Bendy and Boris in The Inky Mystery

by Mercowe, ThisAnimatedPhantom

Summary

Bendy and Boris are humble mechanics until the day came that their lives kinda blew up. Now the pair find themselves in the middle of danger and secrets. If they can't put the pieces together in time everyone will pay the price. With the help of new found friends and the question of who they can and can't trust hanging over their heads, the boys fight against the odds. What is the ink machine? And what roll does it play in the possible destruction or salvation of their world? Jump in the rabbit hole and find out!

Book One: Quest for a Cure - Chapters 1-22
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Book Six: The Far West - Chapters 101-112
Hi! I'm Phantom! Whelp, this is a thing. This is my first work on this site so if ya got any pointers for me I would love to hear them. This fic is inspired by Bendy and Boris: The Quest For The Ink Machine over on tumblr. thebbros has done an awesome job with art. I have done my own little twist on this though so this story is it's own canon, but the Bendy and Boris I imagine is definitely from thebbros. You should take a peek if you're reading this.

https://thebbros.tumblr.com/post/159746600173
Bendy felt uneasy. He didn’t know why. Life had been the same.

Bendy didn’t really remember anything before him and his bro. It had always been the two of them. Life in Sillyvision wasn’t always easy, but Bendy couldn’t really complain. His brother, Boris made the hard days worth it and they had come a long way. The brothers had it good as mechanics in Pete’s shop. The hours could be long and Bendy knew that Pete was cheatin’ them in pay, but still, they didn’t live on the streets anymore. They had food on the table and a little extra for fun. Really, life was good.

Bendy scowled into the mirror as he dried his white face with a towel. He brush his fur and hair. He made sure the two points on his head were neat and straight. Some people had issues with horns, well, not the horns but more of what he was. A demon. His light eyes scanned over himself to make sure he was ready. Fangs brushed, hair done, face washed, gloves, shirt and pants were all there. He flicked his spiked tail. Everything was fine. So why did he feel like there should be more? Why was he so unsatisfied? With a huff he tossed the towel on the rack and headed into the little living room. Boris was laying on his stomach watching his idol on television, Mickey Mouse. Bendy chuckled at the star struck look in Boris’s eyes. His wolf ears were perked and his furry tail wagged. He looked more like an excited puppy than a wolf. He was still young for a wolf. Only fourteen, he still had huge dark eyes, his black fur was brush and his white face clean too. He was completely ready to go. He tugged at the bandanna he always wore around his neck.

“Hey bro,” Bendy greeted.

“Shh!” Boris hissed with a gloved finger against his lips. Bendy rolled his eyes playfully before heading into the kitchen. He grabbed an apple and bit into it with his lazy smile.

“Ya know, we’re going to be late for work if we don’t hurry,” he pointed out between bites. Boris pouted over his shoulder.

“Ah,” he whined, “just a little longer. It’s almost over.” He used his puppy eyes and Bendy quickly looked away. Too late.

“Alright,” he sighed knowing he couldn’t win against that look. “But I ain’t covering for ya when Petey rips into you.” Boris grinned.

“He only does that to you.” Boris teased. Bendy huffed and tossed the apple core at his little brother. “Hey! Rude!” Boris barked as it bounced off his snout. Bendy laughed.

The boys were five minutes late and Bendy couldn’t help the grimace at spotting Pete. He was casually waiting for them leaning by the clock-in-box counting a stack of money. Bendy was amazed the wall didn’t crumble under the girth of his boss. Pete’s chin remained patchy with whiskers, his fur rough and unkempt. His garage overalls had a mustard stain. Bendy wasn’t sure if Pete was a dog or a badger or maybe a cat. He never bothered to ask, but he pitied whatever species had to share the title with him. Boris gave Bendy a nervous glance and reached for his card. The moment he clocked in Pete’s close set eyes zeroed in on them.
“Oh boys! So, you had planned to come in today.” Pete mocked surprise.

Boris shrunk. “Y-yes sir. Sorry we’re a little late I—“

“It was my fault boss,” Bendy cut in. “My alarm didn’t go off.”

Pete leaned down to Bendy’s height and securitized him with a sharp eye and a finger on his chin. Bendy bristled at the mockery of his short stature. Pete knew he hated that. “I ain’t payin’ you to sleep boy! You’re docked half your pay today.”

“Half!”

“Oh, think it should be more?” Pete asked innocently.

Bendy sneered, “No.” Boris shifted uncomfortably next to Bendy, his ears folded to his skull and tail tucked.

“Sorry, what was that?” Pete put a hand to his ragged ear grinning.

Bendy growled, “No…sir.”

“Then stop wasting time and get to work! Cars won’t fix themselves!” Pete hissed as he lumbered off to his office. “Hey, that’s not a bad idea. Cars fixing themselves.” Pete mused to himself. “I wonder…” Bendy grabbed his punch card and pulled the lever hard enough to slam it.

“Brother!” Boris said in surprise.

“Sorry,” Bendy mumbled as he put the punch card away. Jeez, he didn’t even sound genuine to himself.

Boris looked at him sadly, “You didn’t have to cover for me. I don’t want you to—“

“It’s fine,” Bendy cut him off, “I would just be more ticked if it had been you instead of me.” Boris didn’t seem content but nodded nonetheless.

The pair went to work. Fixing cars from dawn to dusk wouldn’t be what a lot of people would call fun, but Bendy and Boris were prodigies. Both felt satisfied every time a struggling car came in to roll out purring like it was new. There wasn’t a thing the pair couldn’t accomplish. Bendy adjusted his goggles as he reached the wrench into the proper possession when the bell rang for the end of the day. Bendy quickly finished up his work and started to pull himself out from under the car when he felt a twinge in his chest.

“Ah,” he muttered in surprise. He raised a gloved hand to the smarting spot but the discomfort disappeared as quickly as it came.

“Bendy, it’s time to head out,” Boris’s boots appeared at the edge of the vehicle. “Are you stuck?”

“Nah bro, I’m coming.” Bendy said shimming out. They quickly clocked out and luckily slipped away before they were spotted by Pete.

“Yeah, how about we stop by the Dancing Lady for dinner? My treat!” Boris suggested lightly. Bendy gave him a sideways look.

“We’re covered in car oil and dirt,” he pointed out.

“We can clean up a little and then go!” Boris pressed. Bendy raised an eyebrow questioningly.
“Please? You love dancing with Sasha and we haven’t gone in weeks.”

Bendy sighed again. It’s true he missed the dance club, but bills had been tight this month. The taxes had changed a bit and now with Pete taking half a day of his pay he knew they shouldn’t. But. Bendy glanced at Boris. Yep, there’s the puppy eyes. Oh boy.

“Alright,” Bendy shrugged lightly. “Who am I to turn down a good time?”

“Yes!” Boris threw a fist of victory into the air. Bendy smiled.

The Dancing Lady was hopping with energy that night. Bendy and Boris shared a grin as they entered the rumbustious establishment. The place was a three-story building with a large open dance floor in the center like a ballroom. Tables dotted the sides of the first floor and the balcony that circled three quarters of the grand room were almost over flowing with partyers. The band just finished a jazzy number next to the stage.

“I bet all this is for Sasha,” Bendy smirked.

“You shouldn’t bet anything bro, you don’t have enough for dinner as is,” Boris teased. Bendy stuck out his tongue.

“Guess it’s a good thing you’re paying uh? Lobster sounds perfect.”

“Uh!” Boris looked shocked. Bendy laughed.

“I’m just ribbin’ ya bro.” Bendy continued to snicker. “Hey, are you going to try and play something?”

“Do you think they’ll let me with such a crowd?” Boris asked excited.

Bendy shrugged, “If it’s Sasha she would. She knows what your Talent is.” Boris grinned shyly.

“Yeah,” he gushed at the thought. Bendy made a mental note to make sure his brother got a hand on an instrument before the night ended.

“But Bendy, if Sasha is singing who’ll dance with you?” Boris asked. Bendy looked at his brother in surprise.

“Hey now! There are plenty of beautiful dams here tonight. You think I can’t get a gal on the floor?” Bendy mocked offense.

Boris looked away and covered his muzzle with a gloved paw, “well if it’s anything like your flirting.”

“That’s low bro. That’s real low,” Bendy frowned. Boris chuckled and nudged Bendy’s shoulder. He was about to say something when the lights dimmed and the crowd cheered. Bendy and Boris went over to the bar and ordered some grub and a couple of fizz-wizzes. The boys overheard a pair next to them talking.

“Did you hear about what happened in Crestville? A real tragedy.” An old turtle leaned over to the aged hare next to him. “I don’t think they’ll ever be the same.”

“It was just a bunch of old buildings you cod!” the hare barked and coughed. His grey muzzle twitched in annoyance. “They’ll rebuild without too much trouble.”
“You old fool,” the turtle groaned. “You don’t get it. Their town was attacked. Folks are scared.”

“Sorry,” Boris’s curiosity peeked. His ears perked toward the two old men. “What happened in Crestville? Is that far from here?”

The turtle and hare shared a look before the turtle spoke, “It’s two towns over sonny. Those people were attacked yesterday.”

“No, they weren’t you nutty shell,” the hare poked the turtle’s leg with a cane. “It was an accident.”

“Watch it string ears,” the turtle growled. “And no it wasn’t! Someone burned down the entire downtown district. It was arson!”

“You don’t know that you, old fart,” the hare said.

“C’mon Boris our food is ready let’s go find a table,” Bendy said. He didn’t really care for the old turtle’s conspiracy theories.

The two found a table and watched as Sasha appear on the stage. The woman was cute in her flapper outfit. Her hat covered her dark curls and the pearls she had around her throat frame her thin neck. Her knee length skirt swished at her every movement. Her dark lips spread into a beautiful smile as her large bright eyes glittered in the stage light. She started with a soft number that had couples pulling close. Bendy glanced over at Boris to see him gazing at the band. As the song was winding to a close he pulled Boris up and headed over to the stage. The boys there gave him odd looks, one of them waved to Sasha and indicated to them. Sasha spotted them and smiled. She gave the smallest nod. Boris hid a squeal of joy as he joined the band and took a clarinet.

“You know how to swing little man?” one of the band members asked.

“Yeah! Music is my Talent!” Boris replied. The band members shared a pleased look before they set themselves for the next number.

Sasha started singing ‘I Got Rhythm’ with her own little twist on the lyrics. Her light voice carried the tune to all corners of the huge room and many started to move to the dance floor. Bendy found his foot tapping to the beat. His eyes wondered the crowd at the edge of the dancers looking for a partner. He spotted a cute little lady eyeing the floor wistfully from her table. Bendy smirked. He casually strolled over and with his smoothest smile asked, “Wanna dance beautiful?” The girl’s eyes snapped to him and she blushed deeply.

“Well,” she drew out the word uncertain.

“C’mon,” Bendy pushed lightly. He put a hand on her table and leaned on it. “You’ll have fun and I’ll get to dance with one of the prettiest girl’s I’ve ever seen. We’ll all have great time.” Bendy silently gloated as her face became even darker.

“O-okay,” she said so softly that Bendy had to lean over to hear her. He grinned and offered her his hand. Boris watched, pleased to see his brother having a good time. He felt guilty getting Bendy into trouble earlier that day and wanted to make it up to him. Bendy was always protecting him and it seemed Boris was always throwing his brother to the wolves...pfft. Bendy inwardly groan, Bendy would have been proud of the stupid pun. Anyway, Bendy was in a lot ways a hero to Boris. When they were on the streets, Bendy did everything he could to make sure Boris didn’t go to sleep starving. He had always put Boris first. Boris was only fourteen but he wasn’t blind to the sacrifices his brother made for him.
Bendy just brought the dam, Sara, back from a far twirl. She was a great dancer, easy to lead and trusting him in his directions. They had worked out a good space around themselves as they expertly pulled off a bold swing. Others paused to watch them move and Bendy felt his ego soar. A light suddenly appeared on them.

“Well ladies and gentlemen it looks like we’ve been graced with Sillyvision’s own dancing demon.” Sasha said from the stage. “What do say boys? Let’s give ‘em a swing!” The music picked up and the crowd cheered. Sara looked a little flustered at Sasha’s teasing but Bendy made sure to keep her busy. He was just about to give her a lift when a huge hand slammed onto his shoulder nearly knocking him over. It pulled him away from Sara.

“Hey wise guy, what do ya think you’re doing with my gal?” a booming voice demanded way above Bendy. Bendy glanced at the giant hand and looked up. And up. To the board shoulders and face it was attached to. Bendy couldn’t tell if he was a gorilla or a huge human but boy was he big.

“Jonny! Bendy just wanted to dance!” Sara huffed at the gorilla. Jonny ignored her.

“Well small fry?” Jonny demanded. Bendy felt his eye twitch, oh this bozo was asking for it. Bendy got out from under his hand.

“Hey buddy, no need for names. We’re all here for some fun,” Bendy tried to rain in his frustration and be civil. People were creating a circle around them, sensing the tension.

“Is that what this is? You have fun runnin’ off with other guy’s dams?” the gorilla accused.

“Oh Jonny, you’re embarrassing me!” Sara blushed and looked at all the watching eyes.

“Just shut it doll, I need to put this schmuck in his place.” He barked at her.

“Woah there,” Bendy narrowed his eyes, “I’m fine with ya having a problem with me, but that is no way to talk to a lady.”

The guy started laughing, “Oh yeah? What are ya gonna do about it peewee?”

“Well, I don’t really mind leaving bozo’s out to dry, but I don’t want any monkey business. I like this place.”

“You beat me? A bean sprout like you?” the guy was roaring with laughter like it was the funniest joke he’d ever heard.

“Yeah, just like your mommy did when you were a brat.”

“What did you say?”

“Is your hearing really that bad or is it the lack of oxygen up there?” Bendy smirked. Jonny pulled a fist back. Bendy took a deep breath and shut his eyes. Bendy noticed Boris had seen the trouble and was desperately trying to reach the circle of tension. He couldn’t get through the crowd fast enough. Bendy smirked and suddenly the brute was on the floor. He groaned in pain. Now the room gasped and fell completely still and silent.

“Who’s laughing now?” Bendy hissed still smirking. He peeked an eye open. It flashed blood red before dimming. The gorilla rubbed his chin and struggled to sit up.

“What was that!” he grumbled.
“Alright, that’s enough,” Sasha suddenly appeared between the two. “I won’t allow this kind of rough housing in my club.” She looked sharply between the two. “Now shack hands and make up or get out.”

“Ah, Sash,” Bendy started but the icy look she shot him had him swallow his words. He scratched the back of his head uncomfortably. The huge guy wobbled to his feet. With his shoulders drooping in defeat Bendy raised a sheepish hand.

“Okay. Sorry about that pal, I just get hot under the collar,” Bendy said with a smile plastered on his face. The guy looked at his hand like it was a striking viper.

“You’re a freak. I ain’t shaking that.” he turned and left on unsteady legs. Bendy dropped the hand and the smile.

“Bendy!” Boris finally was able to get through the crowd. “Are you okay? I can’t believe you did that!”

Bendy again looked sheepish, “yeah, sorry Boris.”

‘Don’t be,” Sara suddenly cut in, surprising both of them. “Jonny was outta line. I’m sorry.”

Bendy waved his hand back and forth, “No, no. You don’t have apologize.”

“Still, I am sorry.” She turned to leave but paused and looked back at him, “and thanks for the dance. That was fun.” Bendy smiled then she left.

Boris whistled. “All that and you still can’t get a girl Bendy. I think that’s a record for you.”

Bendy groaned, “Don’t make records out of my lady experiences Boris.”

“Why not?” Sasha asked teasingly, “I’m sure it’s an impressive list.”

“No!” Bendy whined.

“Am I on your list?” she continued. Bendy felt warmth rush to his face.

“I-I’m leaving,” Bendy turned but Sasha grabbed his arm giggling.

“Oh no you don’t, I get a dance!” she said, “you have to make it up to me since you fought in my club.”

“What kinda logic is that?” Bendy demanded. Sasha just grinned.

“Boris can you get the band going again?” Boris chuckled and saluted her.

“Yes ma’am,” he declared turning on his heel.

“Boris you traitor!” Bendy called after him laughing.

The brothers headed home after a fun night. Bendy had a pleased look on his face.

“I really think I have a shot,” he said.

Boris laughed, “you say that every time we go to the Dancing Lady. Sasha just likes teasing you Bendy.”
“C’mon Boris have a little faith,” Bendy replied.

“Never when comes to your flirting.” Boris answered. Bendy pouted. He glanced back at the Dancing Lady when he accidently bumped into someone. He caught himself before he fell over but the stranger landed on their rump.

“Woah! Sorry there,” Bendy apologized. He leaned down and offered a hand, “I didn’t see you there.” The stranger took his offered hand. He was an owl with huge eyes, his feathers came up into two points like Bendy’s hair. His feathers were ruffled and his clothes looked worse for wear. They were a little oversized on him and a little tattered. Bendy noted how thin he appeared. He wasn’t sure if it was because the guy was a bird or underfed. Standing, he was a bit taller than Bendy (to his eternal annoyance since most people were).

“S-sorry. I’m in a hurry.” The bird didn’t even look at them instead he kept scanning around the street. “I was looking for someone that might be able t-to-ooo help me.” He sounded really nervous, even hooting in the middle of his sentence. He swayed dangerously and Bendy had to catch him. The bird’s wing landed on his chest. The owl gasped and pulled back. “Oh no! Another one, this is truly a terrible day!” Bendy felt alarms go off in his head. He’s first reaction was to get out, not get involved. The owl’s huge eyes widened as his gaze fell on Bendy.

“What’s terrible? Can we help you?” Boris offered. Bendy wanted to smack his forehead. You would think living on the streets would have taught the kid to be more cautious!

“YOU!” The owl’s huge eyes stared at Bendy in dismay. Bendy tensed not knowing how to react. “You’re the one I’m looking for! Oh no! This is truly unfortunate.”

“Me?” he asked pointing at himself with a disturbed look on his face.

“Yes!” the owl screeched.

“Look pal, I don’t know—,”

“You may be the only one that can stop all of this! With your Talent you could possibly stop their plans before they take root. Fate is cruel to you, such a short time limit. To fall to the very thing you must defeat!” He hooted. Bendy took a half step back. He did not like this. This bird was a few screws too loose for his taste.

“Stop who? What plans? Defeat what?” Boris asked innocently. Bendy wanted to shake him. Didn’t he see talking to this guy was a bad idea!

The owl opened his beak, but snapped in shut. He suddenly swiveled his head completely around to look behind him. Bendy’s skin crawled at the weird position. Boris was also startled by this. The owl’s head came back around to face them, “It’s not safe to talk about this out here. Please, is there somewhere we may go to seek shelter? I will explain all there.” He whispered turning his head from one side to the other.

“Oh, um,” Boris shifted unsure. Bendy knew exactly what Boris was thinking.

“Could you excuse us for a second?” Bendy asked.

Bendy yanked Boris away before the crazy dodo could say anything. Bendy pulled Boris down to his level by the bandana tied around his neck. “Boris what are you thinking!” he demanded with a hiss.

“What? He just wants help,” Boris said with a small shrug.
“What did I say about trusting strangers?” Bendy demanded.

“Don’t?” One of Boris’s ears fell back as he furrowed his brows.

“Exactly!” Bendy hissed.

“But he looks like he’s in some kind of trouble,” Boris argued.

“Yeah, trouble we don’t need to be a part of,” Bendy pointed a finger at Boris. “No arguing. We aren’t taking this dodo with us.”

“But Bendy!”

“No but’s! He’s a wacko and we have enough problems getting by,” Bendy narrowed his eyes.

“Bendy,” Boris tried again.

“No! How many time do I have to say it? We can’t trust him,” Bendy shook his head and clenched his fist.

“That is good,” a voice said behind Bendy. He flinched and spun around. The owl was smiling gently, “There are many that you can’t trust. You will be safer keeping your guard up. I’m Wilson by the way. I know you must be confused, but I beg you, you are the only ones I can turn to. You and your Talent.” Bendy groaned.

“You got the wrong people,” Bendy denied. He pointed to Boris, “Boris can just play and I dance. That’s it.”

“Those are good but not your true Talents.” The owl said with a glitter of amusement in his eyes.

“Then we’re mechanics! Is that what you want to hear?” Bendy huffed. The owl shook his head.

“No need to hide it sonny. Though I can understand why you don’t want to broadcast your Talent. It’s very rare and mysterious.” Bendy bristled.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” the automate respond came. The owl chuckled. Boris shifted nervously beside Bendy. He didn’t like this either. Any time Bendy’s hidden Talent came up things got scary.

“It’s okay. I saw what you did in that restaurant. I know what you can do. It’s fine. Everyone has one true Talent. Some are hard to understand or use. Mine is perception. I can perceive truth more clearly than most.”

“Really?” Boris said in awe. Bendy rolled his eyes, not believing a word of it.

“Yes, just like I can see your true talents, I can tell many things.” The owl said.

“Great, a fortune teller. Sorry man, but we gotta go,” Bendy said hooking Boris’s arm and dragging him away.

“Bendy please,” Boris started.

“Shush Boris,” Bendy was fed up.

“Please sir. I have nowhere to go and no friend in this world. If you will just spare me an ear and a night, I will leave when the sun comes up if you wish.” The owl took a couple steps toward the
retreating pair, but stopped. When Bendy didn’t stop, the owl’s head dropped. His beak hid in the collar of his worn coat. A wind came through the night and brushed leaves into whispering songs.

“You really got nowhere to go?” Wilson looked up to see Bendy staring at him blankly over his shoulder. Wilson blinked his huge eyes before nodding. Bendy pursed his lips. He glanced at Boris who was using his puppy eyes to their full effect. Bendy cringed and didn’t say anything for a long moment. He looked back at the lone figure. The guy looked like he hadn’t been indoors for some time. Bendy sighed. Curses.

“Alright,” he forced out between his teeth.

“Yaay!” Boris cheered.

“But I have questions!” Bendy snapped. “And you do anything suspicious or crazy and I will throw you out on your tail feathers, got it?”

“Oh, thank you sir. Thank you,” Wilson looked like he was on the edge of tears. Bendy’s scowl softened a little.

“Have you eaten anything?” Boris asked.

“Oh yes! A kind tortoise bought me a meal earlier.” Wilson responded. “That’s why I was there to see that altercation between you and that other gentleman.”

Bendy felt fear slice up his spine and dismay sick into his stomach. He felt like he had just made a terrible mistake. He couldn’t shake off Wilson’s earlier comments. I know what you can do. Another one, this is truly a terrible day! Fate is cruel to you, such a short time limit.

Bendy felt uneasy. He didn’t know why. It felt like life might never be the same.
Bendy was already regretting this. It was extremely late, they had work tomorrow, and Boris and the bird were still chatting.

“Hey Boris, I think it’s time for bed.” He said cutting through some comment of Wilson’s.

“Ah, but—,” Boris began. Bendy shot him a warning look. Boris snapped his muzzle shut and got ready for bed without argument. Wilson watched silently with his glassy eyes. When Boris shut his bedroom door Bendy turned to the owl.

“You can sleep on the couch. We have work in the morning, so I’m turning in too,” he said stretching.

“If you have questions for me,” Wilson said. Bendy glared at him in irritation. All he wanted was to go to bed and forget about this weirdo and the bad feeling twisting his stomach. He was exhausted and stressed. All he wanted was a little R-and-R after a long day. Was that too much to ask? The owl raised a feathery brow. Bendy cursed and took a kitchen chair to the living room to sit across from the owl.

“Fine. What the cuss was all that when I bumped into you?” Bendy asked.

“Ah, I must apologize for that. I have been traveling for quite some time now. My focus was a bit scattered,” he explained.

“What’d you mean when you said ‘another one?’” Bendy used air quotations mockingly. Wilson shifted uncomfortably. Bendy narrowed his eyes and scowled. “Gotta a problem with someone like me?” It wouldn’t be the first time for Bendy. He had gotten quite a bit of the cold shoulder due to what he was. He didn’t care. He had Boris. Boris loved him and supported him and never judged him. He was happy with his little bro.

“No, no,” the owl denied. “Nothing like that. I simply don’t know where to begin.”

“Oh, then how about the part where it was dangerous to talk on the street?” Bendy asked. He slouched in his chair and crossed his arms over his narrow chest.

“Yes, I guess that will work,” Wilson murmured. He cleared his throat, “Sadly, I seem to be running for my life.” Bendy’s eyes widened. “I know several things that certain individuals would rather I remain quiet about.” The bird turned his head, Bendy thought it might be a nervous tick. “I was in Crestville talking to a journalist when the fires started. I used the bus system to escape. I, uh, I don’t know what happened to my journalist friend. I fear the worst.” Bendy clenched his jaw. Was he
serious? Had Bendy put his brother in danger by allowing this guy to come here?

“That was really arson? And now you’re here, in my apartment.” Bendy spat out. The owl looked startled by his reaction, his glassy eyes widened.

“Y-yes! B-b-but you must understand. It’s important that the population be warned. There’s—,”

“Stop,” Bendy commanded with a raised hand, like he could physically stop the words. “I don’t want to know anything that could get me killed. I won’t let my brother or myself get involved in something so dangerous. When morning comes, I want you out of my house.”

The bird seemed extremely uneasy and sad. He looked heartbroken. Bendy wasn’t moved, this guy was endangering Boris, he had no pity. “I’m sorry, regrettably, you’re already involved.” The owl said mournfully. Bendy startled. Were the people after him that close? Was Bendy already too late to get out? No, he didn’t know anything, they wouldn’t have a reason to go after him or Boris. “You see, when I said another one, I meant you were already involved. You will be one of the innocent victims of their insidious designs.” Fear spiked in Bendy. The stupid bird brain was really pushing his luck. Bendy was about to smack the cryptic outta him.

“What are you—,”

“It’s a disease,” the owl explained seriously. “They are going to allow a plague to sweep this world with pain and death. There are only a few that have gotten sick so far. I am not even sure if doctors have connected the dots yet. I call it ink illness. They want it to spread.” Bendy blinked. What?

“Why would people want a plague? That’s crazy!” he said.

Wilson nodded, “It is. I’m not sure why either. I was a part of team that was researching the Creators and ancient artifacts when I had my first encounter with them. It started with bribes and warnings. They didn’t want us digging up the past. My team and I ignored them, and things escalated to threats and violence. Eventually I had to flee, but not before uncovering some information on this plague.”

Wilson said crossing his wings and leaned back into the old couch. “I couldn’t get everything and I understood even less, but I have deduced from legend that this disease is supposedly connected to the Creators somehow. The disease breaks apart everything to a basic matter. A black sticky substance. It’s very disturbing, this cult or who-oo-ever they are sees it as a type of cleansing, I think.”

“Wait-wait-wait,” Bendy waved his hands and shook his head. “This doesn’t have anything to do with me. All that crazy stuff you said earlier. Something about my Talent.”

“You see, I know your Talent is with darkness, shadow; yes, even inky matter. I can’t be completely sure without experimentation, but it could be the very substance that I was researching with the artifacts. There were writings of a machine. I believe if someone like you could get to this machine you may be able to concoct some kind of cure before the plague can even begin its devastation.” The owl explained. Bendy just gapped at him. He shook his head back and forth in denial. This bird brain was nuts.

“I have reason to believe that such a machine exists. I also have to think there must be a way to stop this, else why try to get rid of me? I must be seen as a threat, thus there is a weakness to expose.” The owl mused.

“I don’t get it. This is too much,” Bendy uttered.

Wilson looked at him pitying, “I know son. I know. I have been running for a year now and I am still overwhelmed. But after seeing the illness’s effects first hand I know I must do something.”

“Only two cases. One was a sickly old fellow and the other was young and healthy. The fellow passed within a day of showing symptoms. The other fought it for months before we met. It,” the owl took a shaky breath. “It was a devastating situation.”

“What are the symptoms?” Bendy asked.

Wilson stared at the floor for a long moment. He didn’t look up at Bendy, “It starts with chest pains, then a mild cough. Next is build up in the lungs and expulsion of this dark substance. There is the reason I compare it to ink, you see. It happens in episodes. The person can seem fine for the day and then suddenly collapse in an attack. They start to drip with the ink during the attacks like their bodies are rejecting their very forms. The pain increases in the attacks to seemingly unbearable levels. After that they collapse, form completely gone. They just-,” a pained look crossed his face, “melt. They become a puddle of ink. That’s all that’s left.” He looked haunted. Bendy shivered. A heavy silence fell between them. A question came to Bendy that he had to ask.

“Is it contagious?” his voice seemed too loud.

Wilson startled slightly from memories. “Oo-oh, no. No, it’s not. I am not sure how one contracts ink illness. One of my last contacts, an old friend in Toon Town; he might know by now. He worked in the Yen University. I asked him to consider the cases and any new ones that pop up. I have been concerned leading my pursuers to him, so I haven’t contacted him since then.”

Bendy breathed a sigh of relief. Okay, he and Boris wouldn’t get sick because they met this guy. At least that was something.

“He might be the best chance you have.” Wilson said staring at Bendy in that mournful way.

“Uh, hu?” Bendy’s confusion was written all over his face. Wilson blinked and swiveled his head side to side before stopping.

“Ah, well. I see that I will have to be forthright.” He sounded nervous. Wilson took a deep breath as his shoulders fell like the weight of the world was on them. If he was right, and Bendy doubted that, it really could be. “There is no easy way to say this. Bendy, you have ink illness.”

Silence fell for a moment. Bendy suddenly burst into laughter. Wilson blinked in surprise but his expression quickly changed to serious dread. “You have got to be kidding me.” Bendy chuckled. “I’m perfectly healthy. Heck the last time I had a cold was forever ago.”

“I understand you don’t want to believe me—,”

“You got that right!” Bendy’s laughing suddenly dropped to seriousness. “I don’t believe ya, bird brain. There is no way I’m buying this. Especially if you think I’ve got anything more than a good case of tired, and I know how to cure that. Sleep, and that’s where I’m headed.”

“Look boy, you may not be showing any symptoms now but I at least want to inform you so your prepared.” The owl said determinedly, like a concerned parent.

“Don’t need it,” Bendy replied. He stood up and picked up the chair to put back in the kitchen.

“You can be stubborn, but at least listen to this above all else. Please.” Wilson begged. Bendy didn’t respond, he just set the chair down. Wilson continued anyway. “You’ll have to focus. Stay strong and fight it. Focus on the things that keep you going in this world and don’t give up,” Wilson said. “Find the things that ground you and hang onto them like no other. I believe you can go years before
Bendy shut his door without looking back. He locked his door and went to bed. He kicked off his shoes and groaned as he laid down. That bird brain was absolutely nuts. Bendy gazed up at the sliver of moon that glinted outside his window. The weirdo would be gone in the morning and Bendy and Boris would go back to their normal lives. No cult, no owls, no illness, no ink, just car grease and dance nights. Bendy fell asleep with the thoughts of music and dancing and dripping darkness and cries of pain. He didn’t sleep well.

Boris awoke to the rising sun. He stretched and yawned. He rolled out of bed and quickly jumped in the shower. In twenty minutes flat he was dressed and ready for the day. He quietly opened the door and peeked out. Wilson slept on the couch whistling a soft hoot like snore occasionally. Boris smiled and walked on his silent paws to the kitchen to start breakfast. It wasn’t long before the smell of pancakes and eggs arose Wilson.

“Good morning Boris,” Wilson said from the living room. He gazed over the back of the couch at the young wolf with his large eyes.

“Good morning Mr. Wilson. How are you feeling?” Boris smiled at his guest.

“I’m doing well, all things considered.” Wilson answered.

“Breakfast will be done in a minute.”

“Oh, thank you, but I really should be going.” Wilson waved a wing in denial.

“Nope, not before you’ve eaten at least. I know how it feels to be on an empty stomach for too long. No one should have to deal with that,” Boris pulled a face. Wilson had a sad look enter his eyes.

“Do you now? I’m sorry you’ve had to face that and at such a young age.” Wilson became weary.

“No reason to be sorry sir. We’re doing great now. Bendy and I got off the streets a while ago. We live the high life now if I think about it like that.” Boris smiled.

“Is that so?” Wilson grew weary, “it’s probably rude for me to ask, but how did you and your brother end up on the streets in the first place? What about your parents?”

Boris set the table and grew thoughtful. He shrugged. “As far as I remember I never had any parents. I’m fourteen now, I think, and Bendy is about eighteen. I don’t really know how I got on the streets. It feels like I was always out there, but Bendy saved me and watched out for me. Without him I probably wouldn’t have made it to today.”

“Saved you?” Wilson asked. He made his way to the table and sat down. He was amazed at how young they still were to have faced such difficulty. They would have still been children! They practically were still kids! What about an orphanage or even the police? Hadn’t there been any adult that tried to help them? He brimmed with questions, but held back. Boris separated the food and sat across from him.
“Yeah, we, uh,” Boris wrinkled his snout and looked amused, “aren’t related by blood. It’s pretty obvious looking at us. But Bendy is my brother anyway. He found me starving in an alley. He fed me, protected me, and made me laugh. It, heh, it was a pretty dark day for me the day we met. I had, uh,” the wolf shifted uncomfortable with the memory. He looked down at the pancakes and eggs he made, “I had kinda just given up on trying anymore. He found me. Bendy gave me hope to live again. I owe him everything. He’s my family.”

Wilson smiled softly. “You both love each other dearly. It’s nice to meet such a compassionate pair of brothers.” Boris blushed, realizing how much he’d said.

“He does get annoying sometimes. His flirting is awful and his jokes!” Boris muttered in dismay like a horrible tragedy took place. Wilson simply laughed.

“Oh! I better wake him up. Bendy is never a morning person.” Boris got up and headed to Bendy’s door. He was surprised to find it locked.

Bendy awoke to knocking on his door. “Bendy! You gotta get up! We’re going to be late and I don’t want to see Pete mad again!” Boris called through the thin door. Bendy groaned as he slowly got out of bed. His restless sleep hadn’t done him any good. The little demon stretched and shuffled out of his room and headed straight to the coffee machine. “You’re not ready at all.” Boris whined when he spotted Bendy. Bendy froze at the sight before him. Boris and Wilson sat at the little kitchen table eating eggs and pancakes. Bendy grit his teeth.

“I thought I said I wanted you gone in the morning,” Bendy stated coldly as he continued to his goal of coffee. Wilson wilted under his gaze.

Boris glared at Bendy indignantly. “We can’t let him go on an empty stomach, brother. What’s with you?”

“I don’t like having him here. He’s dangerous to have around,” Bendy said pouring some cream and a little sugar in his mug before taking a gulp.

“You aren’t—,”

“That’s okay,” Wilson spoke up. “Your brother is right. I shouldn’t have come here. I have put the two of you in danger by just being here. But I felt like I should warn you,” Wilson spoke to Boris but the message was clearly for Bendy. Bendy bristled at that last comment.

“Warn us?” Boris asked concerned.

“Hey! We’re going to be late. Get your stuff together,” Bendy said.

“But you’re not even dressed!” Boris protested.

“Yet, I will still be ready before you,” Bendy said. Boris pouted and got up. Bendy made sure Boris left before approaching Wilson.

“You don’t say any of your crazy ideas to Boris, got it? Leave my brother alone,” Bendy warned darkly.

“You think you’re protecting him, but I think he should be prepared for what will happen.” Wilson said.

“Nothing will happen,” Bendy growled.
“Bendy,” Wilson used a tone that adults had for troublesome children. It only ticked Bendy off all the more. “You won’t be able to ignore this. I’m sorry but this is the truth. Ink illness is—,”

“I’M NOT SICK!” Bendy shouted.


“No! I’m fine,” Bendy said. “This bird brain is just spewing nonsense.”

“Bendy!” Boris furrowed his brows. His ears folded against his skull, “Why are hiding stuff from me?”

“What? No! I’m not hiding anything. It’s just this wackos’ crazy ideas. It’s not true. I’m perfectly fine.” Bendy argued.

“Then why is he dangerous? If it’s all nonsense why are you trying to push Wilson out so quickly?” Boris took a step forward.

“He is going to drag us into his trouble!” Bendy took a step forward.

“Then he needs help!” Boris took another step.

“We don’t know what the heck he’s about.” Bendy shot back.

“Wilson has been nothing but kind. What are you scared of?” Boris pressed. The two were nearly nose to nose.

“He’s—,”

“Either he is in trouble or he’s lying,” Boris said, “which is it?”

“He-he-ugh,” Bendy cringed making a choking sound.

Wilson is suddenly by his side with a look of concern, “Are you okay?”

“GET AWAY FROM ME!” Bendy shouted. Wilson and Boris flinched back. Bendy marched out of the room and slammed his bedroom door.

“Bendy,” Boris whispered in concern. He looked toward where Bendy disappeared to.

“I am truly sorry. I didn’t mean to bring conflict between the two of you. But like I said, your brother is right. My presence does put you in danger. It’s best if I leave,” Wilson said.

“Please don’t go. My brother is way out of line. He normally doesn’t act like that. I’m sorry,” Boris said turning to Wilson. Wilson shook his feathered head.

“It’s alright. I understand that he is only protecting you.” The owl smiled. Wilson headed toward the door.

“Wait, before you leave. What’s this about Bendy being sick? It’s been a long time since he has reacted like that,” Boris asked quietly. Wilson looked back. Boris’s shoulders were hunched, his tail tucked under him and ears still lying flat. His eyes were large and glassy with fear. He had a hand covering his muzzle.

Wilson sighed. “He didn’t want me to say.”
“Tell me anyway,” Boris said.

Wilson shut his eyes for a long second. He released a breath and seemed to sag in defeat. “I believe your brother may have something called ink illness. It’s deadly, I recommend you take him to an old friend of mine in Toon Town. His name is Dr. Ryan Oddswell. He used to work at the Yen University but I don’t know where he is now. If there is anyone that could help him it’s Oddswell.”

Boris’s eyes got even bigger, “Deadly? Bu-but he seems fine!” The wolf shook his head and seemed to swallow his panic with a spurt of hope. "He can get better if it is this ink thing, right? There’s a cure or treatment, right?”

Wilson hesitated. Boris began shaking. He knew what that meant, but he didn’t want to believe it, he couldn’t. “I want to believe that you two will find a way," he finally said. Boris clenched his teeth and wrapped his arms around himself. He couldn’t imagine a world without Bendy in it. He was fine, but there wasn’t any reason for Wilson to be lying to him. Boris could see the truth of it in the bird’s sad, experienced eyes.

“What do I do?” he whispered. Tears threatened at the thought of being alone in this world.

“Be strong for him. Be understanding and just be there for him. Like when he gave you a will to live and protected you. Make him smile, be happy with him, be his pillar of hope.” Wilson said. Boris’ ears perked at that. He wiped the tears on his forearm. A fire of determination entered his dark eyes and he gave Wilson a nod. Wilson smiled. “If there is anyone who can beat this it’ll be you and Bendy. I feel it in my feathers.” Boris smiled. That’s right, it had always been him and Bendy. Nothing would change that. Nothing at all.

“Good bye Boris. I wish the both of you the greatest of luck. Thank you for your kindness. Thank your brother for me too,” Wilson said and opened the door.

“Okay, good luck Mr. Wilson,” Boris said. Wilson nodded and shut the door. He didn’t expect he’d ever get to see those two again. Still, the fire in those youths only strengthened his resolve to save this world. He had formed a new idea, now he simply needed to act upon it.

The walk to work was filled with a tense silence that made Boris really uncomfortable. Bendy refused to talk when he came out of his room dressed and ready to leave. He didn’t comment on the disappearance of Wilson. He didn’t look at Boris. He just stared ahead with a blank, if not somewhat frustrated, look in his eyes. Boris attempted multiple times to get him to say something. He didn’t mention the illness, since that’s what set him off in the first place. It wasn’t until they were right in front of the garage that Boris stopped.

“I’m sorry Bendy. I know you’re just worried,” Boris said. Bendy paused and finally turned to him.

“Whatever,” he muttered. “Doesn’t matter.” Boris’s spirits fell even further. Bendy wouldn’t forgive him until he got out of this mood. Boris hated when Bendy was mad at him. Sure, they argued like any siblings do, but times like these were rare. Boris sighed. Bendy must have heard it. Bendy paused before heading inside and cleared his throat, “Look, I—,”

“THERE YOU ARE!” Pete slammed the door open. “AN HOUR LATE!” His eyes were ablaze with anger. His voice a roaring growl. The brothers cringed back.

“We’re sorry! We had to—,” Boris tried.

“I DON’T WANT TO HEAR IT!” Pete snarled. “And to make things worse, one of you idiots screwed up! I had to cover the damage from my own pocket!”
“What!” Bendy snapped surprised.


“Bendy?” Boris asked in a small voice.

“Go clock in Boris. I’ll be fine,” Bendy glanced at Boris with a reassuring look. “And I’m sorry for this morning too.” Bendy pursed his lips into a hard line before entering the office. Pete was pacing. His eyes narrowed at Bendy.

“Do you think you’re being funny, huh?” Pete demanded. “Sit,” he ordered.

“No, boss.” Bendy shut the door and sat in the little rickety chair across from Pete’s huge glossy desk.

“I’m guessing you’re the one that screwed up the car yesterday,” Pete said winking one eye closed to glare at Bendy. He landed in his cushy leather chair with a thump. Bendy swore the floor shook. He opened a drawer and fiddled around in it.

“I didn’t make any mistake. I tightened every bolt and nut on it. It was perfect when we left,” Bendy argued.

“Tell that to the customers!” Pete hissed. “Take a look at the accident!”

Pete threw a binder across the desk. Bendy’s heart dropped. He opened the file to see pictures of the car he had been working under the other day, smashed into a tree. “What happened? Is everyone okay?” Fear coursed through his veins. He knew they had fixed it up fine. Everything had been in working order, but if someone was hurt, he didn’t know what he would do.

“They’re fine! And they blame us. The cops are still looking into it.” Pete sneered. “Useless pigs.” Bendy released a breath of relief. Thank heavens.

“Due to these recent events, your character is in question.” Pete suddenly sounded very professional. “What?” Bendy said still looking at the pictures and reports in the file.

“I am not sure your presence here is good for the business.” Pete continued pulling out another folder. Bendy was still mentally stalled at the sudden change in Pete’s attitude. Pete also grabbed a cigar and stuck it unlit into his mouth. Bendy put the report down and narrowed his eyes.

“Pete, are you saying what I think your saying?” Bendy asked flatly.

“I believe it is in both of our best interests if I let you go.” Pete smirked.

“That’s a load of hogwash!” Bendy barked. “I’ve been working here for years. I’ve worked holidays and weekends. I’ve done so with lower pay than what most would think is legal! I’m one of the best damn mechanics you’ve ever seen! One incident and you’re throwing me under the bus?”

“Let’s see.” Pete opened the file, retaining his professional facade, and started reading. “Multiple harassment incidents with your boss, two fights, four incidents of broken machinery, multiple
offenses of being late, and a lack of customer friendly service,” Pete listed in a mocking and pleased voice. He sounded like a kid that won a prize and was bragging about it.

“Your machinery is as old and faulty as the dinosaurs, and any other person would refuse to work in this place due to the safety violations. I was late due to the flu and it’s only been a small number of times. Those customers harassed me, and I handled it fantastically until the cops came to take care of it. One of them was demanding their money back because of something you did and I protected you! Oh, and let’s not forget, you’re a selfish, greedy price,” Bendy stated.

“You aren’t willing to take responsibility for your actions?” Pete asked. Did he just say that?

“Don’t take things out of context!” Bendy banged his fist on the desk.

Pete sighed. “And now you are acting out in violence.” This jerk. He had been dealing with this jerk for years, all for the sake of keeping food on the table, now all of the sudden this was happening?

“I am not!” Bendy shouted. “You can’t fire me on these grounds.”

Pete gave him a bored look for a long moment. “Well if it’s not you then I guess there is another person that could be responsible.” All the anger dropped to icy dread. “He is rather clumsy after all, not the brightest bulb. This could be all his fault. If you really want to fight this, then I guess I can investigate him instead.”

“Don’t you dare drag Boris into this!” Bendy was on his feet in an instant, his hands fisted into Pete’s collar.

Pete chuckled. "Well, well, well, seems we can add assault to the list.” Bendy glared daggers into Pete’s ugly mug.

“Now get out. You’re fired!” Pete barked into his face. Bendy tightened his fists. For just a second, one little second, Bendy was tempted to cut loose on this slim ball. He would do the world a favor putting him in his place. Just whip that smug look off his face. A clang outside of the office snapped Bendy out of his rage. He jumped away from Pete. He was shaken by his sudden thirst for violence. He needed to go.

“You’re a real piece of work Pete,” Bendy hissed as he opened the door.

“Don’t let the door hit you on the way out.” Pete lit his cigar and leaned back smiling. Bendy glowered and slammed the door so hard it shook.

Bendy didn’t buy this bull for a second. Something fishy was going on here.

“Bendy what happened?” Boris came up to Bendy. He already had a smug of dirt on his check and a wrench in hand.

“Sorry Boris.” Bendy forced a smile. “I finally lost the job.”

“What!” Boris dropped his wrench with a clang. Bendy shrugged like it was no big deal. “I-I’ll talk to him. It’ll be fine. I can convince him not to—.”

“No bro.” Bendy cut him off. He waved his hand lazily. “It’s fine. I’ll figure something out. If you go in there now, you’ll just end up losing your job too.”

Boris gazed at Bendy crestfallen. “I’m sorry Bendy. This is all my fault. If I hadn’t been so pushy with Wilson you wouldn’t have gotten in trouble.”
“Nah, Boris, don’t blame yourself. Something else is up.” Bendy said softly looking suspicious. One of Boris’s ear perked, his eyes narrowed.

“Something Pete did?” Boris asked in a low voice.

Bendy nodded. “I’m not sure.”

“I’ll keep an eye out,” Boris said.

“Be careful and don’t get into trouble,” Bendy warned. Boris grinned.

“I’m always careful.” Boris bragged. Bendy snorted.

“I better go before Pete decides to call the cops,” Bendy said.

Boris’s ears fell. “Okay, I’ll see you later.”

“Later bro,” Bendy gave a small wave before heading out. With a disgruntled huff, Bendy headed further into town. Since he didn’t have work he might as well go see about this car accident. He planned to stop by the place where gossip flew like wildfire, the wonderful Dancing Lady. Hopefully someone there will know something.

Chapter End Notes

I don't know if I like how this one turned out. I had more but it was just getting so loooong. It's still too long, but I am too lazy to sort it out. Oh well. I'm proud at myself for getting another chapter out this fast. I think I'm just excited for this awesome story. Tell me what you think and if you see any grammar errors let me know since I am not the best at spelling. Also, if you want to help a bit in next chapter I have a question for you.

I have a detective next chapter. Should they be male or female and should they be human or animal (what animal if you choose that)?

Okay, I think that's it. I plan for things to get exciting next chapter. Hehehehe!
A week passed by with nothing for Bendy to really work with. Sasha was getting annoyed with him always hanging around her club. He wouldn’t lie, it was fun teasing her. He traded off between job hunting and scouting for any information on the car accident. To the first he wasn’t really surprised he was struggling. Even though he was now a legal adult he was still a demon with no schooling. Everything he knew was self-taught or picked up by observation. He’d had to teach himself and Boris how to read and do basic math. He loved studying and learning, but if you didn’t have the stinking piece of paper that said you sat in a classroom at some point, most won’t look at ya twice. That’s not to mention the other reason people avoided hiring him, but there really wasn’t anything he could do about that injustice.

Unlike his lack of employment, what Bendy was surprised about was that he didn’t hear a thing about the car. In the small town that Sillyvision was, this little drama should have been everywhere. Bendy didn’t hear a thing. None of the cops, even the ones with the loosest lips, mentioned it. He didn’t even know who owned the car. It made him even more suspicious and nervous. He was starting to think Pete may have paid them off, but no one saying anything? Not one rumor?

Boris hadn’t been able to find out anything at the shop either. Petey was still acting smug, like a fat cat with a canary. Boris had even snuck into the office to look for the file (to Bendy’s strong disapproval), but came up with nothing.

Then there were the bills that would be coming. If Bendy couldn’t find something soon he feared they would find themselves back at square one, the back alley. He couldn’t stand the thought of seeing Boris sleeping on a square of cardboard again. No, he wouldn’t allow it. They couldn’t back slide to that.

To add insult to injury, today, while Bendy was heading to the Dancing Lady, he had also spotted that crazy owl, sneaking away to places unknown. Just sighting the guy put a bad taste in Bendy’s mouth.
Bendy was staring into his fizzy Wizz, lost in thought, when Sasha came up and sat with him at the bar. Her movement snapped him outta thought. “Ya’ know, seeing you pouting is really killing my vibe, Bends,” She said lightly.

Bendy’s head dropped to his hunched shoulders. “I don’t pout,” he muttered.

“Liar. You’re doing it right now.” She smirked.

“I just have a lot on my mind,” he said.

“For the last week you’ve come here, made a nuisance of yourself, left, and then come back to pout at a drink again and again. What’s with ya Bendy-boo?” Sasha asked, leaning forward a little to look at him more fully.

“Nothin’s with me and I’ve told ya not to call me that Sash,” Bendy replied taking a swig of the sugary drink.

Sasha pouted. “Now I’m getting’ the cold shoulder? What happened to my little darling devil?”

Bendy felt himself bristle and his fur stand up. “Don’t call me little.”

Sasha got an evil look in her eye. “It can’t be a small problem if you're acting like this. Have a little confidence in me. Maybe I could be the tiniest of help to you. Even if it’s the tiniest thing, talking to me is better than coming up short and feeling foolish.”

Bendy groaned and planted his head on the counter top. “You’re insufferable,” he groaned.

She giggled, “I know.” She brushed one of her curls behind her ear before leaning her elbows on the counter. “So why don’t cha talk before I pull out the pee-wee guns.”

Bendy sat up to give her the most deadpanned, unamused look he could ever manage. She only laughed. He sighed in defeat. "Alright, so last week Pete fired me.” Sasha’s smile instantly dropped into a scowled.

“Why’s Boris handlin’ this? He still workin’ for that bozo?” Sasha asked. Bendy nodded his eyes going back to his half-finished drink. She pursed her lips in thought. It was obvious now that Bendy had been job huntin’ with no luck. No wonder he was poutin’ at her bar.

“How’s Boris handlin’ this? He still workin’ for that bozo?” Sasha asked. Bendy nodded his eyes going back to his half-finished drink. She pursed her lips in thought. It was obvious now that Bendy had been job huntin’ with no luck. No wonder he was poutin’ at her bar.

“He’s alright. My bro is a trooper. He’s startin’ to push for more work time, so we can meet the bills. I’m worried he’s going to push himself too far, and Pete is always stingy with the paychecks,” he muttered. Sasha gritted her teeth. Oh, she couldn’t stand that man, especially the way he treated her boys. Bendy and Boris were nothing but sweetie pies. She’d known that ever since the first night they showed up, dirty and way too young and thin, asking for a meal and proudly paying for it, like
it was Christmas. She learned later that they'd used their first paychecks to pay for that meal, and that they had still been sleeping in an alley at that time. They had always wanted to eat here, but couldn’t ever afford it. They had chosen her place to celebrate their first time with well-earned money from a stable job. Her heart had broken when Boris had told her that. She’d known these boys for a couple of years now and loved ‘em like family. A thought came to her.

“Well you know,” she suddenly said slowly, “I’ve been thinkin’ about getting’ my place a little security. There have been some shady folk around as of late and I can’t always be sure there’d be a cop on hand or for Ronald to take care of it since he’s supposed to man the bar and cash register when I’m on stage. You wouldn’t happen to know anyone that could be lookin’ for a job like that could ya?”

Bendy was staring at her like she grew a third head. His lighter eyes were huge and his jaw gabbed at her. “S-Sash are you offerin’ me a job?” She smirked at his surprise. Teasing Bendy was such a treat.

“Well,” she drew out the word. “I don’t know, am I?”

Amusement lit up his face and his traditional smirk crossed his face. “Does this mean I get have you every night?”

Sasha burst into surprised laughter. ”Down boy. I still have to sing once in a while. You sure you want to flirt with your boss?”

Bendy grinned, “Oh, I know she loves me, but let’s not talk about my boss. Let’s just talk you and me suga’,” Sasha sputtered with laughter in a rather unladylike manner. This boy! After she got control of herself, she smiled. They talked a bit about mundane things and worked out the details of Bendy working for her. It was much better to see that light of hope and excitement in his eyes than what she witnessed for the past week.

“Well, I better get going. I need to make dinner and tell Boris the good news.” Bendy smiled. Sasha couldn’t help returning the gentle smile.

“You cook?” she asked.

He shrugged. ”With no job, all the house chores fell on me. It’s no biggie.” Sasha smirked, trying to imagine him in an apron. Maybe she should push him into the kitchen and see what he could do.

“Alright, be safe and remember, five o’clock sharp for your first shift tomorrow,” she said.

Bendy stood and gave her a lazy salute. “You got it boss,” and headed to the door. Just as he opened the door, there was a horrible screeching sound and screams. He and practically everyone in the building rushed out to see what the ruckus was. A crowd was gathering around a stopped vehicle. It seemed the driver had gotten out, and was screaming for help. Bendy thought about getting outta there since there wasn’t anything he could do, but the flow of people from the Dancing Lady pushed him forward. “Hey! Don’t step on the tail!” he barked. He wasn’t sure how (it might’ve been how small he was), but he found himself propelled to the front of the crowd. The town folk were making a large circle around the accident. When Bendy registered what was in front of him he swore his heart stopped. The driver was in tears, still screaming for help. Feathers littered the ground. He was kneeling next to the individual he had hit.

Wilson.

It seemed time turned with his stomach. He walked forward on numb legs. Bendy was next to
Wilson before he realized he had moved. He dropped to his knees next to the bird. Wilson was twisted in a painful angle, his legs bent awkwardly and spine obviously broken. Feathers were scattered around. A pool of gore was growing beneath him.

“I-I tried to stop! He came outta nowhere!” the driver was blubbering.

“Wilson?” Bendy asked. None of this felt real. He felt like he was watching this from far away. Wilson’s eyes barely peeked open to turn to Bendy. The owl choked. “Wilson? Can ya hear me? You’re gonna be okay, help is coming.”

“Bend—,” the owl choked and sputtered. Blood dripped from his beak.

“Shh, it’s okay. Don’t force yourself,” Bendy said. He couldn’t believe this was happening. What was he supposed to do in a situation like this? Wilson suddenly snatched Bendy’s wrist. Bendy flinched as he felt warm blood stick to his fur and glove.

“Get—ink ma-machine,” he gasped and coughed. The pain in his bleary eyes was unbearable. His body was shaking. Bendy couldn’t believe he was pushing this hard. This stubborn bird wasn’t going to stop. Bendy was pulled forward to better hear him.

“You want me to find it?” Bendy asked more to comfort him then believing his words. Wilson gave the smallest nod. Fear and determination lit his eyes like the spark of a fire. Bendy felt Wilson force something into his hand.


“Wilson? Wilson! Hey!” Bendy’s voice shook. Wilson convulsed a couple of times before going still. “Hey!” Bendy looked up to the crowd. “Where the hell is that help!” he demanded. Bendy could barely hear Sasha and others shouting for people to move. Bendy’s mind went into overdrive. He suddenly picked up little snippets of people muttering to each other.

“What happened?”

“That bird ran in front of the car!”

“The owl was hit.”

“I saw it, he was thrown!”

“Anyone know who he is?”

“What!”

“I think he jumped.”

“Does that kid know him?”

“That’s what happens when ya don’t pay attention driving.”

“I think he was being chased.”

“Who’s the little guy?”

“He ran like a bat outta hell.”
“What a terrible accident!”

Bendy’s eyes scanned the crowd of people. He suddenly felt eyes on him. Run. The paramedics finally got through the crowd. Bendy was pushed back with the driver. He caught a last glimpse of Wilson’s broken form on the street.

His words cascaded in Bendy’s mind. Everything seemed to drift away from him. Sadly, I seem to be running for my life. He numbly became aware of one of the paramedics trying to talk to him. “Do you know him sonny?” Wilson had been running. I know various things that certain individuals would rather I remain quiet about. People had said he was running. “Sonny? Can he tell me his name?” I fear the worst. “Can you hear me?” Everything felt far away. There must be a way to stop this ‘else why try to get rid of me? “Can you tell me your name?” After seeing the illness’s effects first hand I know I must do something. “Do you have any family?” I have been concerned about leading my pursuers to him. “Can you talk to me about them?” Get—ink machine. “Sir, can you answer me?” I believe if someone like you could get to this machine you may be able to concoct some kind of cure. “Can you hear me sir?” You can be stubborn but at least listen to this above all else. Please. “Bendy, are you okay!” The-ey watching. “Ma’am do you know him?” Watching. Liar. “Yes, I’m a friend of his. Sasha.” I have put the two of you in danger by just being here. “Do you think you can get him to respond?” But I felt like I should warn you. “Yes!” Run. “You need to get him to understand that his friend has passed away. We couldn’t save him.” Run.

A sharp pain suddenly laced through Bendy’s chest making him gasp. It snapped he back into reality. His hand flew to his chest to clutch at his shirt.

“Bendy! Are you okay?” Sasha asked at his side. It felt like his chest was on fire. He was about to speak when the pain resided just as suddenly. He looked around himself. The paramedics had covered Wilson with a sheet. Cops were showing up to manage the crowd and ask questions. There were too many people here. Bendy’s fear spiked. Run. “Bendy answer me!” Sasha demanded putting a hand on his shoulder. Bendy clenched his fist and felt something in his hand. He looked down to see a crumpled piece of paper.

“Sorry,” Bendy muttered. Bendy straightened out the page. There was writing on it. It wasn’t in a language that Bendy recognized. It looked like it was torn from a book. This was too much. He looked back up at the crowd. There couldn’t be people out there that did this, could there? It was just an accident. Or was it murder? He didn’t know.

“What’s that?” Sasha asked. Bendy shrugged, folding it up and sticking it in his pocket. “Thank the stars that Boris wasn’t here,” Sasha said. “I don’t know how he would handle something like this.” Sasha sighed before she swallowed. “Did you know him?”

Bendy’s eyes snapped to Sasha. They widened. A panic entered his being that Bendy had rarely felt before. Boris.

Bendy was on his feet sprinting.

“Bendy!” Sasha called after him. He dodged around people and shoved his way out of the crowd.

“Hey now, where do ya think yer headin’ off to?” a pig cop asked. He blocked the demon’s way.

“Outta my way!” Bendy slipped past him and bolted down the street.

“Stop!” the pig called after him. Bendy ignored him. His mind was only on getting to Boris and making sure he was okay. He blocked out the blood on the legs of his pants. He ignored the sticky feeling of it drying on his arm and glove. He forgot about the scene he fled. He only cared about his
brother. He just wanted Boris to be safe.

He arrived at the shop panting, sweating, and on shaking legs. “B-BORIS!” He choked out between his desperate gasps for air.

“Bendy? What are you doin—.” Boris came around a suspended car. He gasped and dropped the cloth he was wiping his hands on when he spotted Bendy. “What happened!” he demanded and rushed over to Bendy, seeing him spattered in dark blood. Relieved to see Boris safe, Bendy collapsed to his hands and knees, still gulping air greedily. “Are you hurt? Did something happen? Do I need to call an ambulance?” Boris panicked and dropped to his knees in front of Bendy. His hands half raised to grab him and frozen in fear of hurting him.

“No, I-I’m fine. Blood’s not mine.” Bendy was able to choke out. His throat was tight with relief and emotion. Gentle hands lifted his face to look at Boris.

“What happened? Why are you crying?” Boris asked, he used his thumbs to whip the tears away. Boris’s ears were flat, his eyes huge and glassy with worry. He was crying? Bendy hadn’t even noticed.

“I-It,” the memories flashed through Bendy’s mind and he just pulled Boris into a tight hug and shuddered. It was okay. Boris was okay. He was fine. They could get through this. Run. His little brother’s arms wrapped around him.

“It’s okay Bendy. I’m here. We’re together. We can get through anything together,” Boris said. Bendy bit back a whimper of fear, instead he nodded.

“Yeah, yeah yer right bro,” Bendy whispered. In time, his shaking and tears stopped. With his heart calming down Bendy found himself overwhelmed with the thought of telling Boris what happened. He didn’t even know where to start.

“What’s all this? I ain’t paying you to sit around!” Pete suddenly appeared. He spotted Bendy and his eyes grew wide. “What in sam-hill happened to you?”

“Sorry sir, can I have a little break please,” Boris asked. He used his best puppy eyes. Bendy just looked exhausted. Pete looked between the two on the floor and sneered.

“Fine. But don’t think you can go making a habit outta this,” Pete said putting both his fists on his hips.

“Thank you so much sir!” Boris gleamed a bright smile at Pete. He helped Bendy back up as Pete retreated to his office. “Let’s get you cleaned up brother.” Bendy didn’t say anything, but nodded. Boris led him to the back sink and helped Bendy wash off as much as they could. The pants were probably ruined and Bendy could still feel the ghost of blood on his arm, but he could at least think straight now. “There we go. That’s better, uh Bendy. Did you run all over town like that? I bet you gave some folks a heart attack. If it was a fight you sure gave it to ‘em.”

“Boris,” Bendy felt the weight of the world on his shoulders. “It was Wilson, Boris. He was in an accident. He’s,” Bendy tried to swallow the lump in his throat, “He’s dead, bro. They got ‘im.”

Boris’s eyes became saucers. He just stared at Bendy for a long moment. Bendy watched the tirade of emotions play across Boris’s face. Denial, shock, sorrow, pain, fear, panic. “What. Happened?”

Bendy explained in a flat voice. He was too worn out to feel anything during the recount except dread. Boris didn’t interrupt, he leaned back against the counter and only listened. Tears silently ran down his face. Bendy finished with Wilson’s last words and his flight to Boris when the wolf
wrapped him in another hug.

“I’m so sorry you had to go through that! And poor Mr. Wilson! D-d-do you really think it was an accident or something else? Could we have done something differently? Could we’ve—,”

Bendy gentle pushed Boris back to look him in the face. “Hey, you can’t think like that Boris. What happened, happened. No amount of blame is going to change that. No what if’s, okay? I want to believe it was an accident but to be completely honest.” Bendy hesitated. “I don’t know.” He finally said. Boris stared at him. Bendy’s eyes were downcast, he looked defeated.

“That’s not true,” Boris said, “you think it wasn’t an accident.” Bendy tensed and pulled back a little more.

“I don’t know what I think. I just know that something fishy has been going on in this town as of late.” Bendy said. Boris whipped at his tears.

“S, what’d we do?” Boris asked with a sniffle. Bendy furrowed his brow in concentration.

He put a hand to his chin in thought. “I-I’m not really sure.” He finally admitted. “Keep going I guess.” Bendy used the old motivator the two shared when things were really difficult.

“Wilson wanted us to go find some kinda ink machine.” Boris said still looking completely heartbroken.

“We don’t even know where to start! Not to mention that if he was being honest then there are people willing to kill to keep over it and if he wasn’t then it’s a wild goose chase. We can’t just drop everything and chase after a thing that may or may not exist for a guy we only met once.” Bendy reasoned.

“Bendy,” Boris sounded as tired as Bendy felt, “Don’t get mad, okay? I don’t know what it all means but for some reason, he trusted us with this information. He thought we can do something.”

“Boris,” Bendy sighed in frustration but did his best to reign it in, “we can’t go on some sorta crazy quest. Look, I know it’s sad and I know it’s shady, but I think we should just wait and make sure we are thinking straight before trying anything. Ya know, so we don’t do anything rash.”

Boris grew thoughtful before finally agreeing. Neither brother had noticed how much time had really passed. Pete wasn’t too pleased at Boris for practically skipping out on the rest of his shift, but with the blood still staining Bendy’s pants, the grump didn’t voice his complaints…much.

The pair walked home slowly, the setting sun bringing a chill to the silent brothers, both too wrapped up in their own thoughts. With the death of Wilson, Boris’ mind had gone back to the illness he had been warned about. The brothers hadn’t talked about it. The wolf’s large eyes glanced at the short figure next to him then back to the street ahead. Bendy hadn’t shown any signs of being sick. Not even a sniffle, though he was notorious at putting off treatment and insisting that he was fine when he had the flu. He remembered one or two occasions when he had had to lock Bendy in his room and wait for him to tire out before Bendy would allow Boris to put him to bed. He could be so stubborn!

Still, Wilson had said it was deadly, yet Bendy seemed fine. It made Boris wonder if Bendy might be right, and that Wilson hadn’t been completely honest with them. But then why would his dying words be a request for them to find an ink machine? It didn’t make any sense to Boris. Could he really have been a little delusional like Bendy had said? Wilson hadn’t seemed so. Boris didn’t think so. He thought that secretly Bendy did believe Wilson, he just didn’t want to because it was so scary.
Boris didn’t blame Bendy. He was scared too. Either it was all true or all false, Boris didn’t know what he wanted to believe anymore.

Bendy, on the other hand, was trying to put the puzzle pieces together. No matter how many angles he went at it, things didn’t add up. Wilson didn’t seem the type to jump in front of the car. He wouldn’t have known Bendy was nearby, so why would he do something like that to give him a message? It could have been a freak accident, but that timing was a little too easy. Bendy didn’t see anyone that was suspicious, but there were a lot of people there and he admitted that he hadn’t been thinking straight at that time. So, had it really been murder? Was he willing to think that way?

If Wilson had been completely honest with him, and Bendy had no idea why he would be, Bendy was a practical stranger to him after all! But if he had been, then that meant all this crazy conspiracy stuff was real and he and Boris could be in the thick of it. It could also mean that Bendy really did have ink illness.

He narrowed his eyes. That pain he had felt back at the accident. What had that been? It had shaken him out of his shock, but he had never felt something like that before. Could that have been what Wilson had been talking about? Bendy shook his head a little. Nah, he was just being paranoid. He was fine, same old Bendy, no problems here…Everything was fine.

Except it really wasn’t.

Chapter End Notes

Yep, what do you think?
Poor Mr. Wilson, huh? Wonder what he was up to before this. ^^
Anyone else notice how angry and violent old cartoons are? They can be scary! That might be why I love them. Hehehe.
So, I like to try and update on the weekends, Friday or Saturday, but I'm also a busy college student so I can't promise I will have a chapter for all of you lovelies every week. I will do my best though! I haven't been so excited to write something like this before. The chapters and ideas won't stop!
And thanks for all the kudos and comments! They make me happy.
Okay, TAP out, see ya next week!
When Pigs Come Knocking

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Bendy doesn't like cops. Bendy likes ladies. Not sure what he'll think of this lady cop.

Chapter Notes

Hello lovelies! It's TAP! Wow. These responses are amazing! You people are awesome.

XD
I did a Bendy doodle. Because I could and my professor had to explain something I already had down four times for other students. Yipee for boring class!

https://thisanimatedphantom.tumblr.com/post/160492573509/i-doodled-bendy-hes-just-too-awesome-for-words

There. It's on my tumblr and for some reason links hate me. Sorry about that. I'll figure it out eventually. So if you want doodle requests or send me your own fanart contact me over there. Thanks :3

Okay, I'll stop holding you up. See you at the end.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It wasn’t until they were practically on their complex doorstep that the brothers noticed the cop car and the pair waiting for them. One was the pig cop that Bendy had escaped from earlier, the other was a tall, curvy detective. She was a beautiful crow with glossy feathers that disappeared into the darkness of the failing day.

“Are you Bendy?” she asked. Bendy’s head snapped up at the sound of his name.

“Why yes, I am. But I’m at a loss on your name miss,” he answered smoothly to the beautiful woman.

“I’m Detective Joan Featherworth and this is Officer Snoutfer,” she introduced herself and the pig.

“Well beautiful, you already know my name and this is my brother Boris. What brings a fine lady such as yourself out here?” Bendy asked, giving her an appreciative look. Boris quietly moaned at his brother’s antics.

“Officer Snoutfer?” she suddenly looked to the pig.

The swine man huffed and tugged his belt up on his round belly. “That’s definitely him ma’am. This little man jumped around me after fleeing the scene.”

The crow turned back to Bendy. “Is this true, sir?”

Bendy threw his hands behind his head and sighed. “Yeah, it’s true.” He then turned to the officer.
“And don’t call me little.” The pig snorted in surprise at Bendy’s sudden change of tone when addressing him compared to the detective.

“Please sir, we just want to ask you some questions,” the crow intercepted before the officer could get in a huff.

“Sure, do you want to come inside and get more comfort?” Bendy turned the charm right back on when he turned back to her.

“That would be nice, thank you,” Detective Featherworth said.

“Detective do you really believe that’s a good idea?” the officer asked.

“Of course, we’re simply getting a witness statement of a tragic accident,” she said lightly. The officer gave Bendy an untrusting look. Boris’s ears drooping, he knew that look. The boys led the pair to their simple apartment. The police sat at the couch.

“Would you like anything to drink?” Bendy offered from the kitchen.

“No, we are only going to be a moment,” Detective Featherworth said.

Boris and Bendy grabbed two of the three kitchen chairs and moved to the living room.

“Good heavens man! What is that?” Snoutfer barked at seeing Bendy. Bendy’s eyes wandered down to his ruined pants and grimaced. Now unobscurred by the waning light it showed its gruesome horror.

“Ah, that was from the accident.” Bendy said. “if it isn’t too much to ask, could I quickly change?” He shifted uncomfortably.

“I think it best you stay right there boy.” Snoutfer didn’t leave room for argument. Bendy’s tail flicked in annoyance and frustration. His eyes dropped to the floor, but he didn’t argue like Boris knew he wanted to.

Featherworth sighed. “I assume it’s from the deceased.”

Bendy nodded.

“Did you know him?” she asked gently.

Bendy hesitated before he sighed. “I met him once last week. He said his name was Wilson.” The police looked at Bendy in surprise. Neither obviously expected him to know anything about the deceased.

“What were you doing with him?” Snoutfer ordered. Bendy frowned at the officer.

“I bumped into him on the street. The guy didn’t have a place to stay, so we let him spend the night here. He left in the morning,” Bendy said.

“That’s it?” Snoutfer narrowed his tiny eyes.

“That’s it.” Bendy sighed.

“Did Wilson ever say anything to you?” Featherworth asked before Snoutfer could ask another question.
Bendy and Boris shared a look.

“Like what?” Boris asked innocently.

“Anything about family or friends?” Featherworth asked leaning forward a little.

The brothers again shared a look. Snoutfer narrowed his shifting eyes to the point it looked like he was squinting. Boris’s eyes held a question. He didn’t know how much Bendy wanted to be said. Bendy shook his head slightly.

“Well, he did seem scared,” Boris said slowly. “He said it was dangerous.”

“What do you mean?” Featherworth asked.

“I’m not really sure. He was really vague. He mentioned something about warning us, but he never really said what he was warning us about,” Boris said. Boris saw Bendy’s fingers tighten just a hint from the corner of his eye. So, Bendy knew what Wilson had meant, but Boris didn’t. Unless…it was that ink thing? Boris fought the urge to look at Bendy directly.

“That’s okay son,” Snoutfer said, though it didn’t sound okay from his aloof tone. The officer turn back to Bendy. “Do you invite strangers into your apartment often?”

Bendy flinched. “No! But what else could I do? The guy said he had nowhere to go and no friends in the world. I could at least offer him a couch for a night.”

Featherworth was writing everything down. “It’s seems no one in this town knew him.”

“Yes,” Boris said. “He told us he had come from Crestville.” The crow nodded and shared a knowing look with the pig.

Snoutfer turned to Bendy. “So why did you flee the scene?”

Bendy gave him a dirty look. “I just saw someone die. I, eh,” Bendy faltered and pursued his lips. He dropped his eyes to the worn carpet a moment before looking back up. He had a pained look on his face. “I just wanted to see my brother.” He said crossing his arms over his chest. The pig snorted at this. Oh, bite me, Bendy thought. He had been worried.

“You shouldn’t have run from an officer or fled the scene of an investigation,” Snoutfer chastised.

“An investigation?” Bendy’s eyes became intense. It was like he was staring into the officer’s soul. “What are you investigating?”

The pig sputtered, “Well the car—,”

“Do you think it was an accident or maybe,” Bendy shot a look toward Boris, before pinning the pig with his gaze again, “murder?”

“Now see here! Our investigation has nothing to do with—,”

“Because I think I remember some people thought Wilson was pushed or thrown into that car,” Bendy said leaning forward.

“I don’t see why that—,” the swine was starting to sweat, his face becoming splotchy with frustration.

“And others said they thought he was being chased,” Bendy stated.
“I don’t have to answer to you!” Snoutfer squealed.

The detective jumped in, “Do you think it was something other than an accident, Bendy?”

Bendy’s gaze shifted to her and softened. He dropped his head a little and looked away. “I don’t know.”

Silence fell on the group for a beat.

“Did you see anything at the accident or did he tell you anything?” She broke the heavy silence. Bendy got a faraway look.

“He-,” Bendy shuddered, “He could hardly breathe. Sorry no. I got nothing,” Bendy lied. There was a weighted silence like the crow was expecting something more. She straightened and sighed.

“I’m sorry you had to go through that. I think we have everything we need.”

“What!” Snoutfer demanded.

“Thank you for your time.” The crow ignored him and stood to leave. She shook both of the boys hands.

“But Detective Featherworth we haven’t—,”

“These young men are exhausted and so am I. I think a nights’ rest would be good for all of us. If we have any other questions I’m sure they won’t mind another visit.” She turned back to them. “Will you?”

“Honey you can come by anytime you like,” Bendy said. “I haven’t seen you around town. If you’re new here I would love to show you the sights.”

“Bendy nooo,” Boris groaned and dropped his face into his hands. Featherworth smirked and was about to say something when Snoutfer suddenly stepped in between the two.

“You better hold your tongue before you get yourself in trouble there, little man,” he warned. Bendy’s flirty smile fell into an annoyed frown.

“I told you. Don’t call me little.” Bendy’s voice dropped into a warning tone too, but Boris thought Bendy’s was much scarier.

“Are you threatening an officer?” Snoutfer leaned forward. Bendy raised an eyebrow and gave him a look that clearly said, ‘are you stupid?’

“Now, now. No need for that. It’s fine Officer Snoutfer.” The detective quickly steered the swine to the door and only paused for a moment in the doorway. “Oh, here.” She turned around and pulled a card from her coat. “My card. It’ll reach me and my partner’s number. If you can think of anything else or need any help don’t hesitate to call.” She smiled and passed the card to Bendy while Boris worked to return the chairs.

“Thanks doll,” he said with a wink. Featherworth nodded and left. Bendy shut the door and leaned against it.

“You okay?” Boris asked softly.

“As okay as I can be,” Bendy said wearily.
Boris put a reassuring hand on Bendy’s shoulder.

“Bendy do you know what Wilson meant by danger?” he asked hesitantly. Bendy seemed to collapse under Boris’s question. Boris quickly backpedaled. “You don’t have to tell me.”

“No, you should know. If the bird was telling the truth it would be dangerous for you not to know everything I do,” Bendy said. “Just let me change first.” Bendy sighed and slowly headed to his room.

“What was that detective?” Snoutfer asked Joan in the car. “They were extremely suspicious and you just got up and left! What kind of investigation is that?”

“I didn’t want them to get suspicious of us. We don’t want them disappearing and we can’t make an arrest yet. They said enough that is inconsistent with what others reported that I think they know something more. Instead of confronting them and showing our hand we need to find evidence.” Featherworth jotted down something in her little notebook.

Snoutfer snorted. “Sounds like you really think it was homicide,” The pig probed. Joan didn’t respond. Snoutfer sighed and then asked, “You think they did it?”

“I can’t say that yet,” she stated.

“I wouldn’t be surprised. That little demon has caused problems before. He has a quick temper and always seems to be up to something. I don’t think he has ever done anything for anyone without getting something outta it,” Snoutfer stated.

Joan hummed in thought. “If that’s so, what would he have gotten out of our victim?”

“Money? Or maybe the bird found out something they were doing,” Snoutfer suggested.

“We don’t know that. All we know is that he lied to us about Wilson’s last words. The driver heard them too. It sounds like some kind of cryptic message was passed between them and that there are others involved.” Joan stated the facts thoughtfully. “According to the driver, the owl said, ‘get the ink machine and they’re watching.’ That accident was no accident, it was completely rigged. And for whatever reason Bendy understood what was happening.”

“We’re lucky you and your partner came into town. Chief was ready to sweep this whole matter under the rug until ya’ll spoke up. If it is that demon and wolf they won’t get away with it.”

“I don’t think Boris is involved.”

“No?” Snoutfer asked. “He’ll do whatever the other one tells him to do. He is completely loyal like a dog on a leash.”

“I don’t think so. I believe that Bendy has kept Boris out of most of this. He doesn’t know, or at least not to the extent the other one knows,” Featherworth said absently.

“Don’t trust that baby face. He may be young but he’s still a wolf.”

“I don’t categorize my suspects officer,” she said coldly. She hadn’t been impressed by the swine’s blunt display of his biases.

Snoutfer huffed. “Just saying, I know a few things about wolves.”

“Ah, yes, your wooden house a few years back. I heard about that. Sticks, was it?” Featherworth
asked lightly. Snoutfer’s face became splotchy with embarrassment and shame.

“That’s not important,” he squealed. “Once we get back, we’ll report this to the chief.”

“Yes, my partner and I will continue collecting information and keep a distance from those young men. We don’t want to spook them.”

Snoutfer agreed reluctantly. Joan gazed out at the rising moon. She had finally tracked the owl down only to lose him forever. Now she was left with only the barest scraps of information and a dead body. If she was lucky, his murderers had left enough pieces that she could catch them. If not, she will be back to square one.

Her feathers ruffled at the thought. She hoped that wouldn’t be the case.

Boris sat there for a long moment absorbing all the information Bendy gave him. It wasn’t much more than he had already figured out himself, but it was nice to be on the same page as Bendy. He was stung at the fact that Bendy hadn’t wanted him in on everything, but he knew it was because Bendy wanted to protect him. Now that he had a clearer idea on what ink illness was he felt a little assured. At least Bendy wouldn’t drop dead at any moment. He didn’t show any of the signs that Wilson had told him about.

Boris turned to Bendy to see his big bro had passed out on the couch. He was curled up on his side, breathing softly. Bendy seemed more vulnerable like this. His big personality and strong will weren’t there to make him larger than life. Right now, he was a kid just as lost and tired as Boris. There were a lot of times Boris forgot that. Bendy had always been so dependable and sure of himself. It was alarming to see him so lost and (don’t tell Bendy he thought this) small.

Boris smiled and gently picked his brother up. He mumbled in his sleep before relaxing as Boris carried him to bed. He gently tucked Bendy in. “Night bro. See ya in the morning,” Boris whispered before walking out on his silent pads.

He cleaned up the meager dinner they had that evening while they had gone over everything in the past week. They had talked themselves in circles, but mostly choices came down to three options. Go to Detective Featherworth and tell her everything. Just leave it up to the cops, stay quiet and wait to see what happened, or somehow make their way to Toon Town and find Dr. Oddswell.

Both Bendy and Boris weren’t sure about the cops. They didn’t think the police could do much and it seemed talking would just put them in more danger. Right now, they weren’t sure if there was anyone out there that knew they had had a conversation with the past Wilson. Keeping their mouths shut might be best. Besides, the police here had never really done Bendy or Boris any favors, Boris frowned at the memories and shook them off. He got to work on the dishes and moved on with his thoughts. Bendy thought the second idea was best. He wanted to wait due to the pretense that this all might still be a hoax of some kind, even though both of them knew in their hearts that they didn’t really believe that. Boris on the other hand wanted to go to Toon Town.

He’d admit it wasn’t just to find Dr. Oddswell. Boris had always wanted to travel. He’d never been to the city before, he knew this wasn’t some kinda vacation, but at least this way they would be doing something! He didn’t want to sit on his tail and wait. What if Bendy really was sick and this was their only chance to get to help?

Boris shook his head like he could shake away the thoughts. No what ifs, Bendy was right about that at least. He would only drive himself nuts. Boris dried the dishes and started putting them away. There was the one thing Bendy was still sure of. That he was healthy. That Wilson was wrong about
him. Boris wanted to believe it too, but he remained cautious. He remembered what Wilson said. He had to be strong so he wouldn’t be surprised if something did happen to Bendy. He had to be ready for the worst…whatever that could be. Was that another what if? Boris groaned. Okay, this was harder than it looked.

Boris shrugged and headed to bed. He really hoped tomorrow would be better.

The man counted again. This was getting tricky. He would have to act fast if he wanted things to go his way. There were too many people around askin’ questions. If he made the smallest error that would be it for him, but if he played his cards right he had so much to gain. The man chuckled to himself. With all the confusion, there was a good chance he could pull it off. It would be simple. The only problem might be if someone caught on, and that little demon was just too sharp for his own good. The man hummed to himself, going over his plan again and again, making sure there weren’t any mistakes, no evidence. Perfect. If it all worked out right, and it would, that runt was going to take the fall before anyone had a chance to think twice.

Joan yawned as she finally left the chief’s office. She was exhausted. She was also done with small town police. Their minds were smaller than the neighborhoods they patrolled. They couldn’t see the clues beyond the donuts in their faces. She collapsed in the office where her partner was waiting. The raccoon stretched when she saw Joan.

“How’d it go?” she asked with a cheeky grin. Joan shot her a dirty look. Rachel Ringtail was Joan’s partner and best friend. They were as thick as thieves. Rachel offered her a drink, which Joan downed gratefully.

“This force couldn’t investigate their way out of a paper bag,” Featherworth complained. Ringtail looked at her in pity.

“I assume that means you found something interesting with the demon that was at the accident?” she asked as the two got ready to leave. She stood from her seat and came up to Joan’s shoulder, barely. Her long ringed tail swished as she turned to grab her stuff.

“Yeah, he is definitely hiding something,” the crow said. “But now that we finally convinced these idiots that it was a homicide and should be treated as such, they want to pin it on him.” Rachel raised a furry brow.

“That hardly sounds like an investigation. Do they even have a motive?” she asked.

Joan groaned. “Wilson is still a John Doe to them. Putting it on the demon is just the most convenient answer. Seems he doesn’t have a lot of people that will fight for his innocence if accused and he has a rep of being a trouble maker. It’s all politics and no facts. Grabbing air would be easier for these dunderheads,” Joan growled.

“Oh boy, that’s almost a curse.” Rachel pointed out brightly. The crow gave her a dirty look. The raccoon just laughed. “Well, we’ll just have to prove his innocence or guilt ourselves.”

“We technically don’t have jurisdiction here,” Joan reminded her.

Rachel shrugged. “If they don’t care about the rules, why should we?”

Joan scoffed. “We have a lot more to lose then these blockheads.”

“Oh really? Because we’ve already lost our only lead in the case today. Or did I imagine the owl in
the morgue?” Rachel said sarcastically. The crow didn’t respond. They climbed into their car and headed to the hotel. Rachel sighed after a long silence. “Look, I’m frustrated too. We have been chasing this guy for almost a year and now he’s dead? How many people have died around him before this? The mystery is just getting stranger. Usually things would start clearing up, not the reverse!”

“It just means we’re missing something,” Joan said pulling into the parking lot. “We’ll get to the bottom of this. One way or another.” Rachel made a sound of partial agreement partial annoyance. “We need rest. I want to find Bendy tomorrow and talk to him without the local police cutting in.”

Rachel sighed. “Ever think we’ll get back home?”

“At this rate, you’ll be an old woman,” Joan joked. Rachel whined, causing the crow to chuckle. “Come on Ringtail. I’m about to fall asleep here.” The two quickly headed to bed, though sleep eluded Joan. She felt so frustrated. She hated how cornered she felt. She didn’t want to think that young man was a murderer. It just didn’t seem right.

Bendy was going through hell. He couldn’t get the blood off him. He couldn’t run. He couldn’t call for help. The sound of tires squealing against asphalt rung in his ears, the smell of burning rubber and metallic blood burned his nose. Then suddenly everything started melting. Blobs of sticky black dripped off Bendy in waves. He tried to scream and choked as the darkness rose up his throat and spilled over his lips.

A twisted figure appeared from the endless horror. Bendy knew that whoever it was shouldn’t be able to walk with the way their body sat crudely atop their messed-up legs. The upper half was askew from the shuffling lower half, legs unable to move as they once did. Feathers fell with every shift the figure made, blood trailed behind him. Then Bendy focused on the huge fearful eyes of Wilson. Run!

Bendy awoke with a gasp.

He struggled with his tangled blankets until he was finally able to escape their grasp. He headed to the bathroom in the hall and splashed water on his face. He looked at his reflection. The image that stared back looked absolutely beat. His fur and hair were ragged, he had heavy shadows underneath his eyes and his eyes seemed dull. He looked like he aged ten years in one day. Bendy chuckled. “You look like you’ve seen a ghost.” The weary fear in the reflection’s eyes didn’t help much.

Bendy gave up on the idea of returning to bed. Every time he blinked his nightmare was still glued on the inside of his eyelids. If he went to sleep he was sure it would just pick up where it had left off. Instead, he quietly wandered into the living room. It was amazing how different everything felt. The room was the exactly same; small TV, old couch, worn rug, picture on the window sill, but the weight of the individuals that had been here completely changed it. Wilson and his mad warnings. The ghost words echoed from the walls and they seemed more real every passing hour. The police’s questions and Snoutfer’s veiled threats made the room feel heavy and tense, like the very room was waiting with its breath held, for the other shoe to drop.

Bendy continued into the kitchen and decided to start on breakfast. Bacon and omelets seemed like a good idea. He spent his time cooking and allowed himself to relax from the horrors of the other day. He simply figured he couldn’t do anything about it, so why worry? Just as he was finishing up, a yawning wolf appeared.

“What are you doing up so early?” Boris yawned again and stretched his long arms over his head.
Bendy shrugged and set the table. “I’m excited for my first day of work,” he lied easily and brought the food over.

“First day of work?” Boris asked licking his muzzle at the smell of bacon. Bendy blinked in surprise. That’s right! In all the crazy Bendy had forgotten to tell him.

“Yeah, Sasha hired me yesterday. I’m supposed to start this evening,” Bendy said, cutting into his food. Boris looked away from his plate to Bendy in surprise. His ears perked.

“Sasha did? What did she hire you for?” Boris suddenly smirked and gave him a half-lidded look. “A busboy?”

Bendy stuck out his tongue and chuckled. “Nah. Not that, you knucklehead. I’m going to be her security for the evenings.”

Boris genuinely looked surprised. His ears twitched in worry. “Are you sure that’s a good idea brother?”

Bendy shrugged again. “I was able to handle that gorilla pretty well that other night,” he pointed out around a mouth full of bacon.

“Well yeah but you,” Boris seemed a little uncomfortable, “you had to use you true Talent for that.” Boris kept his eyes glued to his plate and his ears drooped.

Bendy gazed at him sadly. “Does my Talent scare you?”

Boris jumped and looked up. “No!” he denied a little too quickly. Boris glanced away and then sheepishly back to his older brother. “Okay, maybe a little,” he admitted. Bendy turned his gaze down to his half-finished plate. “But that’s not the real reason I’m worried.” Bendy looked back up to Boris. “I don’t want people saying mean things about you. You heard that cop yesterday. If you use your Talent out in the open,” Boris faltered. He didn’t really know what words to use. “It could get bad.” He feared Bendy’s abilities. The dark could be scary and Bendy’s eyes changed when he used it. Boris had only seen it a handful of times simply because it scared him and Bendy didn’t want him afraid. He was ashamed to admit it since he knew without a doubt that Bendy would never hurt him. It was just primal instinct and Boris could get over that. He still loved his brother after all. No, it was other’s that weren’t so understanding that really scared him. What if they tried to hurt Bendy or arrest him or run him out of town just because of his Talent? Boris didn’t want that. People did crazy things when they were scared.

Bendy coughed for a moment.

“You okay?” Boris asked. “Are you gettin’ a cold?”

“Fine, just a frog in my throat, anyway,” Bendy huffed. “C’mon bro, ya know that I can handle myself. They can’t do anything about me having a weird Talent. Besides, I bet I’ll barely need it and even if I do, Sasha’ll be my boss. She’s understanding, she won’t kick me out on my tail over somethin’ like that.”

Boris thought for a second. Well, it was Sasha. She has been good to them for years. Boris finally smiled and agreed. “You’re right. I’m just a worry wart.” Bendy grinned.

“You got that right Boris.”

Boris stuck his tongue out.
“What? You’re the one that said it!” Bendy teased.

“I gotta get ready for work,” Boris huffed and stood.

“Ahh, did I make my widdle wolfy mad?” Bendy said in baby talk, a teasing glint in his eye.

“Shut up Bendy!” Boris dropped his dishes into the sink.

“You’re smiling!” Bendy sung from his chair. A lazy smile spread across his face.

“Whatever!” Boris chuckled and made a quick retreat.

Bendy sat in the kitchen for a moment and sighed. The morning might have started out rough, but breakfast with Boris was all he needed to turn it around. His little bro was the best.

When Boris passed him while he was doing dishes, Bendy stopped him. “Hey, why don’t we have lunch together today? I’ll stop by the garage to get ya.”

“Sure, sounds good. Later bro!” Boris said as he left.

“Later.” Bendy was sure he was going to have a good day today.

Chapter End Notes

There we are. Those marshmallows can't get a break can they? I hoped you liked it. Tell me what you think, it feeds my ego and motivates me. Hahaha! But seriously I love to read what you think. You also don't have to worry. I think I'll be able to post for the rest of this month. So be excited for Fridays! Okay, I think that's all I got for now my lovelies, TAP out.
A Q&A That Leads to More Qs Than As

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

The detectives have questions, Sasha gets nervous, and Bendy is still a flirt.

Chapter Notes

Oh boy! I am so excited to share this chapter with you. I am working on the ones that come after and wowie am I excited for this story. School is being tough but you don't have to really worry, I think Bendy and Boris are good until at least the middle of next month, if my schedule stays like it is supposed to. Fate, you're not allowed to throw any curveballs at me! Anyway, I'm holding you up, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was about noon when Detective Featherworth and Detective Ringtail entered the Dancing Lady. They had spent the day chasing one lead after another. They had tried the brothers first, but neither of them had been home. After that they had decided to go after the most promising witnesses and wait for evening to see the brothers. They weren’t getting very far, to Joan’s frustration. Rachel had finally called for a lunch break, since the crow would work through it and dinner if she could. Rachel knew better than to let the crow make all the calls.

The pair got a table on the second balcony overlooking the dancefloor.

“Can you read me the statements we’ve collected so far?” Featherworth asked.

“Again?” Ringtail complained. Joan gave her a sharp look that only birds were able to pull off. Ringtail sighed, knowing there was no helping it. “Fine.”

Ringtail flipped open her book. “Mrs. Deer said that she saw the victim flee from the woods into town fifteen minutes before the accident. She said he seemed panicked and exhausted. She didn’t remember if there were pursuers, since her baby started crying and she had to attend him.”

“Mr. Hooferson said he saw the victim run past his shop toward the center of town. He remembered seeing two other individuals run the same direction a while later. They were fast. The only details he gave was that they had oddly shaped heads and one of them wore a long scarf. I think he couldn’t see beyond his giant quarter inch lens glasses, but what do I know,” Ringtail snarked.

“Your opinion has already been noted Ringtail, keep going,” Featherworth stated. The raccoon rolled her eyes, but complied.

“After that, we have conflicting accounts of whether he was pushed by one of the pursuers, thrown by two or three or ran over with no one near him. These mixed accounts were from a Mr. Furwise,
Mrs. Peckerton, Miss Antlerson, and Mr. Cow. The descriptions vary. They were in black, they were big, they were tall and skinny, they were lions, they were wolves, they had long tails. One had horns like a devil, one was a fish.” Ringtail let out a disgruntled sound, finishing the list.

Joan sighed. “This isn’t getting us anywhere. We don’t have any clear description of the pursuer or pursuers. No physical evidence. It seems we’re stuck.”

“Well, you said that the little guy, Ben was it? He was hiding something. The driver, Devin reported that Mr. Wilson said some strange things like ‘They watch? Run,’ and something about an ‘ink machine.’ It didn’t make any sense to Devin, but it seemed that the Ben kid got it,” Ringtail said lightly. The waitress came up and took their orders.

“Right, that’s our best hope right now. If he knows anything about what Wilson was talking about, then we may be able to piece things together about why he was running in the first place. And his name is Bendy, Rach.” Featherworth sighed.

“Hey, don’t call me Rach. No nicknames on the job. That’s your rule, not mine Joey.”

Joan pulled a goofy face that made Rachel snicker before Rachel became serious again and continued, “It can’t be this simple. Anyone that seems to know anything about Wilson ends up dead shortly after, before we could get anything from them or even offer protection.” Ringtail grit her teeth. “You sure we shouldn’t be losing our minds over this kid?”

Featherworth nodded. “I know, that’s why I want to keep a close eye on those two.” She groaned. “It’s pathetic they slipped past us today.”

Rachel shrugged and reasoned, “Most people aren’t gone by dawn.”

“If anything happens to them, it’ll be on our heads,” Featherworth said.

“True, but there is also the possibility that Mr. Bendy is on the pursuers side. He was perfectly set there to collect any last information from the victim. Maybe he was supposed to head Wilson off, and it really was all just an accident.”

“That’s making an assumption.”

“Thinking he’s innocent is making an assumption,” Rachel shot back.

“Innocent ‘til proven guilty.” Featherworth smirked. Ringtail chuckled at her defeat.

“I’m sorry,” the waitress suddenly appeared. Ringtail flinched in surprise. It was hard to sneak up on her. How had the waitress done that? “I couldn’t help overhearing. Are you talking about Bendy and Boris?” The woman was in an old-fashioned flapper’s dress and cap. Her dark curls were cut close, and her eyes were hard as they switched between the detectives. Ringtail tilted her head in interest.

“Yes,” Featherworth answered in a carefully neutral tone. “Do you know them?”

Ringtail watched the waitress’s jaw muscles move as she clenched her teeth. “I’m guessing you’re cops. I’ve never seen you around here before. If you think Bendy had anything to do with what happened the other day, you’re crackers.”

Featherworth raised a feathered brow. “I assume that means you’re close?”

“I’ve known those boys for years. They’re good kids, they’ve just been dealt a hard hand in life,” The waitress said.
“And you are?” Rachel cut in. The woman shot her a sharp look, which made Ringtail smirk at the challenge.

“Sasha Swingskirt. I’m the owner here,” she said tersely. Ringtail blinked in surprise. She was acting as a waitress? Why? Was she short staffed? It was a small town.

“Did you witness the accident yesterday?” Featherworth asked.

“Yes, I did.” The fire came back to her eyes. “And if you think Bendy did anything, you’re wrong. He was with me before it happened.”

“Doing what?” Ringtail asked.

“I had just hired him to be security here,” she said. Security? Featherworth described the kid as a little guy. How did that work? Rachel was only getting more confused by this business woman.

“Did you see anything yesterday?” Joan asked.

“Like what?” she snapped. Her guard was up, unfortunately, Joan observed.

“We received a report that Bendy fled the scene shortly after paramedics arrived. Any idea why?” Featherworth said.

Sasha hesitated and look at the crow in surprise. She sat down at an empty sit with a sigh. “You can’t blame him. He just saw someone die in front of him.”

“Can you tell us what happened?” Featherworth asked.

She glanced between the two. “We heard it, the tires, from in here. Everyone rushed out and I was swept up with the crowd. I couldn’t get through. I wasn’t sure what was really going on. Then word through the crowd was that someone was hurt, so I sent one of my employees back to call an ambulance and the police. It was only after the paramedics got here that I got people to move. That’s when I spotted Bendy kneeling next to the owl. I got pushed back and lost sight of him again. When I finally found him, one of the paramedics was talking to him.” Sasha’s fire seemed to go out in a blink.

“He just stared forward with this look of horror. Tears staining his face. The poor guy. I tried to get him to respond. I figured he went into shock. It wasn’t until I mentioned Boris that he really spooked. He was gone before I could really react,” Sasha said.

Interesting, both cops thought.

“Boris is his younger brother?” Rachel asked. Sasha nodded.

“They used to work together at a mechanic’s shop on the edge of town,” Sasha said.

Joan glanced at Rachel thoughtfully. “Used to? Is it your job offer that changed that?” Sasha blinked.

“No.” she sighed. “Bendy, apparently, lost his job last week. I couldn’t just stand around and watch him struggle like that. Those boys have been through too much,” Sasha said.

“Mind explaining that a bit more?” Ringtail asked leaning back.

“They were homeless for quite some time, I guess. First time I remember meetin’ those rascals, they came in wanting to buy a meal with their first ever steady paychecks.” She shrugged helplessly. “I didn’t know until a couple years later that they stayed in a back alley before getting a tiny apartment.
They’re resourceful and hard workers.”

“Do you know why he lost his job then?” Featherworth leaned forward and rested her beak on her hand delicately.

Sasha furrowed her brow. “See, that’s the odd part,” She said. “Bendy told me Pete fired him over a car accident caused by faulty maintenance, but he didn’t know any details. He was coming here daily to see if he could figure anything out.”

“A car accident!” Rachel’s eyes widened. She snapped her jaws shut with a click. She didn’t want to give away anything she didn’t need to. Still, the devil had been involved in something like that before yesterday?

“Why would he come here for something like that? Why not the police?” Featherworth turned her head thoughtfully.

“He wasn’t wrong to come here. This is the most popular hang out in town and gossip, like an accident, would spread like wildfire. I’ve heard about yesterday’s a hundred times just this morning. That’s what was so weird. I haven’t heard a thing about what Bendy was talkin’ about. And that was a week ago!”

The detectives shared another look.

“As for the cops, I’m not really sure why it is, but both of ‘em don’t seem to care for the police. It could be mutual too. I haven’t seen any of the police go out of their way for those boys,” Sasha said.

“Any guess as to why?” Ringtail asked twitching her tail in interest.

Sasha shrugged helplessly. “Not really but if I had to guess.” She glanced behind her to make sure no one was nearby to overhear. “I would say it’s the small town thinkin’ people have here.”

Rachel blinked. “Oh?”

Sasha nodded. “Yeah, it’s like, a turtle winning a race is mind blowing to them. Foxes and wolves are thieves and scoundrels. Cows are supposedly dim. That sorta thing.”

“Is it bad?” Ringtail asked cautiously. She might have to watch her tail if it was. Raccoons didn’t have that great of a rep either.

Sasha shook her head. “The most that usually happens is just gossip or no one helping when they could. I remember how shocked people were when I opened up here and was the owner. I guess I don’t fit the part of a club owner for this place. No one stopped me or spoke to me nasty, they just,” she shrugged, “stood off to the side and watched. Maybe some back slander, but I couldn’t give two shakes about that.”

Featherworth hummed in thought. “Have you seen him today?”

“Yes, he came in this morning to apologize for running off yesterday and made sure he could still work this evening.” Sasha smiled.

“Is he here now?” Ringtail started looking around the first floor. Sasha’s smile disappeared in a minute.

“Why?” she narrowed her eyes and stood. Rachel looked back to her.
Joan attempted to placket her. “We still have some questions for him. I left them last night because they seemed exhausted, but we have to continue with our investigation and Bendy is our best lead right now.” She decided to leave the Officer Snoutfer out of it. He hadn’t been helping, and she wasn’t out to slander anyone.

Sasha lifted her chin. “Where are you two from anyway? Show me some badges.”

Rachel looked to Joan surprised. “Did we really forget to introduce ourselves?” Joan sighed.

Rachel giggled. “I guess we are more out of it then we had thought.”

Joan turned to Sasha. “I am terribly sorry. I am Detective Joan Featherworth and this is Detective Rachel Ringtail we are homicide investigators from Toon Town. We followed a lead here.” She reached into her pocket and pulled her badge out.

Sasha gasped. “Homicide? W-what does any of this have to do with murder?”

Ringtail shrugged and looked apologetic. “We can’t really say. The details are confidential.”

Sasha went pale. “This is all a bit more serious than I’d thought, isn’t it?” Neither detective answered her. She dropped her head into her hands. “Bendy what did you get into this time?”

“Is he here ma’am?” Featherworth asked again.

“No, he went to lunch with his brother. I expect him to come back anytime though,” Sasha said.

Featherworth nodded. “Thank you,” she said kindly. Sasha nodded and turned to go. Ringtail was just about to speak when Sasha turned on her heels.

“He’s not in trouble, is he?” she asked worried.

“I hope not,” Joan answered honestly.

“You’ll help him, right?” Sasha wrung her hands. “You aren’t gonna leave him out to dry?”

“Miss, we work to get justice. If he’s innocent in this, we won’t let anything happen to him,” Ringtail said. Sasha thought about that a second before nodding and left without another word.

As soon as she was gone Ringtail looked to her partner. “And if his guilty, we’re going to take him down. I mean, fired for tampering with a car? Then a week later our lead dies in a car accident? Is there really someone in the world that unlucky? I’m thinking practice makes more sense.”

Joan narrowed her sharp eyes. “But don’t forget, no one heard about this supposed car accident from a week ago.”

Ringtail groaned. “Guess we’ll have to go by the office and ask if there’s a report.” Featherworth held back a sner. Stars, not the station again, they made her so tired. “This guy seems to be a handful.”

“Sasha is this shmuck here tellin’ me the truth?” A loud deep voice echoed up to the two. The pair of detectives look down to the first floor. Standing before the owner was a tall elk in a nice, if not somewhat worn, suit. His horns gleamed in the lights of the bar. A short dark figure stood to his side, hands in his pockets and shoulders relaxed, but his light eyes looked weary.

“Well, speak of the devil.” Rachel smirked.
Joan snorted. “That was in bad taste Ringtail.”

“Really? I thought it was clever,” she retorted. “Should we do something about that?”

“Let’s see first,” the crow answered, “but be ready.” Her partner nodded with a gleam of excitement in her eyes.

Bendy sighed. His day had been going so well. He helped a little around the restaurant, got a tour of the employee only areas, learned the details of his job, and went to have a great lunch with his bro. He had just got back after leaving Boris at the little café they had picked this time and what did he get? A drunk deer ranting about him hanging around too much. When he explained that he worked here and what his job was (would be), the nincompoop started braying to Sasha.

Bendy pretty much tuned him out. He knew Sasha had this, so he was surprised when a hoof jabbed him in the chest. “Hey!”

“Sir, that’s enough! Leave,” Sasha ordered.

“Or what? Your little bouncer here gonna kick me out?” the antler face chuckled.

“Well pal, my boss did tell you to scram,” Bendy said still in his relaxed stance.

“Oh?” The guy put a hoof-hand on top of Bendy’s head, pushing his goggles into his skull.

“Yeah, oh, and one more thing.” Bendy’s hands wrapped around his wrist, and with a flash of red eyes the demon flipped the man over his shoulder and toward the front door. The guy bounced on the wooden floor with a thud. He groaned, swirls rolling in his eyes. That got the whole restaurant’s attention. “Don’t call me little.” Bendy walked past and grabbed the half-conscious fella by the antler and dragged him out of the restaurant and onto the street. He dropped the guy there and turned back into the Dancing Lady, dusting off his gloves. A lot of people were staring. “Anyone else have a problem?” Most turned back to their tables.

Sasha was beaming at him. “Oh, I like this. This is gonna be great! Boy Bends you sure know how ta swing ‘em.” Bendy chuckled and came up to the lady boss.

“Of course. That’s what yer payin’ me for after all.”

“Excuse me, Mr. Bendy?” a voice asked behind him. He saw fear flash over Sasha’s face. Oh boy, what now? Bendy turned around with a raised brow. He was surprised to see the crow police woman from yesterday. At her curvy side was an equally attractive if not leaner and shorter lady raccoon. Bendy let his most charming smile loose.

“Why hello Mrs. Featherworth. It’s so nice to see you again,” Bendy said.

“You know them?” Sasha sounded surprised behind him.

“It’s Detective Featherworth and my partner Detective Ringtail,” Featherworth corrected.

“It’s a true pleasure.” Bendy nodded to Ringtail. Rachel smirked, he was funny.

“We have some more questions,” Joan said.

“Sure.” Bendy shrugged. “I got nothin’ goin’ on now.”

Sasha put a hand on his shoulder. “Bendy are you sure that’s a good idea?” She sounded nervous.
Bendy gave her a questioning look then smiled. “Yeah, she’s been nothing but a sweetheart ta me.” He winked.

Sasha stared at him for a moment before nodding and pulling back.

“Can I get you ladies a drink?” Bendy asked.

Ringtail snorted a laugh “Sure hot stuff, I’d love a drink.” She leaned forward at the waist a little to give him a sly smile. Joan elbowed her, making her back off still smiling. The crow’s glare demanded professionalism. Bendy, on the other hand, seemed completely stunned that he was being filtered so bluntly by someone other than Sasha.

“Some other time,” Featherworth said.

“We learned that you lost your job as a mechanic recently. Do you mind explaining why?” Featherworth directed the conversation. Bendy seemed to snap out of his daze and focused.

Bendy’s eyebrows raised in surprise. “Yeah, Pete, my old boss, he told me I caused a car accident on something I had worked on the other day. Showed me the report and everything. Said cops were lookin’ into it. I didn’t get the owners name or what exactly failed in the car. I know I didn’t screw anything up.” Bendy shrugged, putting his hands in his pockets. “I’ve tried to find out but, uh, I got nothin’.” he glanced away from them.

“Interesting.” Featherworth glanced at Ringtail who looked equally confused.

“Why didn’t you simply go to the police?” Ringtail asked.

Bendy’s face hardened. “Those dunderheads won’t give me the time of day, let alone information. If I went to ‘em, I’d probably find myself in the slammer. Do you two know anythin’ about it?”

“Nope.” Ringtail shrugged and smirked. “Your friend told us that’s pretty weird here.”

Bendy nodded. “It is.”

“There’s one other thing I don’t understand,” Featherworth said. “Why would a mechanic shop have an accident report unless they had the car too?” Everyone except Ringtail looked at the crow in surprise.

Bendy blinked then his face turned fierce. “That low cod and lying snake. He pulled a fast one on me!” He pulled out a hand to smack himself on the forehead. “I should have noticed! I would have noticed if it wasn’t for—.” Wilson, if he hadn’t been shaken up by that guy the night before, he would have known that Pete had no reason to have an accident report.

“Wasn’t for?” Ringtail drawled.

“Nothin’.” Bendy scowled and looked away.

“But why trick you?” Featherworth asked.

“If it’s him it’s either power or money,” Bendy growled. “Or maybe I finally just ticked him off enough. No wonder he seemed so smug.”

“What do yo—.” Ringtail was suddenly cut off by the loud shriek of sirens whizzing by. Everyone glanced at the door. “Wow, that was loud.”

Fear lit Bendy’s eyes. “Was that a cop car?”
“I think it was a firefighting truck,” Sasha answered. She noticed his tension. “Bendy are you okay?”

“Fine,” he muttered. He had a bad feeling. Bendy from a week ago wouldn’t have noticed. He would have carried on like any other day. But now…he seemed pale to the three women. “Just gotta check.” He went to the doors and stepped out. His eyes went the direction the noise had headed. There was a wisp of smoke trailing up. Bendy stopped a lady carrying a bundle of flowers. “Excuse me, do you know anything about that?” He pointed to the wisp of smoke.

She glanced at the smoke and shrugged lightly. “Not really. Guess a farmer got carried away? It’s on the outskirts of town I think, so we don’t gotta worry,” she said.

“The outskirts?” Bendy’s bad feeling solidified into icy dread in his stomach. A thought tickled the back of his mind. He mentally skated away from it.

“Want to check it out?”

Bendy’s head snapped around to see the detectives and Sasha standing behind him.

“Featherworth and I are going to head over there in our car. Do you want to come?” Ringtail asked.

“Yeah,” Bendy said slowly. “Thanks.” His eyes went back to the line of smoke.

The wind whipped by him as he leaned out the window to see the smoke, his dread slowly turning to horror. Ice entered his veins, his stomach twisted and his heart sunk somewhere near his feet.

No, no, no, no. Please no. Please, please, no. Anything but this. Please! Anything but this! Just don’t let it be what I think it is! Bendy mentally begged.

When the garage came into view, Bendy could no longer deny it. Flames jumped ten feet above the roof. The windows were melting and burst from the heat. A roar of destruction overtook the shouting of people and firefighters, water uselessly dancing into the windows and open garage doors. The sharp smell of burning rubber, oil and metal filled the area. Panic took Bendy over. He was out of the car window before the vehicle stopped. “Hey! That was dangerous!” the shout followed him into the crowd of onlookers.

He shoved his way to the front, ignoring the shouts of protest. It felt like an eternity before he broke through. A line of firefighters and cops were keeping the slowly growing crowd back.

“How could this have happened! It was so fast! I was almost crisped!” Pete said. “And look at my shop!” He waved an arm at the building. It groaned like a dying beast. Bendy slipped past the line and was in front of Pete in an instant. Pete licked his fingers and pinched the small flame out on his ear. Bendy grabbed the larger man by his smoke-stained shirt and yanked him down to look Bendy in the eye.

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“Boris! Where’s Boris? Did he get out!” Bendy demanded. His eyes intensely bore into his former boss.

“Wha-uh-hey! Let go of me!” Pete tried to push him away.
“Did Boris get out!” Bendy shook him.

“There was someone else?” Bendy turned to see another smoke-stained firefighter. “We didn’t see anyone. We can’t go back in. It’s too hot and the building is going to come down.”

Bendy didn’t waste words. He dived toward the building. The firefighter must have guessed what he intentions were, because he was suddenly pinned to the dirt by a heavy body. He was scraped up on the rocks, but he didn’t feel them. “Get off me! I have to get him! I can get him!” Bendy bucked and twisted violently. He shrieked.

“Calm down! All you’re going to do is get yourself killed,” the man said. Bendy’s eyes flashed red.

Bendy’s desperate gaze shot back to the burning, roaring flames. “BORIS!”

Chapter End Notes

Yeah...don't be mad?
Okay I know, cliffy, I'm the worst, blah, blah, blah. Burn in a fiery pit, yadda, yadda, how dare you, Boris better be okay! I get it. Patience. You'll get it next week.
These poor kids, I am starting to feel like a villain here.
It's kinda fun.
Mwhahahaha! Yes! Give me your salty tears!! HAHAHAHAHA! *cough*
Oops, I think I lost it there for a moment. I prolly need to go take a nap. Tell me what you think. Any guesses on who done it?
Until next week, TAP out!
Detective Featherworth learns more than she was ready for. Bendy learns a few things too.

Chapter Notes

Oh man, I expected you to roast me. I threw ya into the fire and left you there for a week! I was waiting for all the 'how dare you!'s and the 'why are you doing this!'s. Instead you gave me praise and excitement. Oh lovelies, you make me so happy! My ego was so bloated that I'm writing the roughest of rough drafts for chapter ten. Ten! I have never been so proactive in my writing! I was so tempted to post early. If school wasn't so hard and I wasn't such a stickler for good grammar I would have, but I have been thrown out of a good story because of bad grammar before, and I don't want that for your experience. If you do ever catch something, tell me, I'll fix it. Also, I did another doodle.


I also have no idea how to tumblr, so if it's a mess...yeah. Heh. Anyway, go ahead and enjoy. No need to 'hang around' and read this...I'm sorry. I'll stop punning now.
I'll see ya at the end.
off the little demon. Bendy sprung to his feet and threw himself at his brother without a thought for anything else. Boris yipped in surprise and fell to his knees, dragged into Bendy’s shaking arms. “You're okay, you're okay. Oh thank god you're okay! I thought you were in there and I didn’t know what to do! You're okay!” Bendy blubbered incoherently.

“Sir!” someone barked behind them, sounding alarmed.

“It’s okay,” Boris said to them. “He was just scared.” Boris turned his attention to his brother. “Bendy what happened? How did this happen?”

“I don’t know bro. I’m just so cussing glad you’re here!” Bendy’s death grip twitched at the thought. Boris returned the hug until Bendy pulled back suddenly. “Where were you!” he demanded, his fists balled up in Boris’s shirt.

Boris’s folded ears twitched. “I was getting you a surprise gift for getting the new job. I thought you deserved it, so I dropped it off at home before heading back here. Then I saw the smoke and started running.” He hesitated and a hurt look passed over his face. “That’s when I saw you. Bendy what were you going to do?”

Bendy felt shame drape over him like a curtain. He had lost it back there. If Boris hadn’t called out to him, he would have done something he would have regretted, but at the time it hadn’t mattered. “I was going to try and save you. I thought you-.” Bendy shook his head. He couldn’t say it.

“Really? ‘Cause it looked like you were gonna tear that firefighter apart. I’ve never seen you like that before Bendy. Are you okay?” Boris moved a hand to his shoulder with concern. Bendy looked at Boris’s wide honest eyes. How could he be okay? He thought he had lost his little brother! The only family he had in the world. There was no way he would be okay! Movement behind Boris caught Bendy’s attention. He realized the crowd had its attention turned to the two of them. They had backed away. They looked at him in fear and hesitation like he was dangerous wild animal. They acted like he would attack if any of them made a wrong move.

Oh.

What the hell had he looked like to cause this much fear? His eyes shifted back to Boris. He didn’t look scared, just worried. Sweet, kind Boris. How did Bendy get so lucky? At that moment, Bendy wanted to cry. He didn’t deserve such an understanding brother. Not when he was acting like a—,

“Hey, what in the world?” Bendy looked up to see Featherworth and Ringtail finally get to them. “Where’s the fire?” Ringtail asked.

Featherworth thumped her lightly on the head. “Bad taste,” she said.

Ringtail rubbed the spot on her head and looked sheepish. “Yeah, that one was bad. Sorry,” she apologized.

“Officers.” A sheep turned to them. “Shouldn’t you do something? Th-that was dangerous, wasn’t it? He was going to attack!” A hard glint entered the other police officer’s eyes, replacing the hesitant fear.

Featherworth stepped forward. “Do we have any probable cause to take him in?” she challenged. He faltered, surprised. “Ah well.”

“He didn’t hurt anyone. You have no grounds to take him in,” she stated coldly. The other cops backed down with nods and reluctance. The crowd started to mutter. Ringtail shot the spectators a
confused and slightly insulted look.

“Come on you two, let’s find somewhere you can sit down and relax after a near death experience,” Ringtail stated loudly so the crowd could hear her. She ushered them to the ambulance where Pete was wrapped in a blanket, scowling at the now dying fire. A couple of flames jumped around windows trying to get the blaze going again, but the firefighters were beating them back until they gave out their last hisses of protest under the spray. The building still groaned ominously with the promise to collapse any second.

“You two. You didn’t have anything to do with this, did you?” Pete narrowed his eyes at the brothers. His burned fur gave off a charred smell that almost had Boris’s eyes watering. Boris pulled a face and covered his sensitive nose.

“Why would we do something so stupid?” Bendy rolled his eyes.

“Yeah? Why would I want to burn down my job?” Boris asked. “I love being a mechanic.”

“A likely story, or maybe you wanted to get revenge for me firing your brother!” Pete claimed loudly. The detectives shared a look.

“Hey, by the way Pete-y-boy. Why did you have an accident report when you fired me? That car wasn’t in our shop to be fixed,” Bendy asked with a sharp glare.

Pete huffed. “I don’t need ta tell ya nothin’.”

“Uh, how odd,” Bendy said. “I’m sure the police would be interested to hear about it.” Pete gave him a deathly glower, then glanced at Joan and Rachel who watched on bemused.

He turned back to Bendy. “You think yer smart, eh? We’ll see. Don’t forget who taught you all you know about mechanics,” Pete said. Bendy snorted.

“You barely could change a battery! We had to go find real mechanics and come back to show you!” Bendy sneered. Ringtail barely held back a barking laugh of surprise.

Pete laughed and denied. “The things you say boy!” Bendy growled and clenched his fist.

“Bendy.” Boris gave Bendy a look. He backed down with the warning.

It was then that Snoutfer approached with a canister in hand. He came up to Pete. “We found what started the fire.” He lifted the canister. “This was no accident.”

“Really?” Ringtail looked alarmed.

Pete shot up. “WHAT DID I SAY!” he bellowed. “I knew it! I knew it!” He suddenly turned on Bendy and gabbled a finger into his chest. “You tried to kill me!”

“What!” Bendy jumped at the jab. “Are you nuts?”

“Bendy didn’t do anything!” Boris stood between the two.

“Uh-huh. You were probably in on it too! You’re both guilty. Confess!” Pete demanded.

“We didn’t do anything, you cad!” Bendy stood on the ambulance’s back door entrance to be almost Pete’s height. He glared daggers at the sneaksby over Boris’s shoulder.

“That’s enough.” Featherworth cut in from beside Ringtail. Her stern look silenced everyone for a
“What’s all this?” a second pig in uniform approached.

“Chief Hogsmen, seems we have a case of arson here,” Officer Snoutfer stated.

“And I know da the ones that did it too,” Pete stated turning his back to the brothers to look at the chief. He threw a causal thumb over his shoulder to indicate them. The pig looked to the brothers and narrowed his beady eyes.

“Oh, and what makes ya say that?” the chief asked before either brother could deny it.

“They’re da only ones that have a reason ta hold a grudge against me. I fired the pipsqueak last week. He nearly decked me back then,” Pete said. “Everyone else loves me. Dese two though, they’re violent.”

Bendy bristled. “That’s a cussing load of hogwash you low down—,”

“Watch it boy!” the chief glared at Bendy.

“There’s no evidence of that,” Ringtail pointed out in a flat tone. She and Joan stood off to the side making sure to keep an eye on everyone.

“I demand they be arrested for destroying my business and attempting to send me up in smoke!” Pete said.

“We aren’t arresting them sir,” Ringtail said evenly.

“Now one moment detective, they’re still suspects we can’t just let them go,” Snoutfer said. Ringtail seemed surprised she was talked back to.

“But you can’t arrest them on these grounds,” she argued.

“I don’t need a city-slicker raccoon telling me what to do,” Snoutfer huffed. Ringtail looked taken aback. “These two are going down.” She narrowed her eyes and fought the urge to flash her fangs in disgust.

“Yeah hamhead? I’d like to see ya try,” Bendy snarled. “I’ll turn you into bacon stripes before I let ya take us.” Ringtail and secretly Featherworth agreed with him, but maybe in a less violent context. Just slightly though.

“Oh! Look at him now! That little twerp is askin fer it!” Pete gloated.

Bendy snarled and jumped over Boris. He connected with Pete’s chest shoving the larger one down. Pete landed heavily on his back, Bendy standing atop him, “Who’s laughing now?”

“Boy, put your hands up! You’re under arrest.” Snoutfer put his hand on the pistol at his hip.

“Why you!” Pete growled and reached up to grab him. Bendy jumped back and hopped back on the back entrance of the ambulance.

“Bendy! Stop, he’s not worth it.” Boris said putting himself in between them again.

“They’re not going to help us bro, they’re gonna toss us in a cage and throw away the keys,” Bendy said. Boris hunched his shoulders, but eyed the police warily.
“I said put your hands up!” Snoutfer ordered. Rachel took a step forward to intervene. She’d seen enough.

Bendy’s eyes glowed red. “We didn’t do anyth—.” He suddenly doubled over in a coughing fit. Everyone froze to focus on the demon.

“Bendy?” Boris turned around to see Bendy wrap his arms around his chest and drop to his knees. “Bendy!” Boris’s shout sounded far away to Bendy. That didn’t make sense, Boris was right in front of him. Bendy felt his chest take aflame. It was horrible. He couldn’t breathe, it hurt too much. Was an elephant standing on him? What was this!

“What’s wrong?” Featherworth and Ringtail pushed forward past the officer and Pete to the brothers.

“I-I-I don’t.” Boris looked panicked between the detectives and his brother. “He’s never, this has never happened before!”

“Boris,” Bendy choked. Boris came closer. Bendy was forced to take a breath, but the pain was ebbing away. “Boris, I-I think I’m okay now.” Even as he spoke the fire from within was receding. He gingerly straightened up. Yeah, it was gone. He dropped his arms. That had only been a few seconds, but ow.

“Bendy what was that? Are you okay?” Boris looked scared and confused.

“I don’t know bro. It’s over now. I’m fine,” Bendy shrugged looking down at himself.

“It might be best to take you to the hospital. Do you have any conditions you know about or injuries?” Featherworth asked.

“I’m fine. I haven’t even had a cold in forever,” Bendy pushed back. “I don’t know of anythin’ like that. I don’t need to go.” Not to mention how ridiculously expense that would be.

As Bendy spoke something dawned on Boris. He sputtered, “Bendy! Do you think that it’s ink il—,”

“BORIS!” Bendy snapped at him. Boris flinched and whimpered. Ringtail narrowed her eyes.

“B-but.” Boris had a look of alarm, panic clouding his thoughts. “Mr. Wilson! He said—.”

“BORIS SHUT UP!” Bendy grabbed Boris’s collar in a fist. He yipped, but shut his muzzle. It was too late though. Both detectives caught it. Here a heavy silence filled the space between the group. If one dropped a pin, all would have been able to hear it. Pete had no idea what was going on and watched on in confusion. The hogs shared a suspicious look. The detectives stared at the boys. Boris realized what he had done in his panic and whimpered. Bendy prepared to run.

“I think it would be best if the three of you came to the station for questions,” Featherworth said evenly.

“Ha!” Pete barked. His grin dropped just as suddenly. “Wait, three?”

Featherworth nodded. “For questioning. No one is being arrested, but we need to get to the bottom of this.”

“Why me? I don’t need ta be questioned! I’m the victim here!” Pete raged. Ringtail curled her lip in an impressively fanged sneer.

“Look fat man, you have been pretty adamant that these boys started the fire, but I’m suspicious at
why you’re so loud about it. I think you could be hiding something,” she hissed at him, her fluffy tail flicking back and forth.

“What! That’s crazy!” Pete denied.

“Prove me wrong at the station!” she snapped. Before Pete could protest he found himself being whisked away.

Featherworth came closer to the siblings.

“Thanks Ms. Featherworth,” Boris said.

“Don’t thank me yet. You two are still suspects after all.” She narrowed her eyes. “And you obviously know more on Wilson then you led on.” She already knew that, but for them to try so hard to cover it up was alarming. Bendy shot her an untrusting looking.

Boris’s ears fell, but he remained smiling. “Still, you’re givin’ us a chance. That’s more than we could’ve hoped for.”

Featherworth’s feathery brows knit together. “What exactly is it between you two and the—,”

“Detective Featherworth.” She turned around to see Chief Hogsmen’s biddy eyes glaring at her. “A word.” She reluctantly followed him away. She made certain that the boys were still in her sights.

“We appreciate your help with the homicide detective, but you have no reason to interfere with this crime scene or the suspects.”

“With all due respect sir, one of your suspects is my only solid witness in my case. I can’t simply let you do as you please with them,” she answered.

“You can always visit them in jail detective,” he said. Then his snout turned into a smirk. “I can guarantee they won’t be going anywhere.”

“And if they’re innocent?”

He snorted. “They’re not.” She narrowed her sharp eyes. He pulled his belt over his rotund belly. “Look detective, I’ve known those two for years. They are trouble, and they are good enough to get away with it. They finally went for something big here and they messed up. I’m sure of it. It’s the slip up we’ve been waiting for. Don’t stick your neck out for them. It’s only going to look bad on you. Don’t do anything that would put your position in jeopardy detective. I won’t want you to lose it. It’s not so black and white out here, after all.”

Featherworth felt her feathers ruffle at the veiled threat to her job. What was the meaning of this?

The pig was making his way over to the two. Featherworth turned on her heels and intercepted. “I’ll take them down to the station,” she said quickly. He opened his mouth to protest, but Featherworth had already ushered them away. He snorted in frustration.

“You need to tell me what the problem between you and the cops is before we get to the station,” Featherworth said tersely, nearly snapping.

Bendy narrowed his light eyes. “Why? What did he say?” The detective helped the boys through the slowly dispersing crowd.

Featherworth looked at him seriously. “He just threatened my job. He can’t do anything, but just
saying such a thing.” She shook her head in disgust. They made it to her vehicle and she opened the car door. “Get in.”

Boris was so confused. Sure, he and Bendy didn’t like the police, but the chief threatened the detective over them? Had what they’d done when they were kids really been such a big deal?

“Start talking,” she ordered as she started the car. Her tone left no room for argument. Boris and Bendy shared a look. “No secrets this time either. Give me the whole truth. You can trust me with that.” They shared another look before Bendy sighed and shrugged in defeat.

Boris explained. “Back when we lived on the streets. Times were tough, it was all about getting to the next day. We, uh, we got desperate a couple of times, and we aren’t proud of the things we had to do.” Boris’s ears fell. Was stealing food really such a crime if it meant seeing tomorrow?

“We had to survive bro,” Bendy pointed out with a huff. “Look we aren’t saying this lightly. The cops never could pin anything on me and that frustrated them. When I caught one of their officers doing some shady business I harassed him fer it.” Bendy smirked. “It was some of the best fun I had on the streets.”

“Beeeeeendyyyy,” Boris whined looking at his brother completely deadpanned. It had been stupid to have to run from the weasel cop half the time. He hated the target the cop had painted on their backs. Sure, they were fast and nimble, but Boris had been scared out of his mind a couple of times. That guy had gotten too close once or twice.

Bendy shot a smirk back at Boris and raised an eyebrow in challenge. Bendy had always pulled him out of any tight spots. He had always seemed in control of the chaos, never fearful or stressed. His brother used to have fun running from the cop as he threatened to tell everyone he was accepting bribes and trading police stuff with others. Boris knew Bendy had saved him every single time. He couldn’t argue that. Boris only huffed in return to Bendy’s challenge refusing to rise to the bait and argue.

“Well remember how I said he was in some shady business? I think the pigs were a part of it too, or at least Hogsmen. I know they accepted bribes at least, so I think there’s a grudge there, plus we did make the police look bad in front of the entire town.” Bendy shrugged.

“Is it everyone?”

“Nah, I don’t think anyone else really did anything, they’re just embarrassed a couple of kids took down their dirty cop. I think they’re clean, but Hogsmen has been gunning for me since then. It’s
lucky that we got the mechanic jobs shortly after that. One wrong step and I would be behind bars. Every fight or even a ticket and he’ll always push for a greater punishment,” Bendy said casually.

“We’ve been lucky,” Boris said.

“And smart,” Bendy threw in.

“The fight last week at the Dancing Lady?” Boris asked skeptically.

“Hey, it turned out fine, didn’t it?” Bendy shrugged in an easy-going manner.

“You were lucky there were no cops there that night,” Boris stated. Bendy scratched the back of his head and smiled sheepishly.

Featherworth decided it was time for a topic change. “What did Wilson say to you two?” Both startled at the sudden question. They had almost forgotten. Bendy felt like he had whiplash with the jump in thinking.

He let out a big, deep sigh. “It was crazy talk. Freaky wacko babbling conspiracies. Honestly, I would have tossed him out the moment he started if it wasn’t for two reasons. One, I know what’s it like to sleep outside. And two,” Bendy threw a thumb at Boris, “Boris would have pouted at me for weeks.”

“Nah-uh! I don’t pout!” Boris blushed in embarrassment.

“Oh no, that’s exactly what would have happened,” Bendy said with a smirk. Featherworth felt her patience begin to fray. They were almost to the station.

“Yes, but what did he say?” she tried again.

Bendy gave her a deadpan look. “Have you ever heard of ink illness or the ink machine?”

“Bendy?” Boris sounded nervous.

Featherworth blinked. “Ink machine? Wasn’t that some of Wilson’s last words?”

Bendy startled. “How do you know about that!”

Featherworth frowned. “The driver heard him too.”

Bendy again turned sheepish. “Oh. Hehe.” He clearly his throat uncomfortably and shared a panicked look with the wolf.

“Allright, I’ll tell ya everything he said, but don’t judge me for his crazy,” Bendy said. “So, what the bird said was that his team or whoever, were digging and found, what was it Boris?” Bendy turned to his brother. The wolf shrugged. “Well, they found some old stuff and this group of creeps told them to stop. They didn’t and apparently, they were bumped off, I guess. Wilson learned something and then flew the coop.”

“Bendy,” Boris moaned at the pun. Bendy only smirked at his brother again, before continuing.

“What he learned about was this thing called ink illness. It’s some sorta plague that’s supposed to kill a bunch of people. He said these shady wet blankets want the plague to happen and they’ve been after him ever since. He told us he thought this ink machine might make some sorta cure or something.”
“An illness? How does someone get ink illness? Why hasn’t the news heard of this?” Featherworth was reminded of the victim before Wilson, a journalist. He had been trying to get the word out. This was fishy.

“He didn’t know. Doesn’t sound like it’s hit a lot of people, so docs and news don’t know it’s a big deal.” Bendy shrugged. Boris shot him a look that Featherworth noticed. What was that look? Frustration? Fear and concern? There was something there. What would trigger that response? He said they didn’t know how it spreads, and not a lot of people have had it. The wolf reacted. Does he fear of it spreading? If it’s like that then...

Featherworth glanced at Bendy, seeing him in a new light. That panic earlier at the garage. The young wolf had feared it was ink illness. He does fear it’s ink illness. Was Bendy a carrier? Is that why Wilson would entrust them with this information? A warning for the sickness that would hit them? What did that mean for everyone that came into contact with them?

“That makes sense,” Featherworth muttered after a time. She couldn’t worry about that now. She couldn’t do anything about it, so she filed away the information for later. She put a lid on her fears and focused on what she could do.

“Excuse me?” Bendy asked. Featherworth debated with herself for a moment. On one hand, it was confidential information on an ongoing case, on the other hand these boys had been through hell since yesterday, most likely because of her case. The pattern would match that of what had been happening around Wilson at least. To hell with protocol, they nearly were burned to death today, she could take the heat from her boss if she had to.

“We’ve been following him for months, almost a year. We wanted to bring him in for the murder of his team. He was a suspect. We thought he might be a serial killer, because everywhere he went people died. The latest victim had been a journalist. I had my reservations, but with no evidence to support my suspicions I couldn’t do much until we caught up to him. The fires in Crestville have been the most questionable of attacks. Why would one person try to burn down a city block to cover his tracks? Now though, things clear up. He was running from the killers, not us. He was trying to help or warn people, not throw us off his trail.”

“Wait! You believe him?” Boris asked surprised.

“Of course. He was a professor, a researcher, an archeologist, a scientist, and he played in biology and anatomy. He was a very intelligent individual. Wilson Wiseton wasn’t a killer. He helped people. It never really lined up that he would suddenly attack his research team and go on a cross-country killing spree.” She sighed. “But with so many deaths around him we couldn’t really argue it with no evidence.”

“Y-you gotta be kiddin’ me, right?” Bendy practically demanded. He had been waiting for the crow to call him paranoid and nuts. He was waiting for her to deny everything. She wasn’t supposed to accepted everything at face value! Bendy felt his world turning upside down, he was feeling sick trepidation twist his stomach.

“No,” she answered. “This is the clearest Wilson’s case has ever been. Why didn’t he just come to us?”

“We don’t know,” Boris answered. “He said we couldn’t trust people.” Featherworth hid her shock and alarm. Was there someone or some group in Toon Town that would act in such a way against the professor? In the political circles or even the police department, was there someone that would try to silence him?
“He said they’re watching,” Bendy whispered. “When he was dying. He said they’re watching. That I should run.”

Featherworth parked the vehicle in the parking lot and gazed at him for a long moment. “This is a lot bigger than I had first thought,” she admitted. She felt like she was back at square one. Hell, she felt like a rookie right out of the training academy again.

Both boys squirmed at the comment. Neither comfortable with the idea of how big this could be.

“We’ll get them,” she promised. She wasn’t sure if she was promising them or herself. Truth was she felt a little guilty for misleading them, but she had to make sure that she covered all her bases and she couldn’t lose their trust. She still wasn’t sure she believed Bendy or his limited involvement. Why would Wilson trust this information to him? He could have just explained the illness and left it at that. What could this young man do? How had he gained such trust from such a cautious individual? It didn’t add up.

“Good luck with that.” Bendy decided it was time to lighten things up and smirked. “And if you ever need a night off, I sure I can—,”

“Bendy stop!” Boris cut in. “Don’t flirt with the cop!” Featherworth chuckled. She appreciated his attempt to comfort or at least soften the burdens of reality. If any of this was true and there was a part of her that really hoped it wasn’t, then lighter moments like this could become scarce for the crow detective.

“Aw, c’mon Boris.” Bendy smiled teasingly at his brother.

“Nooo!” Boris howled. Featherworth couldn’t help the small smirk, they really were charming. Then her partner crashed through the station doors looking panicked and furious. Her fur bristled making her look twice her size and fangs bared.

“They TOOK it!” she shrieked.

“What? Rachel who took what?” Featherworth got out of the car and approached the agitated raccoon.

“Someone broke into the morgue and the evidence room! They took Wilson’s journal! Right from under the noses of Stage and Ramson!” she snarled.

“How?” the crow demanded.

“No one knows yet!” The detective rushed back into the building. Featherworth firing question after question after question and right on her tail.

Bendy and Boris shared a look.

“Well, this looks like it’s gonna be fun,” Bendy said.

“Bendy, are we going to be okay?” Boris asked.

“Of course! We’re just going to be asked a cuss ton of questions then go home,” Bendy said.

Boris’s ears fell. “What about what happened to you earlier?”

“I’m okay now,” Bendy stated. Boris didn’t look assured, he stared at the ground dejectedly. Bendy frowned when an idea hit him.
“C’mon bro. Where’s my happy wittle wolfy?” Bendy asked. Boris’s lips twitched, he didn’t look up.

He mumbled something like, “Don’t say that in public.”

“What was that? I didn’t hear you, was that an answer from my wolfy?” Bendy put a hand up to the side of his head smiling.

“Here I am.” Boris smiled endearingly at his brother.

Bendy grinned. “There you are!”

“You two! Get in here!”

They snapped their heads up to see Snoutfer glaring at them.

“Let’s get this over with, so we can go home and watch some Mickey Mouse,” Bendy suggested. Boris smiled and nodded.

Even though neither of them were excited about what was surely going to take the next few hours of their lives, both knew that they had each other. That was enough for them.

Chapter End Notes

There we go! A little feel-good between the brothers. I made it a hint longer than normal to make up for it being after a cliffy. Boy are things escalating! Gotta love those guys for sticking together. Hope you liked it. Tell me what cha think and I'll get to work on the next one. I was surprised by Featherworth, she kinda put a few things in prospective for me. Anyway, stay awesome and I'll see ya next week.

TAP out!
Bendy has had enough.

Bendy was right. This sucked.

The pigs had questioned him in circles, but Bendy stayed a step ahead of them at each spin they gave him. He answered questions with questions, refused to get frustrated at their bait or threats. He simply lounged back and smirked. There were a few he refused to answer. They tried to tell him that they had enough evidence to arrest him or Boris, and he poked holes in their claims and statements. It was actually kinda fun making the pigs more and more frustrated as the hours wore on. Eventually he just put on an easy-going smile, like a mask, and switched to automatic sarcasm and jokes.

“Could ya send in the detectives? They are way nicer to look at and I’m sure they won’t ask me the same question three dozen times,” Bendy complained lightly. He hadn’t seen either detective since he entered the building. He guessed with the break in and loss of evidence they were busy ripping the officers in charge of securing that kinda stuff apart.

Snoutfer continued his glaring. “No! If you would just cooperate, then we would be done here.”

“You mean confess and I’ll say it again. I. Didn’t. Do. Anything.” Bendy threw an arm over the back of his chair and leaned it back on two legs. Snoutfer huffed.

“Were you that splotchy when the Big Bad blew your sticks away?” Bendy asked.

“THAT’S ENOUGH! WE BOTH KNOW YOU’RE DIRTY!” the pig squealed.

“Well of course I’m dirty,” Bendy sighed. He watched the wind in Snoutfer’s sails drop like a brick in surprise.

“W-what?” he stammered.

“I was shoved into the ground today! Honestly, I need to get home and shower before these cuts get
infected,” Bendy stated looking at his other arm and the small scrapes running up it. Snoutfer turned so splotchy that for a second Bendy actually feared something would pop.

“YOU DAMN DEVIL!” The door suddenly opened, stopping Snoutfer from flipping the table or lunging at Bendy. He wasn’t really sure which the hog would have gone for. Hogsmen stood in the door way.

“Oh boy! Are we switching again?” Bendy cheered with mock glee.

“You’re free to go,” he said and stepped aside. Bendy didn’t waste a second. He stuck his hands in his pockets and strolled by with his easy smile still on. He paused as he passed the chief.

“Thanks buddy, ol’ pal. Don’t go twisting your hay in a bail. I’m sure you’ll catch the schmucks that did this,” Bendy said.

Hogsmen turned and glared daggers with his beady black eyes. “I swear boy. I’ll bring the ones who did this down.” Bendy knew it was a threat against him. It was stupidly obvious, but still.

He turned fully, and suddenly his cheery mood dropped with his smile to show how he really felt. His eyes narrowed, and darkness withered in excitement around him. “I really hope you do, sir. Whoever they are almost got my brother, and I don’t take that lightly.” Before either swine could react to their instinctual terror Bendy spun on his heels and was gone.

Bendy found Boris tightly curled up on an uncomfortable waiting chair. He was too tall to lay on it completely, so his legs half dangled off the edge. Bendy chuckled at the puppy-like smile on his sleeping face. He was such a kid.

“Oh!” Bendy turned to see the raccoon dame standing in the hall entrance. She had a blanket and a cup of water in hand. Bendy smiled. “You’re finally free, uh? I guess that’s where Featherworth disappeared to. She must have really chewed the chief out.” She put the blanket and cup down on a table next to the boys. “Guess I was too late. Oh well, at least you both get to go home now.” she shrugged.

“It’s still appreciated,” Bendy said.

“Sorry we left you to the wolves.” She glanced at Boris then huffed at herself. “I mean pigs.”

“I get what ya mean,” he said. “Don’t cha worry about it.”

“The break-in just...,” she made a helpless gesture. Bendy waved it off. He turned to shake Boris awake.

“We did get around to questioning that Pete guy. Boy, he sure is a piece of work. I can’t imagine calling him my boss,” Rachel said.

“Young, he’s a hand full.” Bendy shrugged. “But whatever got food on the table was fine by me.”

“Do you want a ride home? It’s getting pretty late,” she offered. Bendy paused. Normally he’d love a ride. Right now, he wanted to walk. The cool night air would clear his mind and the stars and moon would help relax him. He would have time to really think about what happened. But, and he hated there was a but, he had seen someone die yesterday. He could’ve lost his brother today. Now he couldn’t deny that there was at least one person out there that had attacked the garage. He didn’t know if they were targeting Boris, or him, or Pete, but they were still out there. No, it was too dangerous to walk at night anymore.
“Sure,” he answered. “That’s real kind of you detective.” He gently nudged Boris who groaned and opened his eyes.

“Oh, Bendy, good mornin’ is it time fer work? I thin’ I broke m’ bed, m’ neck hurts,” Boris mumbled still half asleep.

Bendy chuckled. “Nah bro, I think yer bed’s fine.” Boris looked confused at Bendy, then down at the chair. He glanced at the room before he stopped at the raccoon.

“Oh.” He sat up and stretched. Ringtail couldn’t help smiling at how cute they were.

“We’re gettin’ a ride home Boris,” Bendy said. Boris’s tail gave a small wag.

It was just as Bendy had thought, the night was cool and fresh. The thin sliver of moon grinned down at him. The stars glittered their greetings. The leaves danced in the soft breeze that carried pleasant woodland smells. It did his nerves good. Ringtail led them to the car.

“So was anything else missin’,” Boris asked Ringtail as she drove. The wolf covered a yawn with his gloved hand. She glanced at them before focusing on the road again.

“Just the book. Nothing else was taken that we are aware of,” she said.

“What was the journal?” Boris asked.

“We’re not sure. It was written in strange symbols. He was a brainy bird that studied old and dead languages. We were going to take it back to Toon Town with us to get it translated once we were done here. Best guess, it was probably just old research notes. Those studying types are protective of their research.” She shrugged. “But with it gone, who really knows?”

Bendy furrowed his brows. That seemed familiar to him for some reason. She pulled up to their apartment and dropped them off. “You boys have a good night. Featherworth and I will probably be by tomorrow to check on you.”

“Okay. G’d night!” Boris called as she drove off. Bendy let out a huge yawn. Boris turned to his brother and said, “Let’s get to bed.” Bendy nodded. He was so tired. He used his Talent roughly two times today, well almost two times, the second was stopped…multiple times. Anyway, it was way more than he was used to, and it was exhausting.

He and Boris shuffled toward their home. “Bendy.” Boris seemed nervous. “Are we gonna talk about what happened to you today? I’m worried.”

Bendy inwardly grimaced. Of course, he would be. Bendy was too, but he just kept shoving it away. “Tomorrow bro.” Just one more shove. A little more time to not really think about it. One more evening of him pretending it was okay, that he was healthy.

They came to the door and he dug for his keys. “Promise?” Boris asked.

“Promise, it’s not like we have any work,” he said. Reaching for the door knob.

Boris gasped, his hands flying to the sides of his head, “Oh no! Your new job! I completely forgot! I’m so sorry Bendy! Do you think Sasha will be mad? She has to give you another chance! She has to!”

Bendy chuckled. "I’m sure she’ll...,” he trailed off, his surprised eyes flashing to the door. The door swung open on his touch, without him unlocking it or turning the knob. He noticed the knob was
busted from some kinda impact.

“Boris, stay here,” Bendy ordered tensely.

“Bro what’s goin’ on?” Boris asked staring at the door.

“Don’t know. Stay here ‘til I call for you,” Bendy said.

“Be careful,” Boris said. Bendy slipped into their apartment and nearly cursed out loud. Their place was wrecked. The couch was slashed and the walls busted. He peeked into the kitchen, which was trashed. Glassware was busted, food was tossed about, so on. He quietly made his way over the glass to the living room. The TV was oddly still there, just knocked over. Down the hall, the bathroom looked like the kitchen, stuff tossed around. He peeked into Boris’s room and growled around. The closet was open and ripped apart. He turned to his room. It was in a similar state to Boris’, everything thrown about or broken. His bed was also flipped. He checked his closet and then made his way through the wreckage of their few worldly possessions to the living room. “Okay, Boris. It’s all clear,” he called. He heard the front door open and the wolf gasp.

“What happened?”

“Someone broke in,” Bendy said and righted the TV. Huh, it wasn’t broken.

“A robbery?” Boris asked making his way to the living room.

Bendy shrugged. “Why’d they leave this then?” he asked patting his hand on the box. Boris blinked.

“Maybe it was just one person and they couldn’t get it out by themselves?” he guessed cocking his head to the side. He started making his way to his room.

“I don’t think so bro,” Bendy said. He followed the wolf to his room and leaned against the door frame. Boris knelt down and started going through the mess. “There are no hateful messages, so I don’t think it’s a hate crime either. I think they were looking fer somethin’.”

“But what?” Boris looked up to him. Bendy shrugged. After a minute, Boris’s shoulders fell. “What should we do Bendy?” The kid looked up again. The little demon saw the glossiness of unshed tears in his eyes. Bendy felt just as overwhelmed and scared. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. It wasn’t like he hadn’t been thinking about this idea all day. Ever since he saw the flames, or truthfully it was the accident yesterday. Wilson. They had to run. It was the only thing he could think to do.

“Pack a bag.” He sounded so dreary. Like he was giving up to fate. “We can’t stay here tonight. It’s too dangerous.”

Boris’s ears perked up, his eyes widened a little. “Are we coming back?”

Bendy gave him a serious look that answered his question. Something like worry passed over the young wolf’s face. He nodded and stood up. Bendy pushed off the door frame and headed to his room. He dug up a side pouch and a backpack. He went through his things and only packed the most important items. He found that half of his emergency cash had been stolen, but the rest was still hidden in different spots. After he dropped by the bathroom to find his toothbrush and some other essentials he looked at what he had. It was still pretty light. He decided he could take some things that he had, just because he liked them. A book written by his favorite author, Felix the Cat, his back up pair of goggles, the drawing Boris had given to him the first time Boris ever got his hands on drawing utensils (It was of them of course, standing on top of a mountain of food) and he pulled out the only photo of him and Boris they owned.
He found photo, crushed, in the living room. The frame was destroyed, but the picture was okay. Sasha had it taken a couple years back. They were sitting at a table laughing at something Boris had said. Boris’s eyes were closed from laughing so hard, his head thrown back. Bendy was looking at his brother, a hand on Boris’s arm to hold himself up from doubling over. The lights of the club gave it a fuzzy dream-like landscape. He carefully packed it away. He went back to his room to give it one last look over.

He was just about to head out, when he nearly tripped. He scowled down and froze. It was a pair of his pants, spattered with old blood. He picked the clothing up. Wilson. Would any of this be happening if he had just said no to helping him? He clenched his fist in frustration and felt something crumple. Bendy blinked and reached into the pants pocket. He pulled out a folded piece of paper. A paper covered in strange writing. The memory of where this paper came from snapped to the front of Bendy’s mind. He unfolded it and tried to see if he could make any heads or tails of it.

Sadly, he couldn’t even figure out which way he was supposed to hold it. With a disgruntled noise in the back of his throat he folded it back up and stuck it in the pocket of his vest. He looked around the room and let the facts sink in. He had a page from Wilson written in an unknown language. The cops had just lost a journal from Wilson written in an unknown language.

He felt his heart sink to his feet. At least he now might know why they had ransacked his apartment. He made his way to the living room and dropped his backpack and side pouch by the ripped-up couch. He spotted Boris in the kitchen.

“Boris!” The wolf flinched. “Stay outta the kitchen, you’re gonna cut up your paws,” Bendy said. Boris gingerly tiptoed out of the room. Just as Bendy thought, the wolf had changed his garage boots to the light open-paw bands that Bendy could hardly call shoes. Bendy never understood Boris’s great dislike of wearing covering shoes. He much preferred his bare paws, and with the thick pads he had, Bendy was usually fine with it. It was at the garage that Bendy had to put his foot down and forced the kid into shoes.

It had been funny at first. Bendy would find Boris’ shoes hidden and thrown away, claiming he lost them. It escalated to him chewing them up. Bendy had to threaten to buy metal knight boots (and a tongue lashing from Pete about policy) before Boris gave in. Now though, the kid was trapezing around a kitchen full of broken glass on practically bare paws.

“Sorry,” he said sheepishly. “I thought I would try to get a couple of utensils and any food that we could take with us.” Bendy sighed as Boris held up two knives, forks, and spoons.

“Just don’t get hurt. Did ya get any glass in ya?” Bendy asked. Boris shook his head with a smile.

“I'll get the food. Did you pack everything?” Boris nodded. Bendy blinked. “Really?”

“Yeah, I had a pack ready for a while now,” Boris admitted, putting the silverware in his bigger bag. He looked back at Bendy with a smile. “I just wanted to be ready if anything happened.”

Bendy stayed quiet and collected the canned food and anything that wouldn’t spoil quickly and brought it to Boris. His thoughts circling Boris’s statement and all the unsaid ramifications. Exactly what had Boris been preparing for? The young wolf put an envelope on the window seal. Bendy gave Boris a questioning look. “It’s for the detectives. They were nice to us, I thought maybe to explain why we left.”

“It doesn’t say where we’re going?” Bendy checked. Boris shook his head. “Good. Okay then.” With packs taken care of, the two looked around the place that had been home for the past few years. The great days, the terrible days, the fights, the pranks and so on. Bendy pulled his stuff on and Boris
hefted the big bag. (It wasn’t because he was stronger, it was just that Boris was so much taller than Bendy and could carry the big pack…Dangit don’t judge him! He didn’t just call himself short!)

“So where are we going?” Boris asked. Bendy pursed his lips in thought. He didn’t want to, but it was only for one night.

“I was thinking we should ask Sasha to house us for a night and then make our way to you-know-where,” Bendy said. Boris nodded, his eyes full of questions, but knowing that Bendy wouldn’t answer anything here, he didn’t bother trying to ask. The two headed out into the night.

“What about the detectives? They’re from Toon Town, I bet they’d help us,” Boris suggested.

“I think they might or at least they’d want to, but right now we’re suspects in arson and hell.” Bendy shrugged. “Hogsmen probably wants me for what happened to Wilson too. I doubt those mud lovers will let them just leave with us, not now. I’m sure there are rules and all that jazz. Besides if we did go with them then they’ll lock us up in Toon Town.”

Boris’s frowned sadly. “I don’t think they’re like that.”

“No probably not, but they still have to find out what happened to Wilson and apparently everyone else that was involved with that bird. Whether I’m a witness or a suspect, they won’t let me go anywhere and that means we wouldn’t be able to go find that ‘friend.’”

“Maybe if we just gave them some time, Detective Featherworth could find a way?” Boris offered weakly.

“We don’t have time. Whoever is after us burned down the garage and broke into the police station. The police station, Boris. There isn’t anywhere safe in this whole town. No, we need to scram and scram now,” Bendy stated certainly.

Afterward, it was a quiet walk to the Dancing Lady. The late night enveloped the sleeping town. Boris spent a good amount of the time worrying his lip. There was one other thing. He couldn’t handle waiting on his tail about this. He worked up the nerve to finally say something.

“Bendy, I know we were going to talk about this in the morning.” Boris swallowed. “But about, your, uh.” Boris felt his bravery wane.

“My illness?” Bendy offered weakly. Boris blinked and stared in sorrowful surprise to Bendy’s downcast expression. “Yeah, Boris I know.”

“Your admitting it?” Boris whispered. He hadn’t expected that. Bendy always claimed to be fine, even in the middle of a flu.

Bendy chuckled bitterly. “How can I deny it after what happened today? That was the most intense pain I’ve ever felt. It was like my insides were on fire. I almost started to scream,” Bendy admitted. He shrugged uselessly. “There’s no use avoiding it. Something’s wrong with me.”

Boris’ eyes were huge and glassy. He didn’t know what to say. They fell silent again as Bendy allowed Boris to gather his thoughts. Bendy had come to terms with this. He had thought about it in the interrogation room and on the drive to the apartment. Wilson had died trying to save people. Bendy had been really cruel denying him, and in extension, everyone he had tried to help. People who might have felt that kinda pain. Bendy wasn’t sure it was ink illness, but Wilson had been-Wilson would have been the best at identifying it, after all, right? Bendy wished he had asked how the owl was able to tell with just a touch.
“I-is it the ink?” Boris whispered.

“Don’t know,” he admitted.

“Is there anything I can do?” Boris asked.

Bendy smiled. “Just keep doing what you’re doing.”

Boris nodded his head. His lip was shaking and his shoulders hunched a little. “Yeah.” Bendy’s eyebrows shot up.

“Hey, Boris, what’s this?”

“I-I can’t do anything,” he whimpered.

“Don’t say that! You’re my whole reason to try and do anything at all. What’d ya mean ‘you can’t do anything?’ If it wasn’t for you I’d just sleep on the couch all the time! You do everything Boris!” Bendy stated. Boris only nodded, as silent tears escaped him. There was a heartbeat of silence before Bendy cut in front of Boris and stopped walking.

“Where’s my happy widdle wolfy?” he asked.

His little brother gave him a watery smile. “H-here I am.”

“Oh Boris.” Bendy gazed at him, his light smile falling. “It’s alright bud. We’re still together. I’m doing great right now! Nothin’ to cry over.”

“I-I know. I-I’m sorry. I ju-just need—,” Boris struggled to speak. He was trying to hold back and somehow that was making it worse. He just hadn’t expected Bendy to admit it. He didn’t expect it to be so scary. It was different. A line was crossed that could never be uncrossed. It wasn’t ‘he might get sick’ now it was ‘he is sick’ and it hit him hard. It’s wasn’t ‘he could be in danger’ it was ‘he could die soon’ and *that* hit like a ton of bricks. Reality was worse then what ifs.

“Don’t apologize bud.” Bendy pulled him down gently until Boris was crouched before him like a dog being told to sit. He held Boris’s muzzle gently and wiped the tears from his furry face. “You know I’d never just disappear on you, bro. I love you and I’m not plannin’ on going anywhere without ya.”

“Promish?” he asked between his somewhat squished cheeks and stuffed nose.

“Promise,” Bendy said.

“I just don’t want to see you hurting, Bendy,” he whimpered.

“I know, but there are going to be some things we can’t help,” Bendy started.

“So, we just keep going on,” Boris finished their little motivator from childhood.

“Right.” Bendy nodded and smiled.

“Love you big bro,” Boris said.

“Love you too Boris,” Bendy said and let Boris go. Boris smiled genuinely and sniffed.

“Thanks,” he mumbled, wiping at his face, a little embarrassed.
“Don’t worry about it. It’s been quite a day and I’m a bit shaken up too,” Bendy admitted. The two started again and reached the dark Dancing Lady soon after. They easily broke in (seriously Sasha, what was with these sad locks?) and climbed their way up to the third floor.

They shared a look at the door to the loft. Bendy held his breath and knocked. There was a long stretch of silence. Boris and Bendy shared another look and knocked again. It was the third time that the door swung open and Bendy suddenly found a barrel of a shot gun in his face.

“What sam-wise schmucks break into my club and have the guts to knock on my door at cussing one in the morning!” Sasha snapped.

“Hiya Sash.” Bendy waved sheepishly.

“You! You have the smallest pea brain to skip work without a call on your first night and come here at one in the morning to say something about it! How did you get in here?” Sasha snarled.

“You must’ve heard what ‘appened.” Bendy tried to side step the weapon, only to have it follow him.

“Of course, I did! And not even ONE PHONE CALL?”

“I’m sorry?” he tried.

“SORRY!”

“We really are sorry,” Boris jumped in. The gun lowered immediately and Boris found himself wrapped up in a tight hug.

“Oh Boris, sweetie pie. I am so sorry! That must have been so scary for you!” she cooed.

He blushed. “Ah no, I’m okay. Please don’t be mad at Bendy. The cops were trying to get him arrested this afternoon.”

“What!” She pulled back to see Boris’s face.

“Yeah, we were locked in interrogation rooms all afternoon,” Bendy said. “I didn’t get a phone call, but at least I ain’t wearing stripes.”

“Those detectives?” she seemed horrified.

“No, they were nice the whole time. They gave us a ride home,” Boris said. “It was Snoutfer and Hogsmen.” She nodded with a relieved sigh.

“Good, good.” she planted her fists on her curvy hips. Bendy noted the long silky bathrobe, and her loose hair, not hidden under her usual hat. She was cute like this. “Now, what are you two doing here?” She looked between them and noticed the bags. She raised a thin brow. “Are you two planning a trip?”

“Mind if we come in and explain?” Bendy asked wearily. Sasha looked lost, but nodded. The next hour was the boys going back and forth explaining the day (leaving out the ink stuff) and ending with the destruction of their apartment.

“You didn’t call the cops!” she gasped.

“And what? Tell them we were attacked? Again? Why? So, they can put me back into their damn box? It won’t make a difference boss,” Bendy grumbled. She spent time arguing his choice. Bendy
didn’t budge.

“Look Sash, just trust us,” he said. “We wouldn’t be doing this unless we thought we had another choice.” Sasha twisted her head back and forth between the two, looking completely distressed.

“Is there nothing I can do beyond a couch?” she practically pleaded. Boris and Bendy shared a sad look.

“Sorry, Miss Sasha, we don’t want to drag you into all this. It’s dangerous,” Boris explained. Bendy shuddered as a strange comparison struck him. She looked like she wanted to cry. Bendy felt numb. He had gone full circle, hadn’t he? He had to hold back bitter laughter. He absorbed the irony of his position. Had it been just over a week? How had he ended up in Wilson’s exact position in just a week? Too dangerous to explain? Can I sleep on your couch? Horrible people are after us? Can’t trust anyone? It had to be a sick joke. What god had Bendy upset for this to happen?

“We’ll be gone in the morning.” Bendy promised, to add to the bitter irony. So, this was how that featherhead had felt.

“Bend-a-boo, it is morning. Stay as long as you need honey. Don’t you worry. I don’t mind,” Sasha said. Bendy glanced at the clock and groaned as three o’clock ticking by.

“Can we sleep now?” Boris asked. Sasha tittered with laughter.

“Yes Boris. Go to sleep, you both have been through enough.”

Boris took the full couch and Bendy fit perfectly on the loveseat. He was so tired he didn’t have the energy to be annoyed. Bendy couldn’t shake his disturbed feelings. Was this how Wilson had started out? Just asking a friend to house him for an evening, until he ran out of friends or was too afraid to contact them? Bendy didn’t want to endanger Sasha in this madness. He didn’t want to feel empathy toward that bird. To Bendy, he was the guy that dragged his brother into this and Bendy couldn’t forgive him for that. Even if he was dead. He hoped he didn’t end up dragging innocent people into these insane problems.

Bendy bit his lip, but he already had, hadn’t he? Boris was next to him, wasn’t he? Bendy swore then and there, it would just be the two of them, and he would do anything in his power to protect Boris on this journey. He had to. It was his responsibility even above finding this Oddswell guy and possibly the ink machine. More important than even a cure, Boris had to get out of this okay. And with that thought, Bendy slipped into sleep.

Chapter End Notes

The quest has begun, our boys are on their way out, and nothing will ever be the same. I am so thrilled for the future you have no idea! I will be updating again on Friday. Midterms are coming so that’s going to be fun for me. It’s the price for the day off I guess. I hope you have a great day, tell me what you think, and I hope you find something to smile about today.

Until Friday, TAP out.
The First Step

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Sasha is sad, Boris is excited, and Bendy is already tired.

Chapter Notes

Hi ya! I don't have much to say except rouge (aka thebbros, the comic artist whom I am basing this little fic from) is doing a great job ripping everyone's hearts to shreds! Hooray! T-T
Mid-terms are also trying to end my existence. My friend, who is like a sister to me, just had her baby boy and I have to help her out around campus (husband is working as a bus driver, so he is away on tours). The poor girl isn't allowed to lift anything over six pounds, so I'm carrying two backpacks next week. I am so glad I have a couple chapters that only need editing. I don't have to worry about not having time to type! So life is busy, but you're not here to hear my problems. NO! You're here for Bendy and Boris and all their shenanigans! No point holding you up. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The boys awoke about midday and the sun drifted high in the sky. Bendy groaned in annoyance. So much for leaving first thing in the morning. Sasha was cooking them a nice lunch. She still seemed really nervous. She would check on them every few minutes, and she was fidgeting, constantly doing something, like she had to stay busy.

“Where are you two heading again?” she asked over her dark wood table after she set down the meal.

“Sorry, can’t say,” Bendy answered after swallowing.

“And why not?” she demanded.

“It’s just better if we don’t,” Boris said. Sasha huffed.

“Promise to be safe?” she asked, looking at the table, down heartened.

“Of course, Sash. You know us, we’re reliable.” Bendy smiled and grabbed a toothpick on the table.

“You mean a pair of troublemakers!” she teased. After a moment she sighed. “I really can’t stop ya, can I?”

“Short of calling the coppers on us, no.” Bendy leaned his chair back on two legs.

“Did you just say short?” Sasha asked in amusement. Bendy stuck his tongue out playfully. It wasn’t long after that the boys were pulling on their packs and heading to the door. Sasha fretted like
a mother hen.

“Are you sure you have enough food?” she asked.

“Yes.” Boris said.

“And coats and blankets? It may be summer, but it can still get chilly when the sun goes down,” Sasha said.

“Yes ma’am,” Boris said.

“And you packed your toothbrushes?”

“Oh my stars Sash, yes! We have everything we need.” Bendy mocked exasperation. Sasha blushed and shoved Bendy’s shoulder, but she was smiling. Bendy chuckled.

“Alright, ginger-snap. Oh!” She suddenly turned around and left. She returned quickly and pressed something into Bendy’s gloved hand. “Take this too.”

He looked down to see a large roll of bills. “Sasha, we can’t take this!” Boris gasped at the money.

“Shush now. I can get by, and the club will always bring me more. I want you boys to be safe. Please take it for my piece of mind.” She smiled sincerely. Both were speechless. Boris suddenly wrapped her up in a hug.

“Thank you, Miss Sasha. Thank you for everything,” he said, his tail wagging. Sasha laughed and returned the hug.

“Yeah, Sash, you’re the best boss I never had,” Bendy said. She looked over and dragged Bendy into the hug too. She kissed both boys on the cheek, before pulling back.

“Now, you’d better get. If you linger any longer, I’ll have to tie you up and keep you,” she said, her eyes suspiciously wet.

“Goodbye, Miss Sasha.” Boris waved and turned to leave.

“Bye Sash,” Bendy said with a goofy grin on his face.

“Goodbye boys. Be sure to write me, ya hear! Don’t just disappear on me,” Sasha said with a wave.

The two made their way down the hall and to the back-exit. Sasha overheard Bendy. “Bro, I gotta kiss! I told you I had a chance.” She heard Boris’ laugh, but not his reply. Sasha took a moment to pull herself together. She had to come to terms that she couldn’t do more. She wasn’t their parent or sister and she really couldn’t do much that wouldn’t either get the cops involved or her in trouble. They were determined to go their own way and they had made it so far without any adult help. She got one last glance of them outside her window. “I’ll miss you two.” She sighed and leaned against the wall.

Boris couldn’t help his tail from wagging as Bendy paid for the tickets. The wolf was practically wiggling with excitement. Bendy calmly collected the tickets from the booth and headed to the platform. The two waited on a bench for about five minutes before Boris couldn’t take it anymore. “So where are we going?”

“I got us tickets to Warnerburg. It’ll be a rest of the day ride on the train,” Bendy said.
“Is it near Toon Town?” Boris stood up and walked around the platform. They were the only ones there.

“Nah, but it’s closer than here,” Bendy said.

“When is the train going to come?” Boris asked with a glitter of excitement in his eyes.

“About forty-five minutes,” Bendy said leaning back and shutting his eyes. Boris went around the platform a number of times, trying to control his excitement.

He couldn’t believe that they were going. He imagined what Warnerburg would look like and his mind went to Mickey’s show and the city scape that was around the Mouse Circus. He tried to imagine the sight and sounds and smells. He felt like he was going to go on an adventure!

As Boris enjoyed his excitement, Bendy took the time to think. He knew if he mocked sleep Boris would leave him be. He played the last forty-eight hours of his life over in his mind. He’d seen someone die, saw his old job lit in flames, panicked for his brother’s life twice, was nearly arrested, had his home ransacked, ran away, and had two pain attacks. He took a deep breath. This might have been the worst couple of days of his life, and that wasn’t a record he wanted to break.

He wasn’t sure what this Oddswell guy could do either, but at least it was a direction to run. In the end, Bendy felt overwhelmed and a bit like he was drowning. He eventually mentally shrugged it all away, because he couldn’t really do anything. What he didn’t mean to do was fall asleep.

It was a cold, miserable night. Bendy felt his stomach clench even tighter, like a small blackhole was opening up in his middle. It’d been four days since he had last eaten. He was feeling so fatigued, but he was afraid to fall asleep in the snow right now. He was afraid he’d never wake up. No one had given him anything from his street begging. Not a penny or even scraps. The trashcans didn’t have anything edible either. He had taken to chewing cardboard to at least comfort himself a little.

He dragged himself down the empty main street. It was getting late, and he was so tired. Other kids his age would be in bed after their parents tucked them in with bedtime stories. They played in the snow and laughed. Bendy hated the snow. It was cold and seeped into the holes of his destroyed shoes. It would gather up on his head and melt into his face. He couldn’t remember the last time he felt the tips of his fingers. Would he really survive this winter? Something reflected the poor streetlight into Bendy’s eyes, and he squinted and looked up. It was the butcher shop window. His mouth watered. The butcher had chased Bendy away once or twice when he’d begged in front of the store. He had just wanted to get enough to buy a few slices of ham.

Bendy crossed the street and pressed his face against the glass. There, amongst the sausage links and chickens and in the center display, was a huge, juicy-looking roasted ham. Bendy’s stomach practically sat up and begged. The boy whimpered. Could he take it? Stealing was supposed to be wrong, but leaving food out like this was bad too, right? He was so hungry! What would happen if he got caught? He looked up and down the street. It was still empty and silent. The world was muffled by the snow, like it was sleeping with a white blanket covering it.

Bendy didn’t know how long he stared at the meat, but he finally started to move. He had first thought to break the glass, but decided it would get him caught. He chewed his chapped lip for a moment. He could use that…though it might break more things than if he just threw a rock. His stomach gave another pathetic growl and he shrugged. Bendy held his breath as he reached out to feel the dark shadows from inside the shop. They withered and whirled excitedly. He watched as the ham was pushed against the display case window.
“C’mon, open the case.” Bendy panted out loud in a quiet whisper. His breath fogged the air in front of him, blocking his view for a second. The shadows banged the ham against the window two more times before he could get the case door to slide open. Bendy was terrified that someone would hear it and appear at any moment. The meat tumbled out and bounced on the floor. Bendy held his breath again and waited for someone to appear. When nothing happened, he let out a sigh of relief. Now, he just needed to get the meat by the door and unlock it. He didn’t know if he could get something as small as a lock to turn from the inside, but he had to try.

Bendy focused again and tried to get the shadows to move the ham to the door. Instead, the darkness chucked the ham up and straight at Bendy and the large window. Bendy let out a squeak of surprise and the ham crashed through the glass, spraying shards everywhere. Bendy covered his face with his arms and let out an “umph!” when the ham collided with him. It knocked him into the snow and he groaned on his back before sitting up. He couldn’t help the wide grin at seeing his prize sitting on his lap. A light from the second story of the butcher’s shop turned on and Bendy could hear exclamations from inside. He scrambled to stand up. When he was finally on his feet, he wrapped his arms around his prize and booked it down the street.

He moved just as he heard a door bang open. “HEY, YOU ROTTEN KID, GET BACK HERE! GIVE ME BACK MY MEAT! DEMON THIEF!”

Bendy didn’t stop and didn’t look back. He sprinted as fast as he could, jumping fences, slipping in and out of alleys and running through snow covered bushes. His lungs were on fire, his eyes watered from the stinging cold, and if he thought he was tired before, he was completely spent now. It wasn’t until he was near the outskirts of town that he collapsed in a tiny alley that had a few trashcans and a pile of cardboard boxes. He leaned his back against the freezing brick wall and sucked in as much air as he could get. His legs felt like jelly, his chest hurt, and sweat was freezing into ice on his fur.

Again, he looked down at his prize and grinned. It was all worth it. He was going to eat like a king for a whole week! Just as he was about to take a bite, he heard something shift in the alley. He snapped his head up and instantly reached for the shadows. His coiled body was ready for anything. “Who’s there!” he demanded. He got no response. Bendy pulled himself up on shaky legs. “I know you’re in here! Come out,” he barked. Still nothing. Bendy hesitatingly made his way deeper into the alley. He heard another shift and pinpointed it behind the boxes. He crept up to it and peeked around cautiously.

The person turned over on their bed of cardboard and shivered. It was a dog, or maybe wolf. He was a very skinny one. He looked far too skinny actually. Bendy wondered if he even had the energy to sit up, because it didn’t look like it. The guy only had on a thin jacket over a torn shirt and shorts. He didn’t have any shoes, and the pads of his paws looked cracked. Bendy peered closer. Was that dry blood on them? Bendy was just about to back away when the wolf, Bendy guessed that was right, opened his eyes. Bendy froze as they made eye contact. Bendy had never seen such dull and hopeless eyes. They reflected only emptiness and despair. Bendy’s eyes widened at the person.

The wolf furrowed his brows, his ears pinned to his head. He blinked, then curled up to himself, and shut his eyes.

“Hello.” Bendy didn’t know what compelled him to speak. He was doing it before he realized it. “What’s your name?” The wolf didn’t respond. Bendy was again going to shrug and back away when the wolf opened his eyes. They focused on Bendy and pinned him in place. “I’m Bendy. Can’t you tell me your name?” Bendy tried again. The wolf blinked, his eyes dropped to the ham in Bendy’s arms, and Bendy tensed. Wolves could be vicious and this guy looked like it had been a long time since he had eaten anything. He felt bad, but it was a cold day in hell before he let this guy take his prize.
The dead eyes didn’t stay on the ham long. They traveled down his person and then back up, taking him in completely. “Red eyes.” The wolf muttered. Alarms went off in Bendy’s head. He had kept his grip on the shadows this whole time, which caused his eyes to glow. That scared most people, but this guy didn’t seem to really care.

“Oops.” Bendy chuckled, embarrassed and surprised. “Sorry, i-it’s kinda a talent of mine. I don’t mean to look scary.” The wolf blinked and one ear raised. Did that mean he was curious? He looked curious. Bendy let go of the darkness and his eyes returned to normal. The wolf blinked and turned his head in a way that only K-9s were capable. “Sorry for bothering you.” Bendy turned to go.

“Boris.” Bendy stopped and turned back around. The wolf was sitting up, he was a little wobbly, and Bendy could now see how much his thin cloths hung off him. How long had it been since he had eaten? Bendy also realized with a start that this wolf was a pup. A kid that was maybe a little younger than him.

“Sorry, uh, what was that?” Bendy asked, completely taken aback.

“My name. I’m Boris,” he said again, watching Bendy. Bendy tilted his head a little.

“It’s nice to meet cha Boris.” The wolf’s eyes went back down to the ham and then away, like he was ashamed to even want something that wasn’t his. Bendy looked down at the ham and up at the kid. It could feed him like a king for a week or it could feed a starving pair for a couple of days. Bendy approached the wolf with a sigh. The kid’s dull eyes snapped back up to him, and the wolf watched him warily. He stopped in front of Boris and tried to wear his best smile. “Well, Boris, I’ve got this huge ham with me and I don’t think I can eat it all by myself. If you’re hungry, do ya mind helping me?”

Boris’ eyes widened, and his jaw dropped a little. He looked like Bendy had just pulled the cardboard out from under him. “Uh, w-why would you do that?”

Bendy shrugged and sat down in front of the wolf. “’Cause I know what it’s like to be hungry, and no one should have to go through it. That and food tastes better when you’re eating with a friend.” He looked down and started to separate the meat. This was the wolf’s chance to deny him. To say he didn’t need a friend or whatever it would be. Bendy glanced up and was shocked again as he saw tears run down the kid’s face.


“Well, sure, I don’t have any friends or family. It’d be nice to have a pal around,” he said. “Do you want to have a friend?” The wolf nodded. The two went on the ham and after they had eaten Bendy stashed the rest away for tomorrow.

“B-Bendy?” the demon turned around to face the wolf pup again.

“Yeah?”

“I’d like to have a friend.” He hesitated, looking scared, and Bendy smiled to reassure him. He could hear the ‘but’ coming. Boris didn’t want someone like him, he expected that, because he was scary after all. The kid needed food though, so he was probably scared to say no to Bendy. Bendy was okay with that. He got it. “But what I really want is a brother.” Bendy was floored and his eyes widened. “Is it okay for us to be brothers?” Boris looked terrified, but there was a gleam in his eyes. A spark of hope amongst the despair.

Bendy mentally shook himself. “Are ya sure you want someone like me as family? I can be kinda
“scary.”

The kid blinked and shrugged. “That’s okay. Everyone can be scary.”

Bendy shook his head in amazement. “Yeah, okay. I can be your brother. We can watch out for each other and stuff.” Boris’ ears perked up and he gave Bendy a warm smile as his eyes lit with humble joy. Bendy felt a warmth bud in his chest.

“Okay, thanks Bendy.” Boris grinned.

“Bendy! Bendy!”

Bendy jerked awake.

“What’s gonna on?” Bendy looked up at Boris.

“You’re gonna miss the train pulling in!” Boris exclaimed excitedly. “Look! You can see it!” he pointed. Bendy followed his finger and sure enough there was the train speeding down the track toward the station.

“That’s great bro.” Bendy yawned and stretched his arms over his head. He felt his back pop and he had a crick in his neck. He groaned to himself. No more bench naps for him. They were gonna kill him. He couldn’t help chuckling. He was amused, watching Boris became more and more excited as the train drew closer. In a short amount of time it pulled into the station and stopped with a whistle. Boris hopped on with a bound, Bendy close behind him. The two found a nice spot tucked away in a corner with seats facing each other, so passengers could talk to one another. The seats were cushioned and wide. Bendy let out a happy sigh as he sat down and shoved his backpack under the seat.

Boris wondered at the cabin a bit. He was absorbing every detail with awe. “Hey, Bendy, think they’d let us look at the engine?” Boris asked. Bendy chuckled and shook his head.

“Probably not Boris, but when the guy for the tickets comes by, you can sure ask ‘im,” Bendy said, resting his head on his hand.

“Okay.” Boris continued his exploration.

Bendy just watched out the window. His mind went back to his dream. It was more of a memory actually. It had been a long time since he thought about that night. He wondered idly why his mind had brought it up. Maybe, it was because that night changed his life for the better? He didn’t remember anything before that time. So, he considered it a beginning chapter of his life, and the next big step had been when they got an apartment. Maybe, it was because this was going to be another chapter? He kinda felt like he lost everything, but he knew he hadn’t.

Boris sat down across from the Bendy. Bendy still had Boris, so this was a journey that Bendy could handle. Somehow. His eyes suddenly lit up as a whistle sounded. “We’re moving!” The pair stared out the window and watched the station begin to slide away. Boris practically had his face against the glass. First the station, then the town slid away from them. Soon, it was a pinprick behind them. Boris’ tail wagged in excitement. “Wow, we’re going so fast!” he said. The landscape blurred by in a screen of forest branches and open fields.

“Oh yeah!” He suddenly pulled his bag out from under his seat and reached into it. Bendy cocked an eyebrow.
“What’s this bro?” Bendy asked.

Boris looked up from his pack sheepishly. “I forgot. I found the present I got you yesterday before....” He trailed off, and furrowed his brows. “Before everything happened.” Bendy turned his head a little in inquisition. He barely remembered Boris explaining that he had been late getting back to the garage, because he had gotten Bendy something.

“Oh, bro, you didn’t have to do something like that,” Bendy said. “We have to carry everything with us too.” He pointed out.

“I wanted to and I know you won’t mind carrying it.” Boris pulled out a square wrapped in packaging paper. He handed it to a curious Bendy, who held it carefully.

“Thanks bro,” he said and pulled the paper loose. Underneath was the latest book from Felix the Cat’s adventure series. Bendy’s eyes widened. Books weren’t always cheap and this hardback was new. “Boris. Thank you,” he said in awe. Boris grinned, knowing Bendy liked it.

“Yes, and now you have something to read while we travel,” he said.

Bendy didn’t waste any time. Boris returned to the window. The two passed a few hours like this. They were only interrupted by the ticket guy. Bendy learned he was called the conductor, and that no, they couldn’t go look at the engine.

The rest of the day was traveling, and by the time they reached Warnerburg it was late, and they were exhausted. They couldn’t see much of the place pulling in. Just the lights of the streets blurring by before they finally came to a stop at the station.

They made their way out and looked around. The street was empty of people and the shops were closed. The two looked at the unfamiliar street. “So, where are we sleeping tonight?” Boris asked. Bendy sighed.

“I have no idea,” Bendy admitted.


Bendy smiled apolitically and shrugged. “Hey, how was I supposed to know? C’mon, let’s find a place that’s open,” Bendy said taking a step forward. Boris rolled his eyes with a smirk at his brother’s antics.

“That is so like you,” Boris muttered. Bendy chuckled. The two took an hour and a half wandering around the town, looking for a place that was open. Bendy noted that the town was quite a bit bigger than Sillyvision. Bendy could easily get lost here if he didn’t pay attention. They started when a dog bolted out of an alley, with a cat clinging to its head. “This place is a bit creepy,” Boris said, after recovering from the shock.

Bendy chuckled. “What? Getting cold paws?” Boris snorted and looked away. They spent another hour, before collapsing by a tall wall. Boris leaned against the wall with a sigh.

“Think we should just give up and try again tomorrow?” Boris asked.

Bendy growled from his cross-legged position next to the wolf. “I don’t want to you to sleep outside,” he said. Boris stared at Bendy confused. He took in Bendy’s serious and frustrated glare burning a hole in the asphalt.

He snorted a laugh. “I’ve done it before.”
“But, we got outta that,” Bendy muttered. He still refused to look at the wolf. Boris tried to figure out what Bendy wasn’t saying.

“Yeah, we did,” he said slowly. “And we will again. This is just a journey. We can’t take a house with us,” he chuckled. “I don’t mind sleeping under the stars, bro. We still are a hundred miles beyond where we were.”

Boris took a deep breath and looked up. The street lights blocked out the stars and the moon was barely there, but the night was calm and cool. The air was crisp, barely any wind, and smelled of damp asphalt and greenery. Boris smiled. It was a nice night.

Bendy seemed to work through his thoughts. “Sorry, bro. I guess I’m just hung up on the fear that we’ll be stuck out here again,” he said.

Boris shrugged. “There are worse things.”

“Yeah.” Bendy sighed and leaned against the wall like Boris. “I just wished we’d get the better things occasionally.”

Boris chuckled. “I got you and the sun and the moon. What else do I need?”

Bendy smiled. “That is so cheesy, bro.”

Boris stuck out his tongue.

“But, I’m happy with you too,” Bendy said. “Anyway, we better sleep, I’m tuckered out. We’ll get breakfast, and then head on out in the morning.”

“Okay, Bendy.” Boris smiled. He shifted his bag, and using it as a pillow, curled up and fell asleep. Bendy smiled and went back to gazing at the sliver of the moon. Boris really had a gift to fall asleep so fast. Bendy was a little jealous. He sighed. He would have to be smarter than this from now on. He was certain the city streets wouldn’t be as kind as small town streets. They had just gotten a slow start is all. Tomorrow, he would do better.

Bendy felt something shift, so he scooted over to give Boris some more room, before going back to sleep. It felt like a few minutes later that something poked him.

“Hey, wake up!” Bendy cracked an eye open. “You two can’t be by the main gates. Go on. Shoo!”

It was a large heavyset man in a security guard uniform, and he looked like he’d forgotten to shave. Bendy sat up, stretched, and yawned.

“Sorry sir, we’ll move,” Bendy said, half-awake, while reaching over to shake Boris. He looked at the two unimpressed, but turned to leave. “C’mon, bro. They’re kickin’ us off the crib.”

Boris grumbled, but sat up and rubbed his eyes. The sun was just peeking over the horizon. Dew clung to everything and the boys awoke damp and cold. “Can I sleep more when we move?” Boris mumbled barely awake.

“You can sleep on the train,” Bendy said and leaned to his other side to grab his bag without looking. He patted the ground before turning his head and looking. There was no backpack. It took his sluggish mind a moment to absorb this fact. The pack was gone. His favorite book, Boris’ drawing, his cloths, some of their food, and…all their money.

“Boris!” Bendy was on his feet in an instant. Boris jumped and yipped in surprise.
“Bendy! What in the—,” Brois squeaked.

“The bag’s gone! Someone took my backpack!” Bendy claimed. His hands flying to his goggled head.

“Bendy, don’t worry, I’m sure we’ll—,”

“No!” Bendy stopped looking up and down the street and shot a panicked look to Boris. “You don’t get it! That bag had all our money bro!”

Boris froze, before zipping up next to Bendy. “You had all of it in there! What about what Ms. Sasha gave us? What about your satchel?”

“All of it,” Bendy said, and returned to looking up and down the streets. His satchel only had their photo, Boris’s present to him and his spare goggles.

“Bendy!” Boris exclaimed exasperated.

“I know. I know!” Bendy said.

“Hey you twos!” It was the guard again. “I said scram.”

“Sir, could you help us? My brother’s backpack was stolen.” Boris approached the fat man.

“That’s got ninin’ to does with me,” he slurred. Bendy scowled. Was he drunk?

“That’s got nuin’ to does with me,” he slurred. Bendy scowled. Was he drunk?

“Ah, gee, thanks pal. You are real swell,” Bendy’s voice dripped with sarcasm.

“Now, I’s gotta give ya the boot,” the guard stated.

“Yeah, yea-hey!” Bendy barked when the guard suddenly grabbed him and Boris by the scruffs of the neck. Just when Bendy was gonna flail, he felt a sharp snap to his backside and was sent flying. He heard Boris’ yip right behind him. The two sailed across the street and into a park. Bendy crashed into a tree and landed in a twist of branches a good thirty feet above the ground. Boris crashed through and landed in a bush below him at the base of the large oak.

Bendy groaned from his tangled upside-down position. “Bro, are you alright!” Boris called from the bush.

“I’m stuck in a tree! No, I’m not alright!” Bendy shouted and started struggling. He felt himself drop two inches.

“Hold on! You might fall out doing that,” Boris said. Bendy stopped and craned his head back to look down, or up depending on who you asked. Boris was pulling himself out of the bush. “Boy, when he said he was givin’ us the boot, he meant it.” Boris chuckled, finally free. Leaves and twigs stuck out of his cloths here and there, but otherwise he seemed fine.

“If I ever see that schmuck again I’ll show him what a boot looks like,” Bendy growled.

“Brother, that’s not going to help us,” Boris stated, deadpan. “How are we gonna get ya down?” he asked.

“I thought you had an idea!” Bendy scowled. Boris shrugged. “Great!” Bendy grumbled and tried to cross his arms, only to be stopped by branches.

“Hey! What’s all this ruckus around my house! Who are you? What’re you doing?” An old squirrel
woman came around the tree and glared at Boris. She had a closed umbrella in hand and hat with a flower sticking out of it on her head. “Oh great, another dog,” she grumbled to herself.

“Well, whadda we have here? Another one of you Warners? What the name of Sam-hill are you doin’ in my tree?” she put her fists on her hips.

“Warner? Never heard of them! And what I’m doing in your tree is **trying to get out of it!**” Bendy snapped.

“Watch it, shrimp, or I won’t help you out,” she said. A smaller squirrel came around the tree.

“Who you callin’ a shrimp, you nut munching hat liner!” Bendy snapped and twitched to flail again. The blood was starting to rush to his head, making him a bit dizzy.

“What’s going on, Aunt Slappy?” the little squirrel asked.

“Some schmuck Warner is stuck in our house and his dog keeps barking about it,” she said. Boris smiled weakly, hoping they would help, even if his brother was being very rude. Bendy sighed in defeat as the upside-down sun peeked its light through the leaves to the unfortunate devil. This was not exactly how he pictured his first day out of Sillyvision.

Chapter End Notes

There we are! Stars, I really don't give Bendy a break. Then again, I'm not getting one either, so why should he?...Hey, he still has his gift from Boris at least. That means something...right? No?
Tell me what you think. I don't know if I'm completely happy with the little flashback I have up there.
Love me. Roast me. I love any feedback, but you lovelies already know that. I got a friend looking this over, and she is really good. She reminded me I am not that amazing at grammar, so she is going through and fixing minor issues. She is an angel.
But not Alice. That's later. ;3
Until next week TAP out.
It's Time For Animaniacs!

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Bendy is not amused. Not. Amused.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys, gals, and all other pals! It's your author TAP!
Wow, look at all of you...it's so intimidating that so many of you are reading this. Heh. Just as I feared, I didn't get any typing done this week. Bendy's yelling at me in the back of my mind to get back on track. Sadly, I don't think I'm gonna get anything typed up this coming week either. Oh well, I at least got this puppy sorta edited, and the next one in draft. After that...I might be in hot water. But! You don't have to worry cause you'll have a chapter next week!

I am introducing a couple of awesome OC's too! They are not mine!
Meet Finley and Sammy!

http://steampunkseahorse.tumblr.com/post/160853495835/uh-s-sammy-i-have-an-idea-so-heres-finley
http://68.media.tumblr.com/1b5e997907ec6d55864a39bd6c8d9742/tumblr_oq09o0Ez481rpuuvlo1_5

They are creations by steampunkseahorse over on tumblr.
http://steampunkseahorse.tumblr.com/
Head over there and give some love and thanks! I was charmed when I saw them. They fit in perfectly with the retro cartoon world. That and they are so fun. I have to thank the creator for allowing me to bring them into Inky Mystery. They'll be real important folks.

Okay I think that's that. Enjoy the chapter and I'll see you at the end!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The two brothers made their way down the street. Boris was picking twigs and leaves off Bendy as they walked. Bendy was scowling with his hands jammed into his pockets. He was in a bad mood. It had taken almost an hour for those two jabbering, insulting squirrels to get him out of the tree (none
too gently either). And they still didn’t have the money to get out of this place with his pack stolen. He was done with this day and the sun had only been up for a couple of hours. It was at this moment that Boris’s stomach gave a growl. Boris blushed and ducked his head.

Bendy looked at him. “Best we find a spot to eat, just not under a tree,” Bendy said. Boris agreed and the two found a nice little spot near a public shopping district. They stopped at a public fountain where other people were starting to mill around. In the daylight, Bendy had realized that Warnerburg was a lot bigger than he had first thought. Palm trees mixed in with trees he recognized. People dressed a bit snazzier and buildings seemed to be very square with large shilling roofs and stucco walls. Even though it was only morning, it was already starting to get hot outside.

Boris dug around in his pack and pulled out a couple of cans and a can opener along with forks. Bendy took his and ideally asked, “If we’re sparse, how long we got from what’s in your bag, bro?” Boris stuck his fork in his mouth and considered his bag again. Bendy watched him bob his head as he counted.

“If it’s a meal a day, we got enough for two weeks, longer if we only do half meals,” Boris said.

“Don’t know how realistic that is. If we don’t have any cash, we’ll have to walk to the next town and that means we’ll be starving.” Bendy sighed. Boris hummed in agreement and turned back to his meal.

Bendy idly watched the locals and tourists, when a pair set themselves up right next to the fountain across from the bench Bendy and Boris occupied. One was a tall lanky cat with a nervous look on his face. His brows were creased and his ears twitched about. His button up shirt was half untucked and he wore thin looking, long slacks, and worn shoes. A paperboy hat sat between his ears, and his gloves had holes in them. The other was a smaller…fox? Maybe a dog? Bendy wasn’t really sure, he had huge ears and a long fluffy tail. His shirt’s sleeves were rolled up high on his arms. His pants were also rolled up, hinting at their ill fit. He had spenders on to keep them from falling. The maybe-fox had a big tooth grin, and was placing his hat on the ground upside down.

Bendy watched with interest as the two started their routine.

“Hey Sammy,” the fox said projecting his voice across the pavilion.

“What is it Finley?” the cat’s voice didn’t carry nearly as far.

“Know what I don’t get?” he raised an eyebrow.

“What?” Sammy asked fiddling his fingers.

“What?” Sammy asked fiddling his fingers.

“What people mean when they say, they’ve found themselves in a hole,” Finley said and put his hands on his hips and shook his head.

“Oh? If they didn’t want to be there they should’ve stopped digging,” Sammy stated. Bendy held back a snort.

“Hey, Sammy, what’s the difference between a bird and a fly?” Finley asked with a smirk.

“I don’t know Finley, what is the difference?” Sammy responded.

“A bird can fly, but a fly can’t bird,” Finley answered.

“That hardly seems fair to the fly,” Sammy said. Bendy chuckled. Back and forth the two went, until it devolved (or was it evolved?) into a slap stick routine. Bendy had to admit they weren’t half bad.
They were certainly getting dinner tonight at least. If the brothers got desperate he and Boris might have a chance here. Bendy mentally counted the dough these two were bringing in. It wasn’t bad, but it would hardly cover the train tickets they needed. Still he and Boris might be able to pull something off like this if Boris could get his hands on an instrument.

“So, what should we do now?” Boris asked.

Bendy thought for a moment. “We should probably report my bag stolen to a police station and then go from there.”

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?” Boris asked with his ears droopy.

“They won’t be the bacon-brains we know, so why would they have a problem us?” Bendy shrugged. “Besides, if the cops can find my bag sooner than we can, the better. I don’t wanna stick around here too long.” Boris nodded scratched his ear. He found another twig and pulled it out, to toss it away.

Bendy glanced back to the performers. The fox had just fallen into a bouquet of flowers the cat held. He stood up with a crown of flowers adorning his large ears. They were doing pretty good. Boris and Bendy got up and walked by and Bendy gave them a pleasant smile as he passed. If they got his stuff back and he saw those two again he’d tip them. He paused and turned back around. Boris gave him a curious look, but followed.

“Hey.” Bendy waved. They paused before their next skit and looked at the approaching demon. The cat fidgeted nervously. Finley on the other hand gave him a big grin.

Bendy spoke, “You guys are pretty good.”

“Thanks! Nice to have a fan,” The fox said with a slight bow.

“Do you guys know where a police station is by any chance?” Bendy got to the point.

“Sure, pal. It’s just on the other side of the shopping district there. What do ya need from the cops?” Finley asked, a bit curious.

“Ah, well, my bag was stolen earlier and it had all my cash in it,” Bendy admitted. “Can’t exactly skip town without it.”

Finley whistled. “That’s rough.”

“Yeah.” Bendy shrugged like it was no big deal.

“I hope you get it back,” Finely added.

“Thanks.”

“But Finley, with that crime thing going on now that’s nearly impossible,” the cat, Sammy, said with his ears pinned to his skull.

Bendy looked up to him and the cat shrunk back at his gaze. Bendy quickly looked back at the fox. “Crime thing?”

“Ah, Sammy means the rumored crime ring. They’ve been giving the tourists a bad run this year. Guess the cops are having a tough time with the Warners also causing havoc.” Finley shrugged in a ‘what can you do’ kinda way. “We keep our eyes out but we haven’t really seen any of them.
‘Course we’re not the type thieves target, so I can’t say if they’re around or not.”

“Uh-huh,” Bendy said lifting a brow with interest. “Ya know, that’s the second time I’ve heard about the Warners. Who are they?”

“Woah, boy.” Finley chuckled. “They are nuts to begin with. They are supposedly related to the founders of this town. They have a weird tie with the gated studio where some of the stars are. Ever heard of Warner Studios?” Bendy made a so-so gesture with his hand. “Well, they terrorize that place. The studio couldn’t get rid of them. Rumor has it they threw the three Warner siblings into the empty water tower and locked them up there. Didn’t last long. I guess they’re just running amuck again.” Finley smiled. “It’s great seeing pro jokers, but they are insane, so I’d be careful if I were you.”

“What do they look like?” Boris asked.

“Well they’re dogs, I think.” Finley glanced at Sammy who shrugged. “And they look a bit like you.” He pointed to Bendy.

“Well, at least I know why that squirrel wouldn’t shut her yap about them,” he muttered, with irritation in every word. “Hey, thanks for all the help. Good luck guys.” Bendy lifted a hand to shake.

“Finley the Fox, and glad to help,” Finley said gripping his with torn gloves.

“Ah, so you are a fox, and the name’s Bendy,” he answered. Boris stepped forward too.

Finley winked. “What? Never seen a fennec fox before?” Bendy shook his head. “Well, I guess I can forgive you. I’ve never seen one of your kind neither.”

“And I’m Boris.” He smiled.

“Nice ta meet ya.” Finley grinned and went to shake his hand.

Sammy seemed uncomfortable, but with an encouraging glance at his friend he also introduced himself. “Sammy, Scare D. Cat. Nice to meet you.”

Boris gave him a warm smile.

“Well, we wish you the best and maybe we’ll see you around,” Finley said with a wave and the group parted ways.

“They were nice.” Sammy commented, like he was surprised.

“Yeah, hope their luck turns around,” Finley said. “Ready?”

Sammy sighed in defeat. “Yes.”

Bendy and Boris easily found the station after the long walk to the other side of the shopping district. The delicious smells coming from the cafes, bakeries, and restaurants teased the boys and they couldn’t help but admire the bright items, cloths in the other shops. Bendy was grateful they had eaten before going through this area. He paused outside the doors of the building. He and Boris shared a look, before straightening their spines, squaring their shoulders, and bravely entering the building.

The front office was a wash of energy and noise. Cops, office workers, and civilians hurried this way
and that. Bendy had to jump back to save himself from being run over. When they finally reached
the front desk Bendy to realized it was at his eye level. Who the hell used such a tall desk!

“Excuse me?” Bendy asked. The older woman, sitting there, didn’t answer. Bendy could barely see
her, leaning over on the other side of her cubical, talking to an officer. “Excuse me?” Bendy said a
little louder. He was tempted to stand on his tip-toes to actually see, but his pride firmly held him flat-
footed to the ground. Boris was using all his might not to chuckle at the expression Bendy had on his
face.

“Ma’am?” Bendy said a bit louder. Bendy sighed, when no response came. Boris reached and rang a
bell on the countertop that Bendy (of course) couldn’t see. Boris had to turn his face away to hide his
grin. Bendy glared at the back of Boris’ head in less-than-serious frustration. “You having a good
time over there, bro? Something funny?”

“No!” he squeaked quickly, which only made him chuckle more.

“You sure? If there’s a joke I’d love to be involved,” Bendy said flatly. He raised a hand gesture for
Boris to speak. “I like a good laugh.”

“Nope! Nothing funny at all Bendy,” Boris said with a large and innocent smile.

“Can I help you?” Bendy flinched and snapped his head up. The older woman was leaning over to
gaze down at him with boredom. She had a rather nasally voice that clawed at his ears.

“Ah, uh, yes! Um, you see my backpack was stolen this morning and it had everything in it. I can’t
even buy breakfast.” Bendy explained in a rush. The woman stared at him like she expected more.
When he didn’t respond, she sighed and leaned back. Bendy blinked. Had he said something wrong?

“Fill this out and we’ll give you a call when we find it,” she said, handing him a clipboard and a pen.
She sounded like his issue was the biggest waste of her time.

“But, I don’t have a phone,” Bendy said, a little worried.

“Your hotel number will work,” she said.

“I don’t have a hotel number either. I can’t afford a hotel room. How will ya tell me if you found it?”
he asked getting a little irritated.

She sighed like he was the most burdensome thing she had ever dealt with. “Then, stop by tomorrow
to see if we have it. Fill out the information as best you can.”

She then dismissed him and turned to Boris. “How can I help you?”

Boris blinked. “Ah, no, I’m with him.” Boris gestured to Bendy. She made some sound of
acknowledgement and turned away from them. The demon heard the roller chair move away and she
disappeared from his limited sight. Bendy grumbled and took a bench after dodging to the side of the
room. He looked through the papers. His address? Didn’t have one. Birthday? He had picked one for
himself, but he doubted there was any record with his name on it. After scarcely filling out the
personal information, he described his backpack and the contents in it. He recounted where he lost it
and how it disappeared.

Boris watched people flying back and forth. Cops escorting criminals and witnesses, civilians asking
questions, giving thanks or being frustrated. It was interesting. Boris watched as a weasel was
dragged by. He was arguing with the officer taking him into the back. He didn’t have any effect on
the officer with his excuses.
Boris wondered idly how things were in Sillyvision. Did Ms. Featherworth and Ms. Ringtail find his note? Were they worried? Was Hogsmen angry? And what about Pete? Did people know they were gone? Were people bothering Sasha about them since she was the closest thing they had to a friend?

His ears drooped just a bit. He hoped people were treating her decently. Sasha could take care of herself, but still.

Bendy hopped up and headed back to the too tall counter. He lifted the clipboard and slide it across the top as far as he could. The woman came back and picked it up. She glanced over it and the annoyance and disappointment multiplied with a drop in the corner of her mouth and the wrinkles in her forehead. It was a show of utter disapproval that overcame her long features. Boris felt his ears drop to his skull completely. If this was what it was like to turn in a school paper, he was glad he had never gone.

“Is this all the information you have for us?” she asked in her painful voice.

“Yeah,” Bendy answered flatly. Boris could see the anger burning in his brother’s eyes.

“There isn’t a lot to work with here. I don’t know if we will be able to help you much sir. If we do find it, we will hold it for you,” she said and started writing something behind the desk.

“Gee thanks,” Bendy said in the same flat tone. He spun on his heels and headed toward the door. He almost got to the door when someone stepped on his tail. He yelped and yanked his tail free, almost tripping the man that had stepped on it.

“Hey!” the man barked in surprise.

“Watch where you’re stepping!” Bendy snapped, cradling his tail close to his chest.

“Brother, are you alright?” Boris rested a hand on Bendy’s shoulder.

“Yeah, I will be once we’re out of here,” he grumbled, glaring at the guy and exiting the busy space. Back out on the street the two wandered back up the district silently. Neither was in the mood to ogle the stores anymore, as their situation took on a new layer of reality.

“They aren’t going to find it, are they?” Boris muttered quietly.

Bendy sighed through his nose. “Prolly not. That desk lady didn’t sound very excited for it. I think it’s up to us, bro. Stars, what is it with cops?”

“What if we can’t find it?” Boris asked a little worried.

“Then we do what those two guys were doing. Dig up an instrument for you and start saving up to get those tickets outta here,” Bendy said, then had an afterthought. “Or I guess we could start walking, but I’m not sure about our directional skills without a map and compass. We’d still need to save up for those, but I’m sure they’re cheaper than train tickets.”

“That sounds like it’ll take a long time,” Boris commented. Bendy shrugged his shoulders.

“Nothin’ we can do about that,” Bendy said. “Doesn’t really matter. We’ll get there soon enough. As long as we stay ahead of that trouble we had back in Sillyvision we’ll be fine.” Boris fell silent and stared at the sidewalk. He shot a glance at Bendy and back down again. Sure, they’d be okay staying ahead of the bad guys, but what about Bendy’s illness? Boris didn’t know how much time they had. He couldn’t help but worry.
It was at this distracted moment that neither brother noticed the shouting ahead of them. No, it wasn’t until someone bumped into Boris, fleeing past him that Boris noticed. He looked up in time to see three dark blurs pass him and Bendy. Cops and a familiar guard ran after the blurs shouting. “Stop! In the name of the law!” one officer said.

“Freeze!” another demanded as they continued their pursuit. Bendy shot the guard a cold glare, but the fat man didn’t notice.

Bendy and Boris shared a confused look and watched them disappear in the distance. It wasn’t until the uniforms were gone that three individuals appeared. One popped up from a plant pot. The bush sitting on his head. “Law? Never heard of ‘im,” he said in a lazy tone.

“Yeah.” Another, with a hat, appeared from behind a flagpole that was far too thin for him to hide behind. “How are we supposed to freeze? It’s like, a hundred degrees out here.” He pulled out a slushy from nowhere and slurped. In a second he was encased in a block of ice.

A girl one, in a skirt and wearing a flower on her head, drifted down from seemingly nowhere using an umbrella to sit on the block of ice. “I guess that’s how,” she said in a high-pitched voice. She tapped the ice making a ‘tink-tink’ sound. Bendy and Boris stared at them, completely floored. Who were these guys? The one in the pot climbed out and observed the one in the ice with interest. He was the tallest out of the three and wore trousers.

“Brain freeze. A classic,” he said. The girl nodded solemnly.

“D-do you guys need some help?” Boris asked hesitantly. Both unfrozen heads snapped towards him and his brother.

“What do we look like? Mailmen?” Bendy asked. The guy strolled over to them. He pulled out a letter and a card with a WB printed on it. “Could ya deliver this to the water tower in the studio pronto?”

Boris blinked. He meant about the one in the ice, not, uh, holding onto a letter.


“Well, yeah, what do you think you look like?” he said and shoved the two items in Bendy’s hands.

“Hey!” Bendy barked.

“What? You said you’d help.” He shrugged.

“This doesn’t help at all!” Bendy said.

“I don’ know, helps us.” The guy grew thoughtful. “Hey!” He snapped his fingers as an idea struck him. “The guys you take that letter to will help you out too. You two could use a favor, right?”

“Yeah!” Boris spoke up. “We had a pack stolen.”

“Tsk, tsk.” He brushed his fingers together in disappointment. “People these days. But, great! I’m sure they’ll be able to help ya.” His tone quickly changed to be upbeat.

Bendy gave him a disbelieving look. “How in the worl—.”

“THERE THEY ARE!” All looked over to see one of the cops pointing at the three accusingly.

“Well, that’s our cue,” the tall one said and ran over to the ice, giving it a shove. It had started
melting and slid easily down the street. The girl pulled him up and the two rode the ice cube as they slid away from the cops. The cops again zipped past Bendy and Boris in pursuit. After everything quieted the brothers shared a baffled look.

“Ah, what just happened?” Boris asked. Bendy shrugged and shook his head. It wasn’t like he had any idea. “What are we gonna do with that?” the wolf pointed to Bendy’s hand.

“Open it?” he suggested.

“I think opening other people’s mail is illegal,” Boris said frowning at the elder brother. “And the other thing?”

“I guess it’s a pass onto the studio.” Bendy sighed and stuffed it into his pocket. “Guess we have to deliver it then. Who do those shmucks think they are? And what kinda help could friends of those weirdos do for us?” Boris just shook his head. There weren’t words to explain what just happened.

The two found themselves back at the car entrance and wall they were at earlier in the day. The guard looked frazzled and exhausted while he let vehicles in and out of the lot. When he spotted the brothers approaching, he scowled. Bendy’s glare reflected the guard’s.

“Be nice, bro,” Boris asked, well begged, to be honest. The last few days had pushed them quite a bit, but Boris didn’t think the poor guard should suffer all Bendy’s frustrations.

“What chu talkin’ about, Boris? I’m the poster boy of chivalry,” Bendy said through clenched teeth. Boris gulped and pitied the guard.

By now the boys were at his gate.

“You twos were kicked out earlier,” the guard said.

“Hey, nice to see ya again too, pal.” Bendy said with a strained smile that was a little too big. “Look, I know we got off on the wrong foot and I can tell you’re berries, so why not let bygones be bygones and say you let us on by,” Bendy said.

The guard blinked, confused, then shook his head. “Can’t let no one by unless they're workin' here or have a a pass.”

“A pass? Like this one?” Bendy flicked his fingers making it seem like the WB pass appeared from nowhere. It was one of Bendy’s favorite tricks. The guard again looked surprised.

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“Hey, where’d ya get that?” he demanded pointed at the card.

“Well, if you had let us explain, we woulda told you that we were here to deliver a letter to the Big Cheese here, personally, but no you gave us the boot first, didn’t ya?” Bendy glared at him. The guard started to sweat.

“The boss didn’t say nothin’ about no one comin’ for a visit,” he said.

“It was supposed to be a surprise, but ya know what? I think I’m gonna tell him exactly how we were treated by one of his employees this morning. He should know that he has a flat tire running his security here,” Bendy grilled him. The guy looked like he was sweating bullets now.

“No! No! I’m sorry sir. I didn’t mean nothin’ by it! I thought yous were a couple of bums on the crib, honest. With the way yous are dressed and everythin’ I had no idea that you guys were here for the
boss.”

“Oh, yeah? Well, next time you’re gonna check before you find yourself up a creek with no paddle,” Bendy stated harshly. “Now move it, I gotta make a run.”

The guard scrabbled back. “Y-yes sir, so sorry again. I won’t do anything like that again. And if yous need anything—.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Bendy waved him off impatiently. “As long as you keep your nose clean from now on. I hear about you bootin’ others, I’ll show you what a real boot looks like.”

Bendy and Boris made it around a corner and Boris let out a sigh.

“See? I was nice.” Bendy pointed. “ Didn’t even touch ‘im.”

“He probably thinks he’s gonna lose his job any minute now,” Boris said giving his brother an unimpressed look.

Bendy shrugged and muttered. “Teach ‘im to treat people nicer. Who kicks a couple of sleepin’ folks in a cussing tree? Who does that?” He huffed and shook off that train of thought. “Any idea where this water tower is supposed to be?”

“Oh gee, I wonder,” Boris said sarcastically and pointed to the tall tower peaking over all the other buildings in the immediate area. “Do you ever look up?”

Bendy looked up with half lidded eyes. He looked forward and refused to make eye contact with the smug, amused smile on the wolf’s muzzle. “Shut up.” This only made Boris laugh. It took a moment for the two to get to the base of the tower. Bendy looked back and forth to only find a rickety metal staircase. He and Boris shared a nervous look before Bendy sighed and started climbing. The higher they went, the windier it got. Soon, the whole studio was sprawled out before them. Bendy let out an impressed whistle. “Check out that view.”

“Yeah, that’s really beautiful. I don’t think I’ve ever seen this far before. Hey, look! It’s the train station!” Boris pointed. “And there’s the shopping district.”

“Wow, bro, you’re right. Good eyes.” Bendy squinted his eyes and spotted the two locations in the distance. It wasn’t much longer before they hit the top. “Wonder what the pay would be for a view like this,” he muttered. They spent a few minutes looking for a door. They circled the tower three times, but only came to the huge WB sign at the front.

Boris gave Bendy a confused look. “What’d we do with the letter?” Bendy responded with an exasperated sigh and a shrug. Honestly, he had no idea why he was doing this. Well, besides the fact Boris would pout about it for hours.

Boris tapped a little beat on the tower distractedly. Suddenly, it flew up knocking Boris to the railing with a yep and tittering him over the edge.

“Boris!” Bendy dove for the wolf and snagged his hand before he could fall, and with a strong yank he had Boris safely back on the platform side. The wolf collapsed to his knees in relief. “Are you okay?”

Boris was shaking but nodded. “Y-yeah, that was close.”

“Hello?” Bendy turned his head to glare at the person that opened the door. To his surprise, it was the guy in the hat that had frozen himself back at the shopping district. For some odd reason his
tongue was sticking out of the corner of his mouth like he was in deep thought.

“What the hell is wrong with you! You almost killed my brother!” Bendy snapped glaring daggers at him.

The individual turned to look at the brothers. “No, I didn’t. We installed the trampoline there!” Without missing a beat, the fella bounced over to them and lightly hopped over the railing. He grabbed both his feet in each of his hands and plunged tail first out of sight. The boys gasped and lunged to the railing, neither wanting to see the fate of the individual, but both powerless to do anything else. As they gazed down, to their utter disbelief, they witnessed the crazy guy hit a dark circle and rocketed back up to them. Both brothers had their jaws drop as the strange fella straightened and at the crest of his ascent, took a single step forward on to the railing and hopped back down onto the platform. “See? Woulda been fine. It’s actually kinda fun.”

“Who’s at the door, Wakko?” A voice called from the open sign-door of the tower.

“Don’t know,” Wakko shrugged and walked back toward the tower. “Might be mailmen. They look like mailmen.”

Boris leaned toward Bendy and whispered, “That wasn’t there when we were climbing up here, was it?”

Bendy shook his head. “I didn’t see anythin’ like a trampoline climbing up here.”

“Then where did it come from?” Boris asked in disbelief, as his eyes widened.

“I have no cussing clue,” Bendy said. The brothers shared a look and Bendy wondered what star forsaken thing they had gotten themselves into this time. Bendy saw the tall guy in the pants step out and give them a curious look.

“Hellooooo mailman!” Bendy suddenly felt a yank on his arm. He looked over to see the girl with the flower in her hair, er, ears. It was pinning her ears up in a mock ponytail. Something else was weird with her, she had hearts in her eyes.

“But, I’m not a mailman,” Bendy said.

She suddenly leaned into him and brought a hand up to his cheek. She smiled suggestively and with half lidded eyes asked. “Wanna be one?” Bendy felt a shudder of something like disgust or dread run down his spine. Bendy asked himself how the cuss was he going to getting away from these nutcases?

The tall fella put his hand to his mouth. “Mmmmmuah!” he threw his hand out with a grin blowing a kiss. “Good night everybody!”

Boris stared at him then turned to where he was looking. “Who are you talking to?”

“Why our Readers of course!” Yakko gasped. “Don’t be rude. Say hello or goodbye now, I guess.”

“Readers?” Boris asked, sounding extremely unsure. His ears fell to his skull.

“Well them and TAP. But, they’re pretty tapped out right now, if ya know what I’m saying,” Wakko chuckled with a raised brow.

Boris pulled back a step. “No clue.”
The Warners shared a look and shrugged. “He must be mental,” Wakko said.

“Completely nuts,” Yakko agreed.

“Could you just stop?” Bendy growled trying to push the girl off him.

“Yeah, sure. The writer wants us to stop here anyway.” Yakko shrugged.

“What are you talking about?” Bendy demanded.

“They.” Dot pointed.

“Who?” Bendy glanced over and back.

“The Readers,” she said.

“Who?” Bendy growled as his patience burned thin.

“Geez, it’s like talking to an owl,” Yakko said, shaking his head with disappointment.

“No, no! That was back in chapter two.” Wakko pointed out to Yakko.

“Oh yeah.” Yakko put his hand on his chin. “What was that guy’s name again? Willy? Wilby?”

“Henry?” Wakko offered with a grin.

“No, that’s not it.” Yakko hummed and thought. “Whyborn?”

“Boys.” Dot’s tone held annoyance. “Ending the chapter,” she suggested, still clinging to Bendy.

“Alright, alright.” Yakko waved her words away.

“What the cuss is going on? What are you loons talking about?” Bendy demanded, feeling so lost his head was spinning.

“Oh, we’ll probably never tell you. You don’t see the fourth wall here obviously,” Yakko said, gesturing out.

“Fourth—,” Boris started to ask, still looking completely out of sorts.

“See ya next chapter folks!” Yakko and Wakko waved. Dot was busy making doe eyes at Bendy. Bendy regretted this day. Completely regretted it.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, sweet cheese and crackers! Those Warners ran off with my story! Seriously! Every time they came on they went completely against what I was planning, and then they dragged it out! Self aware characters like that take the script and laugh at it. They were still fun to write, just dangerous too. They might try to peek ahead in the story...Can't have that. Nope!

So, anywho, I'm giving steampunkseahorse another thank you and those two are going to help our boys out in Warnerburg 'CAUSE SOMEONE HAS TO! And the Warners...oh, boy.
I have nothing to say except...what the heck are you talking about Wakko, tapped out?
I'm fine! Just living off four hours of sleep. Hehehe. I'll nap after this.
Let me know what you think! I can't really tell what you liked or disliked about the
chapter/story if you don't! I hope you are having a great week! It's finally warm here!
Have a great day or night (it depends) and see you next time.
TAP out!
...Wait. Wakko!
Scary Spots

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

The Warners are insane. The boys are given pity and possibly knew friends.

Chapter Notes

Hi...I am sorry this took so long. I was stuck on baby duty, then I had an exam and THEN the chapter refused to paste in anything but half binary! UGH!

FRUSTRATION!

"You should chill. It's the weekend after all."

WAKKO! What are you doing in my author's notes! You're supposed to be in the story!

"I wanted a look/see. This is a pretty sweet spot. Look at all that below us." He grinned.

GET OUT OF MY NOTES!

"Okay." He pulled out a couple of slices of toast and a jar.

...What are you doing?

"Making a snack." He unscrewed the jar and dumped a glob of jam on the toast. He reached behind him and pulled out a thick pile of paper. He placed the stack on the toast and took an experimental bite.

A-are you eating paper? Wait. IS THAT MY STORY!

"Hhhm, salty," he said thoughtfully. "With a hint of sweet."

WHAT ARE YOU DOING!

"What? Wanna bite? That Kit suggested I eat the script in the comments. Sounded tasty, had to try it." He shrugged and grinned. "C'mon it's strawberry jam, real good."

GET OUT GET OUT GETOUTGETOUT!!!!!

"Okay. Shesh. So grumpy. See ya in the story." He took another bite. "And tell TAP hi at the end of chapter."

OOOOUUUUTTTTTTT!!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy finally pushed the odd girl away from him. “Look you gave us a letter to apparently give back to you.”

“So, you are a mailman!” she cheered.

“No!” he snapped and focused on the tall guy, since he seemed to be in charge. “Look, you said something about a favor?”

“I did?” he asked.

“Yes, you did,” Bendy said.

“When did I do that?” he asked.
“When you gave me the letter,” Bendy said.

“Nah, I’m not a mailman,” he said. Bendy felt his frustration starting to boil into anger. He pulled the letter out of his pocket.

“Look, you gave me this letter to deliver to you. You offered us a favor for doing this for you wakkos, so here.” Bendy said stepping over and shoving the letter into his hands.

“I’m not Wakko, he is.” he threw a thumb to the guy with his tongue sticking out. Bendy glanced at him to see he was eating a—wait—was that paper with jam and toast? “I’m Yakko,” the first continued. He turned to the shorter. “What you got there Wakko?”

Wakko sighed and in a pleased voice explained. “The script to the story with strawberry jam. Wanna bite?”

“Oh? Anything good?” Yakko asked with a speculative look.

“A bit salty, if ya ask me, but sweet enough to balance out the salt. You should see chapter twenty-eight.” Wakko smirked. “Oh, and later when the girl shows up.” Wakko suddenly growled, “Helloooooo angel!”

“Oh, yeah?” Yakko said with interest. He took a step closer to Wakko.

“And when she sings and dances. Oh, boy!” Wakko grinned mischievously and winked at Bendy. “I’d say you’re lucky until she finds out about her f—,”

Suddenly an anvil with the word ACME stenciled on the side fell out of the sky and landed on Wakko, cutting him off. After everyone recovered from the aftershock, Yakko leaned over the heavy weight. “Eh, I’d say that’s spoilers you can’t share there.”

Wakko suddenly appeared from behind it. “No kidding. That was close! TAP near ended me!”

Bendy raised a gloved hand to his temple. He felt his headache worsen. He decided to ignore what was going on. Nothing these guys were saying made any sense. “Look, we did what you asked. Can you help us or not?”

“Ah, TAP made you ignore us, uh?” Wakko shrugged. “Your loss.”

“Sure, but you’ll owe us a favor,” Yakko said and handed the letter over to Wakko. He opened it excitedly and pulled out joke glasses with a mustache attached. He put them on with a grin and tossed the empty envelope into the air. Bendy had to do a double take, because he was sure that the envelope hadn’t held anything that was close to that shape.

“But, we just did you a favor!” Bendy said exasperated throwing an arm out.

“You did? What was that?” Yakko asked.

“We gave ya the letter!” Bendy snapped.

“What letter?” Yakko asked.

“Argh!” Bendy threw his hands up in defeat.

Boris bravely stepped forward, hoping to save the situation. If he didn’t, he worried Bendy would break. “We are looking for a backpack. It was stolen from my brother earlier today. It had all our
money in it."

“Well, why didn’t you just say so?” Yakko waved an arm at Boris. Bendy gave a feral growl and Boris rested a hand on his shoulder. Bendy marginally relaxed under his touch and gave a huff. Boris could practically read Bendy’s unsaid thoughts. *Fine! You talk to these crazies. I’m done with all this baloney!*

“So, can you help us find the people that stole it?” he asked.

“Nope,” Wakko said.

Boris’s ears drooped. “O-oh.”

“What!” Bendy barked.

“Well, ya see,” the girl said, pointing to the gate of the studio. “Every time we leave, we’re chased. It’s fun, but not really a way to catch any bad guys.” She suddenly winked at Bendy. “And I’m Dot by the way, the cute one.”

Bendy cringed.

“But hey, if you do catch a crook from the crime ring we could point ya in the direction of the stolen goods,” Yakko suggested.

“How?” Boris asked. The three shared a knowing smile, that sent a chill of terror over the brothers.

“We have our ways,” Wakko said with a mischievous glint in his eyes.

“Sure, ’kay, splendid. We’re leaving,” Bendy said and tugged on Boris’s arm. “C’mon bro.”

“Before ya go,” Dot suddenly popped up on his arm again, with hearts in her eyes. She leaned over and tried to wrap her arms around him. “Gimme a smoochie, Mr. Mailman.”

“Ugh!” Bendy caught her shoulders and pushed her away. “No way!” She finally stopped to look at him. “And for the last time I’m not a mail man! My name’s Bendy!”

She grabbed his arms and spun around so her back leaned against his chest. She pulled his hands around her shoulders so they encircled her and peeked over her shoulder to give him her half-lidded eyes and flirty smile. “Oh, Bendy huh? Why don’t ya bendy over so I can see those sweet buns!”

That was the last straw for Bendy. With a simple toss, Dot found herself over the railing. She blinked and looked down.

“Beat it!” Bendy hissed.

The girl tumbled.

“Bendy!” Boris gasped in horror.

“What? She has a trampoline,” he said, stuffing his hands in his pockets and casually headed to the stairs. “It’s a waste of time bro. Let’s go.”

They saw a blur (which must have been Dot) shoot up past them as they headed down. “That was really rude bro,” Boris chastised.

“She was trying to kiss me Boris.”
“So, you push her off a ledge!” he barked. “When have you ever *not* wanted a girl to kiss you?”

“I like real keen dames, Boris, not some dumb Dora,” he said. “Besides, never stick around crazy birds. Ya never know what they’re planning to do to ya.”

Boris rolled his eyes. “Still. You didn’t have ta toss her.” Bendy didn’t say anything. He knew that was going too far, but they were driving him nuts.

“So where to now?” Boris asked.

“I guess go around town and see if anyone has seen my stuff.” Bendy shrugged. “And after that how about we go back to that fountain? Maybe those performers will still be around.” Bendy suggested.

“That works for me.” Boris smiled. He liked watching the cat and fox and he was happy to go see them again. They almost reminded him of Mickey’s friends on his show, Donald Duck and Goofy.

That is exactly what the boys did for the rest of the day. They went to-and-fro asking and describing Bendy’s bag and the contents found therein to anyone and everyone that would listen. They were careful not to say how much money was stashed in it. Bendy hoped the crook hadn’t found the secret pocket he had the cash hidden in, but he wasn’t very optimistic. The people ranged from kind to uncaring to snide to downright rude. Bendy did note that even though they did get some suspicious looks and sneers, it wasn’t the condescending looks he was used to. That was the one refreshing thing he enjoyed.

Exhausted and downhearted, the two found their way back to the fountain. They collapsed on a bench they had occupied that morning and rested their sore feet and paws. It seemed Sammy and Finley were just finishing their work for the day. The hat was brimming with coins and bills. Bendy smiled. He was glad they could get a satisfying meal. Boris shuffled through his pack.

“I know we have to be sparse, but can I eat another can Bendy?” Bendy glanced over to the weary wolf. He looked hot and beat. Bendy chewed his lip measuring the pros and cons. “Or even half a can? We can split it. You need to eat too,” he said.

“I’m fine, Boris,” was his automatic response. Boris frowned, knowing that was Bendy’s first reaction. The demon had to be just as hungry as him.

“Hey, you two.” The brothers looked up to see Finley. His hat was back on his head and a cheery grin on his face. “Need ta eat? We’re about to go grab a bite too.”

“Thanks, but we can’t,” Bendy said. “We’re broke.”

The fox nodded. He figured as much with the sad way the two dragged themselves to the bench a few minutes ago. “Yeah, no worries. We got you covered.”

“We couldn’t do that to you,” Boris said quickly. “you guys earned that cash today.”

“And you had yours stolen today. Look pal, you two seem like decent folks to me. I gotta feeling that if this situation was reversed you’d be doing the same thing for us,” the fox said.

“Stop yapping excuses and come eat with us.”

Boris looked to Bendy for permission. Bendy chuckled and shrugged. The stubborn fox was going to get his way. “Alright, you win. We’ll bite.”

Finley grinned. “Fantastic.” Sammy nodded hesitantly beside him. The four found a nice little
sandwich shop and after placing their orders, took seats at an outside table. “So, what brings you to Warnerburg?”

“We were just heading through. We’re trying to get to Toon Town,” Boris said without thinking. He felt a light kick under the table from Bendy. Oops.

Finley let out a whistle. “That’s not exactly a day’s walk from here.” Bendy made a noise of agreement. “I’d love to see Toon Town. We could get our big break there.”

“That’s what you said about here, Fin,” Sammy pointed out.

Finley chuckled. “Well, they don’t know talent when they see it, obviously.”

“Oh?” Boris asked.

“Yeah, those fat cats hired some upcoming bunny with a carrot catch phrase. Something about a doctor?” Finley rolled his eyes. “It’ll never catch on. But Toon Town, that’s where ya go to be star.” He grinned.

Boris turned his head in curiosity. “You want to be famous, Finley?”

“Ab-so-lute-ly!” he said. “The jazz, the cash, the travel! And don’t forget all those people cheering and happy ’cause of us!” the fox noticed his friend staring forlornly at the table. “It’ll happen, Sammy.”

Sammy started for a moment and flushed before nodding. “Right, Finley.”

The brothers shared an amused look.

“So, why are you headed to Toon Town?” Finley asked.

“Isn’t that rude to ask?” Sammy asked, he took the tip of his tail in his hands and fiddled with it nervously. He didn’t look up from his hands.

Finley shrugged. “I wanna know and we’re feeding them,” he said like it made all the sense in the world.

Sammy’s face twisted in confusion.

“We’re just traveling. We heard it was a pretty swingin’ place. Can’t go anywhere with no cash though,” Bendy deflected. Sammy raised an eyebrow and glanced up at the devil, before dropping his eyes again.

“So, what about you Sammy? Do you wanna be famous?” Boris asked with a gentle tone. Sammy shifted nervously in his chair with everyone’s attention focused on him.

“I want to write a book,” he muttered quietly.

Bendy perked up. “Oh, yeah? You’ll have to send me a copy when you get it published.” Sammy flushed and looked at Bendy with a mix of surprise and alarm. “What do you want to write about?”

“Oh, um, ah, well,” the cat cleared his throat, then began to explain his ideas. It didn’t take long for Bendy and Sammy to become completely absorbed in their conversation on novels and story themes. The cat even dropped his tail and only glanced away periodically. He slowly began to relax. The other two watched amused.
“So, do you know Mickey Mouse?” Boris suddenly asked Finley. Finley tore his eyes away from the scene of his friend warming up to someone else (He was so proud).

Finley grinned. “You mean the Mouse Circus? Of course! That guy’s a genius.” The food arrived and it didn’t take long for the four to eat. The sun sank from the sky and the growing darkness was dotted by only the most stubborn of stars. The street lights flickered to life, signaling the end of the day.

“Do you have a place to stay?” Sammy asked. Bendy glanced at Boris who smiled. Bendy sighed and shook his head.

“Not really, but last time we just laid down my pack was stolen,” Bendy admitted. Finley and Sammy didn’t seem surprised by this.

“Well, if you don’t mind an alley, you can stick with us,” Finley offered.

“Okay!” Boris answered without a second thought. Bendy just nodded with a neutral expression.

It took Finley some time to scope out a good area. He finally found an alley with empty cardboard boxes, a few trashcans, and a couple of crates. By the time Finley had picked the spot it was late. “You two ever sleep outside?” Finley chuckled. “Ya know, besides the other day?”

Bendy nodded, patting down some stacked cardboard and setting his pack as a pillow. He pulled out a few of the blankets and gave them out. “We used to be in an alley in the outskirts of our town, before we got work.”

“Ah,” Finley said, hoisting himself on one of the crates. He waved away the blanket Sammy had from Boris. “Nah, you use it Sammy.” Sammy looked down at it, hunching his shoulders silently, touched by all the kindness. Bendy leaned against a stucco wall. He wasn’t ready to sleep like this again.

“Hey, we blabbed about our dreams, but what do you two want from life?” Finley suddenly asked. Even though he was laying down, he didn’t sound tired at all. Sammy curled up under Finley’s crate, his tail sticking out from under the blanket as he curled around himself.

“Fin, that’s asking too much. That could be real private,” Sammy murmured and lifted his head to make eye contact with the fox.

The fox peeked over the edge of the crate to gaze down. “Is it? I wouldn’t know, I wear my dreams on my sleeve.”

“Finley, no,” the cat complained.

“Ya’ know they keep me warm and fuzzy at night.” The fox smirked.

“Fin, save it for the morning.” Sammy turned over to face away from the fox.

“Well, you’re amazing at the cold shoulder,” Finley said. The cat groaned and pulled the blanket over his head. Finley chuckled. Bendy heard a moan and glanced to Boris to see him annoyed too.

“What’s the matter bro?” Bendy smirked.

“Bendy.” Boris’s tone held a warning.
“Cold? Afraid you’ll have dreamless sleep? Don’t worry, I’ll wrap you up like a dream burrito. All sorts of warm and fuzzy,” Bendy said. Finley snorted with laughter.

Boris looked at him, completely unamused. “You are terrible.” Bendy shrugged with a chuckle.

“Maybe, but he thought it was funny.” Bendy pointed to the fox. “No need to be so cold either. I think I see frost on your shoulders.” The wolf rolled his eyes.

“Yeah.” Finley sighed with a content smile. “But, hey, Sammy had a point. I didn’t mean to pry.”

“Oh, no! that’s fine. I don’t mind sharing.” Boris’ smile and warm demeanor were back in an instant. “I either want to keep being a mechanic or maybe become an inventor. Oh! Or I want to play in a band. All of those sound like fun. If I do the band schtick, I bet I could travel a lot too!” Boris gushed. Bendy smirked. “Maybe I’d even get to meet Mickey Mouse.”

“Hey, why not all those things? And when you meet the mouse get me an autograph, ‘kay?” Finley said cheerfully. “What about you, slick?” he turned his head to look at Bendy.

“Me?” he raised a brow and the fox nodded. “Well, to be honest I just wanna see my bro happy and be able to afford a roof and food.” He shrugged.

“Ah, c’mon.” Finley propped his head up on his hand. “You gotta have a dream, right? You don’t gotta share, but at least chase after something.”

“Well.” Bendy drew out the word in thought. He hadn’t ever thought about dreams or goals beyond taking care of himself and Boris. “I guess I would be happy dancing with beautiful dames and traveling to see the world,” he said. He could practically feel Boris rolling his eyes. His mind went to Felix’s books and the protagonist’s grand adventures that Bendy liked so much. He chuckled. “I guess a good adventure sounds like fun too.”

“An adventure, huh?” Finley said thoughtfully. Bendy shrugged lightly.

“What kinda adventure?” Sammy suddenly asked. He pulled his head out from under the blanket to look at Bendy with curious, wide eyes. Bendy blinked and thought about it for a moment.

“The kind where you return as a hero,” Bendy said. “Something grand.”

“The crowd is cheering your name,” Finley said in a dreamy tone.

“Yeah,” Bendy agreed, turning his gaze to the narrow strip of sky that peeked above their alley.

“You’ve made a ton of friends and have a hundred tales to tell,” Finley continued, laying down and also looking up. The city lights blocked out most of the stars, but a few stubbornly gleamed through. The moon was gone, making the night seem that much darker. “Everything seems beautiful and peaceful after all the excitement.”

Bendy hummed, feeling his eyes grow heavy.

“Sounds pretty snazzy to me. You’ll have to remember us little guys after you become a hero. Introduce me to some of your lady friends.” Finley winked and snapped his tongue. Bendy was about to retort with a joke when he felt his stomach give a painful lurch. His heart dropped as he felt his throat close and pain spear through his chest. Bendy only grunted as he wrapped his arms around his middle. He was vaguely aware of Boris saying something about his flirting. The pain spiked to what it had been the last time; an inferno lighting in his ribs. Bendy bit his lip to stay quiet. Why now? He could barely hear what the fox said to Boris. It was getting too hot, he couldn’t stand it. He
was burning from the inside out. His lungs spasmed and he couldn’t stop the cough that forced its way up his throat. It was too hot. He couldn’t breathe. It was too tight. He fumbled and managed to wrench his vest and shirt off.

“Bendy?” Boris suddenly appeared next to him. When had he moved? The pain was too much. He felt tears wet his face. The cool night air helped the heat, but only just. One of his hands covered his mouth. He coughed again. It hurt to breathe, to move, and coughing hurt too. He hunched over coughing. His body shaking. “Bendy!” Boris’ gloved hand gently and hesitantly rested on his back. It was cool against his skin. He bit the palm of his hand to stop a scream of pain. It hurt. It hurt. It hurt! His lungs wouldn’t stop and the pain only becoming worse. He couldn’t focus on anything except the pain and Boris’ presence. “You’re going to be okay, Bendy.” Someone asked something Bendy missed. “No, but there’s a canister in my bag.” Just when it seemed he would pass out the pain began to ebb away. Bendy almost sobbed in relief. The taste of bile stung his taste buds. He felt so exhausted that his locked and shacking muscles nearly gave out. He dropped the hand over his mouth and leaned back. He was surprised to find he was leaning against Boris instead of the wall. He limply looked up at the worried wolf. “Bendy, are you okay?” Bendy blinked. It took him a moment, but he managed to nod.

“Found it!” Finley raised a canister triumphantly. His nose and upper body were still halfway in Boris’ backpack. He shot up and out and quickly handed it to Boris.

“Thanks.” Boris unscrewed the lid. “Wanna drink Bendy?”

“Yeah.” Bendy croaked weakly. His mouth tasted horrible and acidic. He raised his hand to take the canister and froze. He stared at his gloved hand. He stared at the speckles of black there. Inky darkness on the hand that covered his mouth. Numbness iced his limbs.

“Bendy? What’s wrong?” The wolf looked over Bendy’s shoulder and followed his brother’s line of sight. “Oh,” he breathed out behind Bendy. "That’s what." Boris’ already distressed look shifted to horror. He tried to stop it, but a tiny whimper escaped him. That snapped Bendy out of whatever trance he was in. He clenched the hand and used the other one to grab the canister before taking a few large gulps.

“Um,” Finley said awkwardly. “Feels like we’re missing something here.”

Bendy looked over to see the cat and fox standing back, gazing at him in concern. Sammy’s hands where clenched together, ringing themselves and the holey gloves he wore, tightly. He looked like he was on the verge of some kinda panic attack. “A-are you okay?” he asked his voice barely above a whisper. Bendy nodded. “Wh-what happened?”

Bendy took a deep breath of the cool night air, grateful for the feeling, and released it with a sigh. “It’s called ink illness.” He voice was just a little scratchy. He felt Boris tense under him. Bendy didn’t acknowledge it. Neither of them could deny it now. He was surprised he’d even had a shred of hope that it was something else. He hadn’t known hope was there until it was crushed by the evidence in his hand. “It’s kinda serious.”

The fox and cat shared a look. “Is it like a flu ‘r something?” Finley asked putting his hands behind his back. Bendy shook his head. He felt so tired, so raw, after all that pain.

“It doesn’t spread like that and I don’t think there’s a cure for it,” Bendy said. He realized he was admitting a lot, that this information could get these two in trouble, but what was the use of being quiet about it? According to Wilson it would hit the whole world. Bendy sure as hell wasn’t going to hide it.
“Does it spread?” Sammy asked his wide eyes getting slightly larger.

“I don’t think it’s that kinda disease. We would have already heard about it if it was, right? Cities panicking and all that jazz,” Bendy muttered. “Nah, it seems to just crop up in some folks, but it’s not like I really know anything.” Bendy suddenly growled in frustration. Boris twitched, startled by Bendy, and Sammy jumped, his fur puffing out. “I don’t know anything! I didn’t ask for an explanation! I should have listened more!” Bendy cursed. That bird had tried to tell him.

“It’s alright Bendy. We’ll get answers,” Boris said in a soothing tone. “We’ll also get a cure,” he said it with so much certainty that it took Bendy aback. Where did he get that much hope?

“Yeah, bro,” he muttered. “Sorry.” Boris was the best brother.

“Don’t be.” Boris smiled. “It’s been a tough few days.” Bendy snorted a laugh. Understatement of the year.

Finley brought a hand up to his chin in thought. “That’s the real reason you guys are headed to Toon Town,” he stated it instead of asking. “Well, then there’s only one thing we can do.” He turned to look at Sammy with a smile, hands resting on his hips. “Right, Sam?”

Sammy blinked and looked between the fennec fox and the two on the ground and nodded. “Right, Fin.”

“So, we’re gonna help you two out a bit.” Finley grinned. “We’re gonna find that cash and get you to Toon Town.” Both boys looked surprised at the fox.

“You don’t—,” Boris tried to say.

“But, Finley, that money might already be gone.” Sammy shared the thought that just occurred to him, accidentally cutting Boris off.

Finley hummed for a second before snapping his fingers. “Then we’ll just raise the money for the tickets.”

“Sounds good to me,” Sammy agreed.

“Wait, wait, you can’t do that!” Bendy protested loudly. “What about you guys?”

“What about us?” Finley tilted his head.

“You need food, and to save up for a place, and heck, what about your dreams, huh?” Bendy waved his arm out in a frustrated gesture.

“Woah now, there is no worry about my dreams. Dreams come true pal. It could be tomorrow or the day after, but I have enough time to help a guy out,” Finley said. “Half the fun is just getting there after all.” Bendy shook his head. It didn’t make sense. He didn’t think he would do this if the roles were reversed here. He would be focused on Boris’ and his own survival.

“But, what about food?” Boris asked.

“No worries, we’ll get by.” Finley waved away his concerns. “You just find your stuff.”

“So, um.” Sammy fiddled with the tip of his tail. Looking at it rather than Bendy he asked. “What exactly is ink illness?” He seemed to shrink on himself. “Sorry. You didn’t explain it before.”

The devil glanced back at Boris. The wolf didn’t meet his eye. Bendy fought off a grimace before
focusing on the entertainers. “Alright, so it’s a sickness that comes and goes in attacks of pain, coughing, weakness, and ah....” Bendy trailed off. He swallowed and took another deep breath. “And coughing up ink or something like it. The fella that told us about it, he said the people who have it eventually, uh, melt into a puddle of this ink.” Bendy opened his hand and showed the spots to the two.

The other two stared, glanced at each other, and then stared again. “Oh,” Sammy murmured with wide eyes and ears pinned to his skull. He looked stricken and a little fluffed up with stress.

“Yeah,” Bendy said, lowering his hand.

“Someone look at that yet?” Finley asked with his huge ears down cast too. Bendy shook his head.

“Well then!” Finley grinned, suddenly flipping his ears back up. “We gotta guy that’ll check on ya! He’s a grand push over. A swell doc.”

Bendy opened his mouth, but Finley kept going. “And don’t worry about paying. The guy won’t wanna cent.”

“Maybe you should see a doctor,” Boris suggested in a strained light tone. “It couldn’t hurt.” Bendy looked over his shoulder to see Boris’ most sincere and sad puppy eyes. Bendy was nearly floored by the gaze.

“Okay,” he found himself saying without hesitation. By the stars, he would say anything to make that look disappear. Boris smiled. Bendy straightened up and grabbed his shirt and vest from the ground.

“Are you okay now?” Boris asked.

“Yeah, besides being tired, I’m fine,” Bendy said pulling the shirt over his head and shrugging the vest on.

“Well then, I think that’s the bell for bedtime,” Finley said, retreating to his crate. Sammy followed, close to his heels. The cat gazed, unseeing, in the middle space in thought.

“Go on bro,” Bendy said, gesturing to the cardboard Boris had been curled up on.

Boris shook his head. “I’m good. You can go though.”

Bendy rolled his eyes. “You’re the morning bird.” Boris smiled and shrugged. The demon sighed and took a spot on the cardboard. “Don’t stay up too long,” Bendy muttered before curling up. Boris stayed against the wall for a while longer, watching them all sleep. The wolf took deep breaths, trying to calm his racing thoughts. He wanted to deny or panic or scream. Who knew a couple spots on a glove could mess him up so bad? It looked so painful. He didn’t know what to do. Bendy seemed just as lost. They had to find Oddswell. He had to have something that could help Bendy. They had to get that ink machine, but he didn’t even know where to begin with that.

He looked up at the stars. He wondered if they knew where the machine was. Maybe they knew what was going on with everyone down here. He wondered if the stars were able to talk if they would share what was going on in Sillyvision, if they could tell him how to save his brother and stop this horrible sickness.
Chapter End Notes

I think this chapter nearly killed me. Between the Warners and Bendy's suffering, I am spent. And Wacko eating my story! I don't regret the anvil. I seriously don't. If that makes me a bad person, oh well. I'm the bad guy then.
I have to thank my best friend for figuring out the pasting problem. Thank steampunkseahorse for Finley and Sammy! Aren't they swell fellas?
And thanks to all of you for reading, commenting, your kudos and bookmarks! They make me smile and laugh and...shoot there are so many of you. Heh. I am honored to write for you. ^^
Have a great week and I'll see ya all next time.
TAP out.
“By my claws!” Ringtail cursed and chucked her notepad to the other side of the room. She growled and dropped her face into her hands.

“Ringtail!” Featherworth hissed disapprovingly.

“Dry up, Featherface!” Ringtail snapped at her. “It's started all over again! We are right back at square one! We let them slip by us because we were way too trusting! We were complete pushovers. Once we get back to Toon Town, we might as well turn our badges in. Cuss!”

Featherworth sighed as her partner continued her rant. They were in their hotel room for a breather. It had been a difficult day.

“They played us like harps and the minute they had a chance they slipped away. We should’ve let them get thrown in the slammer!”

Upon discovering the state of the brother’s apartment, the detectives had lost all authority with the local force. Quietly, the local force had decided the Toon Town agents were incompetent. The cops believed the mechanics has fled their crimes and had sent out wanted reports. The town civilians had become nervous and untrusting after the events of the last few days. Whispers of the town being cursed and shady groups showing up were hissed on street corners and over late-night drinks. Most were reluctant to talk to the women now. The fear was almost suffocating. There was little more the two detectives could do now.
Featherworth mentally went over the list of facts they had. The two brothers seemed to be targeted now, much like Wilson had been. Their apartment had been ransacked for something and not destroyed from a struggle. The letter Boris left explained things vaguely. Joan glanced at it on the table. They hadn’t shared it with the local police. She knew it was withholding evidence, but after losing the journal, she was reluctant to turn in anything she considered vital to her case.

_Dear Miss Detectives,_

_Sorry. We have to leave. It’s too dangerous to stay here. Bendy doesn’t think there’s anywhere safe in town. We’re going to find a cure for the illness. I hope you catch the people that are doing this. Sorry we didn’t come to you. We are doing what we think is best. Good luck and thanks for everything._

_-Boris_

Joan clenched her fists in frustration. She had let them down. She hadn’t had time to explain everything to Ringtail after her drive with Bendy and Boris. Today had been just as hectic. If she had, would things have turned out differently? Would Rachel have had some insight that Joan hadn’t considered? Joan didn’t know. Now the two brothers were wanted for murder and arson and she couldn’t help but feel responsible. She didn’t have any evidence to defend them, but her instincts were certain that they were innocent of these crimes. She wasn’t naïve enough to believe they were purely victims, that they weren’t involved, but she couldn’t believe them to be murderers. The true villain or villains were after them and if they beat her and Ringtail to the boys…they would end up like Wilson.

“JOAN!” Featherworth startled. She looked up at the outraged glare of her partner. She must have been calling her for some time now. “Great time to shut down,” Ringtail hissed. “Glad to know that you are so enraptured by my opinions.” Sarcasm dripped from her tone like venom.

“Rachel.” Joan sighed heavily.

“Oh no! I don’t want to hear anything you have to say right now.” Her fur was fluffed up. She looked bushy and feral with her fangs flashing and her ears folded back.

“It’ll completely change your outlook on the case and the boys.” Featherworth sounded hollow even to herself. She was so drained after hearing nothing but accusations against the two young men. What was she to do? Hogsmen wouldn’t hear reason and the rest of the station followed. She wouldn’t be able to do anything until she got back to Toon Town or captured the boys.

“Why would you withhold something like that from me?” Ringtail demanded.

“The same reason we decided to keep Boris’ letter. We can’t trust this information to be safe. If what I learned from them is true, the implications could be dire for everyone.” She mustered up her conviction and explained everything to Rachel. The raccoon’s expressions shifted throughout, but she stayed quiet and listened. There was something brittle in the crow’s voice that kept her quiet. Rage turned to confusion, shifted to surprise, and then to horror.

“Joan,” she breathed. “That’s-.” She shook her head. “Do you really believe it’s some kind of plague?”

The crow shrugged. “With them gone I can’t prove or disprove anything, but you saw Bendy's condition at the garage. What do you think?”

“I seriously doubt it,” she said. “I mean, a plague? Really, Featherworth?”
“What else then?” Joan asked.

“Money?” Rachel said. “Information? Revenge? It’s just, a plague sounds like something a doctor should be talking about. Not a professor or a couple of mechanics.”

Featherworth acknowledged this. “I know, and yet it would explain Mr. Wiseton’s actions for the past year.”

“But an entire year of knowing about this plague and nothing happening? No doctor figuring it out or town that’s had more than one case? No rumors?” Ringtail raised a hand toward her friend to answer. When Featherworth didn’t say anything, Ringtail continued. “Maybe he believed it. Maybe he got those brothers to believe it, but I don’t see it, Joey.”

“A delusion?” Featherworth asked. Ringtail nodded, dropped her paw, and crossed her legs on her bed.

“It wouldn’t be the first time someone brilliant had a break down from stress.” She said.

“If that’s the case, we have all the more reason to catch up to those brothers,” Joan said. “They could be on a wild goose chase.”

“Well, ready to go see a most certainly grumpy joint owner?” Ringtail asked.

“Stars no,” Featherworth said, shrugging on her coat. Ringtail gave her a tired smile.

It didn’t take the two long to get to the bouncing club. It was a crowded evening, but the building was full of tension. People sat in tight circles, whispering to one another, and nursing drinks that stood half empty. The dance floor had a few pairs, but not nearly as many as usual.

“Geez. It’s so heavy here,” Ringtail muttered.

“Hey, no cops,” the bartender growled. Ringtail and Featherworth turned to him in question. “The boss is done talking for now. She doesn’t want to see anyone.” He started wiping down a glass with a clean towel.

“We have a few questions for her,” Featherworth said in an authoritative tone.

“She already talked to the police. If you want to talk to her, you’ll probably have to arrest her,” The bartender said.

Featherworth was about to argue, but Ringtail beat her to it. “No worries, big boy. We’re here for drinks, not work.” Both the bartender and her partner shot her a suspicious look. Rachel grinned, but carefully hunched her shoulders and tightened the muscles around her eyes to show how tired she was. “Unless we can’t be here to relax,” she stated it in a brittle and vulnerable tone. The bison narrowed his eyes and scowled, but he nodded for them to stay.

Ringtail made to go to the bar, but felt Featherworth grab her arm. “And what do you think you’re doing?” she hissed quietly.

“Taking a needed break and making sure we get to talk to Ms. Swingskirt,” Ringtail muttered back, before pulling her arm free and taking a sit.

Featherworth glared at her, but took a seat next to her.

“Wha’d’ll it be ladies?” the bartender asked.
“Just a fizz-wizz for me,” Featherworth said.

“The strongest juice you’ve got,” Ringtail said.

“Ringtail,” Featherworth hissed with disapproval. “You can’t—,”

“My life is on the rocks right now, Joey. I might as well have a real drink on those rocks too,” Ringtail cut her off.

“Oh?” the bartender sounded interested.

“Yeah, the other officers give us a razing every time we’re around, those boys are on the lam, and I’m gonna lose my badge for defending them.” She scowled at the counter. The bartender placed their drinks before them. “Thanks big daddy,” she said, throwing it back. Featherworth watched her carefully as she sipped her sweet carbonated drink. It was after three of these that Ringtail really started to rant, and the crow grew nervous.

“I mean, what is with this place? So, he was a demon, so what? He was still a kid! Everyone had to be cussing cold to watch him and the wolf starve on the streets. They grew up here, right? It’s not like they were strangers in the area,” Ringtail growled. She took a fourth glass and gulped half of it.

“Rachel,” Joan said in a warning tone. She glanced at the people staring at their backs.

“If I’d shown up on vacation, would I be thrown in the slammer cause I’m a raccoon? I pull out a ten and everyone checks their pockets to make sure it’s not theirs? I’m a nice girl! I have a great job, I’m shmart, and I’m gorgeous! I’m a catch, but does any of that matter here? Nope! Honestly, if I had been dose boys I would have fled too. This run down, can of a town can burn da good outta anyones.”

Featherworth heard angry grumbling near her. “I think you’ve had enough Rachel.” Ringtail finished her drink and was waving for a fifth.

“Oh noes,” she slurred. “I’ve only started. Bar boy, give me another, sugar sweet! Shee, I could get the hate thing with Bends,” she continued her rant. “Demonses ar-aren’t aroun’ mush. The stories about dhem can be preeetty scary, but the wolf? That pup is a heaven-sent marsssshmallow. Dat guy woulda apologishe for stepping on grassh! How much tighter laced do yous have to be aroun’ here to get good? And backs on the Bends, sure he’sh rough aroun’ the edgosh, but he was doin’ real work, like honesty stuffs, yeah? There’re cops that ain’t dhat honesh. He should has a harps!”

“Dry up, city slicker. Ya don’t know what you’re talking about.” Joan turned to spot who said it, but couldn’t find them in the crowd.

Ringtail spun around in her seat, another drink in her hand. “Oh, I knows exactkry what I’m talkin’ about. You thinksh it was easy forrr me to get were I am now? I’m a gurl and a rashooon in one o’ the biggesh cities in the country. Dat and I’m so young. I have had to climb a star fallen mountain of glass to gets here. Joey too!” Rachel sloshed her drink, and spilled some on the floor. “I’d like to see yours palookas try bein’ me fer a day. You’d be runnin’ to mama ‘fore the lunch bell rang.”

“What was that?” The detective focused on a badger at a card table. “You two are sure high and mighty for losing a couple of murderers.”

“That’s enough!” Sasha walked in.

“Ma’am!” the bartender seemed truly surprised she had come down. Sasha’s eyes seemed dull, and her face tight.
“If anyone wants to start trouble they can get out. I have no patience for it today,” she said. The locals heard the steel in her voice and fell quiet. She turned her glare on the detectives. “You two. Come with me.” She turned on her pointed heels and clicked back through the door way she appeared from. Featherworth felt oddly like a scolded child as she guided her partner to the back room. She could feel the eyes of everyone on them as they disappeared behind the door. “This way,” Sasha said, stepping up the stairs.

“Are we’s followin’ the fairy? Joey, we’re supposeds to find a deemon, not a fairy,” Ringtail giggled. Featherworth rolled her eyes. She quietly followed the club owner and shushed any noise Ringtail started to make.

The woman led them up to her private loft on the third floor. “Are you sure?” Featherworth asked.

“Yes,” Sasha said and opened the door. She stepped in and left the door open for the other two to follow. Featherworth observed the tastefully furnished living room. The couches were soft and full, if not a little worn. The rug was simple, but tasteful, the coffee table too. Featherworth paused at the photographs of people in her club. Employees, locals, and visitors all seemed happy and she even spotted one of the local officers at a party and another of Bendy and Boris. “Have a seat, I’ll get something for you to sober up.”

“No need.” Ringtail plopped down on the couch with a pleased grin. She sounded completely sober.

Sasha paused and looked over her shoulder. “I’d rather only have this conversation once, so you have to remember it.”

“Well, it’s a good thing I’m sober,” Rachel smiled. Sasha blinked and turned around fully. She put her hands on her hips, her tired demeanor shifting to outrage. She glared death at the raccoon. “You played me!”

Ringtail shrugged. “Would you have spoken with us if I hadn’t?” Featherworth rolled her eyes. She did not agree with Ringtail’s conduct. They were supposed to defend the peace, not trip it up. That and the raccoon’s drinking made Joan nervous.

Sasha huffed. “Well, I would ha—.”

“Would you have spoken with us today?” Ringtail cut her off, gazing around her place with a lazy eye. She didn’t notice anything that hinted at family or her life before Sillyvision, or at least nothing obvious. Interesting, Rachel wondered what her life had been like before she moved to this dot on the map.

Sasha failed to respond and the silence stretched to uncomfortable lengths. “I didn’t think so,” Rachel finally said.

“I already talked to the cops. I don’t know anything about Bendy and Boris. The last I saw of Bendy was him leaving with you,” Sasha said, crossing her arms. If she was lying, she was good. Rachel couldn’t find any telltale signs.

“But we all know that’s not true, Miss Swingskirt,” Featherworth spoke up. “All gossip travels here. You know exactly what happened to Bendy and Boris, if not with a few extra details. Also, if they were in any trouble, I have a feeling they would turn to you. You seem to be the closest thing those boys have to a friend here.”

“Why should I say anything to the two of you? So far, neither of you have helped my boys and now I know you can be very manipulative.” Sasha shot a look to Rachel, who smiled. “I don’t exactly
hope you have those boys best interest at heart.”

“Of course we do,” Featherworth said gently. “They are running, possibly for their very lives, and I want to catch up to them before they either end up like Wilson or back here behind bars.”

“You’d just arrest them,” Sasha said.

“Yes, we have to now. I plan to take them to Toon Town. There we will work on building a case for them. We will clear them of what we can and put them under witness protection. I want to believe that there is more to this than those two going on some sort of rampage and skipping town,” Featherworth said. She caught Ringtail’s disapproving look. Featherworth returned her look with a steady gaze. Sure, the rampage was the least complicated explanation and neither story completely added up, but her gut was still telling her those boys were innocent. It didn’t matter that Ringtail thought differently.

“You said you would help them. That you would be fair.” Sasha sat down on the loveseat, her eyes flickering between the two police women.

“And we will. If you know anything that could help us find them, I implore you to share. They could be in danger,” Featherworth said.

Sasha bit her bottom lip and her gaze went to the pictures around her living room.

“We can’t help them much if we can’t find them,” Rachel added.

Silence hung in the air. Joan watched the woman struggle internally. She knew without looking that her eyes were fastened to the one picture she had of the two boys. She felt Rachel tense next to her, and with a light touch stopped the raccoon from pressing again.

A fire overtook the conflict in the club owners eyes. “If I find out you caused those boys any pain, and if this is a ruse in any way, I swear I will make you both pay. To hell with the consequences.” Rachel grinned at the woman’s spunk. She really did like this woman the more she talked to her.

“Did you just threaten cops?” Ringtail asked in amusement.

Sasha raised her chin, like she expected a fight. “I made a promise. It’s up to you if it becomes a threat.” Rachel had to bite back a chuckle. Oh yeah, she definitely liked this feisty woman.

“Understood,” Featherworth said.

Sasha’s fire cooled a little and she relaxed her shoulders. “I really don’t have much to offer you. The fastest way out of town is by train. I know those two. They probably think they’re doing what’s best.” She sighed. “Those idiots.”

“Were they here last night?” Featherworth asked. “Did anyone stop by here?”

Sasha fixed her with a cold stare. A sharp smirk crossed her smooth face. “It’s none of your business what company I keep in the night.”

Rachel had to cover her muzzle with a hand to keep from spurting in giggles. Featherworth remained unfazed.

“That’s all I can giving you,” Sasha said. “Now, if you don’t mind, I have a club to run and a bunch of nervous drunks to entertain.” Sasha stood.
“Thank you for your help,” Featherworth said, standing. She reached out, and after a moment of hesitation, Sasha shook her feathered hand. “We won’t stop until those two are safe and justice has been served to whomever has upset this town.”

Sasha nodded. Rachel didn’t think she looked convinced. She also stood and shook the club owner’s hand. The two detectives headed to the door and down the stairs. They ignored the looks of the patrons as they came out of the back room and through the bar. “Station?” Ringtail asked.

“Station,” Featherworth confirmed. They walked to the front doors. Featherworth grabbed a handle and paused.

“What is it?” Ringtail asked. Featherworth cocked her head and opened the door. She looked at the lock on the outside of the door. “Featherworth?” Joan narrowed her sharp eyes. The crow continued outside with her partner at her side.

“Those locks have been picked,” Featherworth said.

Ringtail glanced back at the building. “New scratches in the locks huh?” She hummed thoughtful.

It didn’t take long for the two detectives to walk to the train station. They questioned the employee giving tickets.

“I already told the police,” he said, a little irritated. “The record we have on them says they bought two tickets for Warnerburg yesterday.”

Featherworth and Ringtail shared a look. “Thank you,” the crow said and turned on her heels. The two quickly left and headed to the car.

“Those slime balls didn’t tell us they found where the boys went,” Rachel growled.

“Of course not,” Featherworth said. “if we get them, Hogsmen loses his chance. He wants them back here so he has jurisdiction. He’ll make it as complicated as possible and keep those two tied up in his jail for as long as he can.”

“That could freeze our case entirely,” Rachel stated in an annoyed tone.

“I know. Why is he so fixated on them?” Featherworth wondered.

“Pride? Maybe to cover up the bribes that shorty told you about,” Rachel offered in a thoughtful tone.

“Bendy would be upset to hear you call him that.” Joan smiled.

Rachel smirked. “I know. I hope I get to mess with him again. Those two were a riot.”

Featherworth rolled her eyes. The two got to their car and the raccoon started to drive. “Soooo.” She drew out the word. “Pack up and head off to Warnerburg?”

“Actually, we need to stop at the station one last time,” the crow said.

Rachel pulled a face. Her lips pulled back and her eyes narrowed like she ate something bitter. “Why?”

“Just a couple of things to fetch,” Joan said innocently.

It didn’t take long. Rachel watched quietly as Featherworth inquired about the car accident from
sometime back. The officer looked and couldn’t find anything, just as the two had expected. She then asked for a few other files and secured what they needed. Rachel was hopefully they could get away. She and Joan made a quick beeline to the door.

“Detectives!” a voiced called out. Rachel bit back a moan. They had been so close. The two turned around to see Snoutfer approach them.

“Officer Snoutfer,” Featherworth greeted.

“You seem busy, so I won’t hold you up. I just wanted to apologize fer my behavior the other day. Tension was running high and I shouldn’t have said that to you, Detective Ringtail. You both are an immense help and Sillyvision hasn’t see a homicide in, golly, I think thirty-five years or so. The last few days rattled me and I didn’t mean to take it out on you,” he said, his round face turned slightly downward and his face seemed splotchy with embarrassed. Ringtail was floored he was apologizing.

It took her a moment to find her words. “All’s forgiven, Snoutfer. I know it’s been stressful. I guess it’s just different in the cities.” Though she didn’t agree with the pig on a lot of things, she was touched he would take a moment to apologize.

“And don’t worry about your reputations. Those two hoodlums have burned a lot of good cops like this before,” he said. “The stakes just haven’t ever been this high.”

Ringtail forced herself to keep her smile and nod pleasantly.

“That’s a lot of files, are you going somewhere?” he asked.

“It’s time we head back to Toon Town. We sent in a report to the office to come collect the evidence for our case from here and take it to the city. They should be here in a few days,” Featherworth said.

“Oh, well, thank you again detectives. If there is anything more we can do for you, just give us a call,” he said pleasantly and left the two.

As the detectives got in the car, they shared a look.

“That was odd,” Ringtail commented, raising a brow.

Featherworth snorted. “I know. Manners are beyond you.”

Rachel’s jaw dropped in mock offense. “Rude! I will have you know, I’m a refined lady.”

“So refined you faked being drunk and almost started a bar fight.” Featherworth rolled her eyes heaven ward.

“I got us in with her, didn’t I?” Rachel grinned.

“You had an edge, admit it.” Joan narrowed her sharp eyes suspiciously.

“It’s not like I was spifflicated,” Rachel muttered.

“I let you drive!” Featherworth laughed in disbelieve.

“Hey, now! I’m doing a bang-up job,” Ringtail stated, straightening her spine and turning the keys.

“Oh, no, move over. You are not driving anymore!” Featherworth leaned over, laughing and grabbed the wheel.
“You didn’t even notice!” Ringtail protested, laughing too. She weakly tried to push the crow back. It didn’t take long for her to find herself in the passenger seat. “Annoying featherhead.” She crossed her arms and slouched in the seat.

“Love you too,” Joan said, smiling as she drove them to the apartment.

It only took a few minutes for the woman to collect their things and throw them into the car. “So how long do you think the drive will be?”

“If I’m guessing right, it should probably be the rest of the day. We’ll get there late,” Featherworth answered.

Ringtail hummed. “Sounds like a perfect time for a nap!”

“Hey, I thought you’d keep me company,” Joan huffed, sounding annoyed, but a smirk gave her away.

“Nah, too much effort.” The raccoon sighed and leaned back, pulling her hat low over her eyes. The crow gave her shoulder a light punch. “Hey!” Featherworth pulled a goofy face by crossing her eyes and sticking out her pointed tongue from her beak. Rachel burst into giggles. “Okay, okay, you win!” The car pulled out and turned toward Warnerburg. Rachel idly watched the small town slip away. She couldn’t believe they were only here a few days. Between these places it felt like a lifetime since she’d seen her simple apartment back in Toon Town. She missed the never sleeping city. She hoped Warnerburg was bigger than this place.

“Two tickets for Warnerburg,” he said. His voice was gruff and low. The ticket man looked up and did a quick double take. The individual felt annoyance spark in his being.

The employee shook his head, probably shaking off his surprise before answering. “Yes, sir, hope you travel safe,” he said as he took the money.

“What’s with the look?” he asked. The employee glanced up at him in surprise. He guessed he’d let his annoyance show a little too much either in his tone or his face.

“Sorry, we don’t see many like you around here,” the employee apologized, handing the tickets over.

“Well, watch yourself. Ya might find yourself six feet under from a guy not as nice as me,” he said, tucking the tickets into his jacket pocket. The employee started, his eyes widening at the veiled threat. The individual turned and strolled away. The employee put his hands on the counter to lean forward and call after the man. Suddenly, there was a flash of blue and the wooden dividing panel that was used to close the booth slammed down on the employee’s hands. The clip links that held it up were smoking and broken. Others looked and rushed over to the screams of pain. The man chuckled as he met up with his partner on the platform.

“That was funny, bro.” The other laughed.

“Yeah, I know. He was annoying. He deserved it.” The man chuckled again.

“I know,” his partner agreed. “Hopefully, the next chums are as easy to deal with.”

“At least easier than that damn bird,” the man said, fishing in his pocket for a cigarette and lighter.

“The sign says no smoking,” his partner pointed behind him. The man shot him an annoyed glare. The other shrugged with an easy grin on his face. “I’m just sayin’.”
The man snorted and lit it. “Pull up your scarf, we’ve gotta get going and I don’t need you tripping again, idiot.”

“Ya trip one time, and he’ll never let you live it down,” the other grumbled, tugging the scarf up around his nose.

“Not as long as you act like an idiot, idiot.” The man retorted and let out a puff of smoke. “We can’t ball this up. I’m sick and tired of chasing weenies around. The bird is finally taken care of, only for these two schmucks to pop up.” He felt his frustration climb again. “The boss ain’t the most patient person.”

His partner made a noise of agreement. “That was terrifying.” His easy-going smile didn’t match the phrase. The man hummed in agreement. Their meeting with the boss had almost ended with the loss of his partner. They got out by the skin of their teeth and with a new mission. He had been so sure they were done. He let another cloud of smoke escape through his nose. No use crying over spilt milk. They were both still alive. Just one more mission.

The whistle of the train alerted the people at the platform of its arrival. The man dropped his cig and stepped it out. Just one more mission. No problem, it was just a matter of time before he caught up to them.

Chapter End Notes

They finally showed up, and it's like chapter eleven. Good heavens, this thing is going to grow into a novel, isn't it? Hehheheh...oh, boy. What did I sign up for?
At least I'm having fun with it! Also, it's amazing what cops were allowed to do back in the day. They had a lot more power. I'm glad for people like Joan and Rachel, but nervous when it comes to people like the local police of Sillyvision. The contrast in how they use their authority is night and day.
Next time we'll be with the boys again. They need to get a move on or they're gonna find themselves in hot water. Leave a comment to feed the ego monster and I'll see you lovelies next week (hopefully) and thanks so much for reading! Have a good rest of your day..or night..or whatever time of existence you find yourself in.
TAP out!
A Busy Day

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Bendy just can't get a break today!

Chapter Notes

TAP here!
Just like Bendy can't get a break, neither can I! End of semester weeks are complete mad houses! I don't have a lot of time, so I'll just let you get to the chapter.
Oh! Real quick though, the links in the story are for music if ya want it. This is what I listened to while typing this chapter. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I'm sorry young man, but in my professional opinion you are completely healthy,” Dr. Boo said. He was a small crow, not nearly as tall as Featherworth had been, and his thick glasses hid his eyes from Bendy completely, but his eyebrows were expressive enough that it didn’t matter much. He had a hood attached to his white coat giving him a white grim reaper look…or was it more of that ‘death doctor’ look? Plague doctor with the beak? Something like that, he seemed dark to Bendy.

“Ah, c'mon doc. You gotta have more than that,” Bendy complained. He had never been to a doctor's office and it had taken all three of his companions to convince him to go. It had been odd to see Sammy explain in his quiet and concerned way that a doctor would at least have something for pain. Finally, Boris was able to drag Bendy in. The two entertainers explained to the beautiful nurse the situation. She had to get up and talk to the doctor about a walk-in visit. Bendy had enjoyed watching her very curvy form sway through the back doors. The street performers opted to wait out in the waiting room. Boris wasn’t going to leave Bendy’s side and Bendy was secretly relieved. This overly clean and sparse place was creepy. He didn’t like the chemical smell, and the tension that came from people unable to do anything but wait was nerve racking.

The nurse had returned to inform him that the doctor would gladly see him. Bendy had flirted with her until he went in (much too Boris’s annoyance) to relieve some of his nerves. She had been pleasant and polite. She smiled at him like he was a kid trying to be charming. Bendy had been too nervous to really get annoyed.

The doctor shrugged. “I’m sorry. Until the test results come in, I can’t tell you more.” All this tension was amounting to squat. After facing the needle and probing, he couldn’t believe this was all he was getting. They had explained all Bendy's symptoms. They even gave the doctor his stained glove.

“When will that be?” Boris asked.

“Roughly a week,” The doctor answered. Bendy was barely able to stop himself from smacking his forehead. A week! He didn’t have a week to waste here. At the same time, it wasn’t like he could get
outta of here either.

“What about some pain meds, doc?” Bendy cut in.

“I can’t proscribe anything beyond over the table medicine until I have a better understanding of what you’re dealing with,” Dr. Boo explained patiently. Bendy’s eye twitched. Hadn’t he just explained what he was dealing with? What good was this quack? Boris rested a hand on his shoulder.

“Thank you, sir,” Boris said.

Bendy walked out of the building feeling somewhat violated. He decided he didn’t like doctors or hospitals much. Needles were freaky and the smell was disturbing. Nope, he was good never going back.

“Well that was a waste of time,” he muttered in a bad mood.

“Hey, maybe he’ll come across something,” Finley said.

“We don’t have a week,” Boris said, tugging at his gloves.

Bendy sighed. “It’s not like we have much of a choice, bro.”

“Well, Sam and I are gonna go start our routine and see how much we can rack in today. What about you guys?” Finley asked.

“We’re gonna stop by the police station and see if they have any leads yet, then we’ll hit the streets and start asking around,” Bendy said.

“Alright, we’ll see you around lunch time.” Finley gave him a lazy salute before turning and heading to the shopping district. Sammy gave them a wave before following.

As the two friends set up for their routine a thought came to Sammy. “Hey Fin, do you think I could get ink illness?”

Finley thought for a moment and shrugged. “Well, if you did, I’d take care of you. I mean, that’s what friends are for right?”

Sammy gave a small smile. “Y-you would?”

“Of course, you and I are as thick as thieves.” Finley grinned. Sammy nodded.

“Thanks Finley, you’re a swell friend.” Sammy hunched his shoulders.

“Back at you bud,” Finley said. “I’d do whatever it takes since you’ve always looked out for me. It’s only returning the favor.”

Sammy shook his head. “I haven’t done anything.” Finley snorted and looked at his friend in disbelief. He had an endearing smile, kindly disagreeing with the cat without saying it.

“We better get started. We got some big goals today,” Finley said. Sammy nodded. If something like ink illness hit, Finley feared it would be Sammy, but he wouldn’t leave his friend. He would do everything he could to help the cat. That’s just how Finley was.

Bendy took a deep breath before entering the station. It was just as busy as last time, but unlike last
time, Bendy kept his tail close. He and Boris approached the counter where the same woman sat. Without looking up, the woman asked in her nasally voice. “How can I help you today?”

“I came in yesterday about a stolen backpack,” Bendy said. The woman looked down and spotted him. Her eyes widened just a little. The wrinkles on her forehead doubled with her raised eyebrows. She glanced between him and Boris.

She clicked her tongue. “One moment, sir.” She got up and went into the back that was walled off from view. Bendy felt his hope rise. He glanced around the waiting area and the wanted posters. Maybe they had gotten his bag?

After about five minutes of waiting Bendy felt nervous. It shouldn’t be taking this long, should it?

“Hey Boris.” Bendy indicated to the wolf to lean in. “Can you peek over the counter?”

Boris raised a brow in confusion. “Why?”

“Just look, tell me if you see anything,” Bendy said. Boris stepped up to the counter and leaned forward to see over it. “Well?”

“Just office stuff Bendy.” Boris said. “Pens, staples, files, a phone, a notepad—oh wait.” Boris narrowed his eyes and turned his head a bit. “It’s upside down, but there’s something about Sillyvision on the pad.”

“What does it say?”

“Sillyvision report.” Boris blinked and leaned a little closer, enough to look suspicious. Bendy glanced around to see if anyone was watching them. They were still good. “Two wanted reports. Highly dangerous. Wanted for suspicion of murder and arson. Bendy the demon and Boris the wolf.” Bendy’s stomach dropped. He grabbed Boris’ arm, and yanked him toward the exit as quickly as possible. “Bendy, what’s going on? Why is—.”

“You two stop right there!” The boys glanced over their shoulders to see a group of cops bursting through the double doors.

“Time to go!” Bendy burst out the doors and down the street. Boris was on his heels.

“Freeze!” Roughly five officers were pursuing them. Bendy took a quick left into an antique shop. He and Boris dodged around the clothes rack. The shop owner let out a shout of surprise. The boys slipped into the back room and looked around wildly. Boris pointed to a door. They burst out the back of the store and turned into an alley. They took another corner, jumped a pile of trashcans, and took a third corner.

“Why are there-wan-wanted,” Boris tried to huff the question through his panting. They came out on another street and turned, going parallel to the street they were on before.

“I bet my ta-tail it’s those star fal-fallen hogs!” Bendy barked as they kept going. After thirty minutes of running and dodging through crowds the boys dove behind a chest high (for Boris at least) row of potted flower bushes.

“Do you think w-we lost them?” Boris panted, his tongue lolling out of his mouth, and sweat making his fur sticky.

Bendy peeked out. “There they are!” An officer pointed at him.
“Nope!” Bendy was up and running again. They started getting more creative, jumping over tables, plants, and even people. Bendy knocked over stands or stacked products to slow the police down. They doubled back and slipped into the alleys again.

“Now where?” Boris looked around the brick walls.

Bendy spotted the fire escape of a boarded-up building. “The roof.” He pointed to the metal frame. The ladder was suspended too high for Boris to reach even standing on a trash can.

“How?” Boris asked looking up at the ladder.

Bendy huffed. “Stand under the ladder.”

“I still won’t—.”

“Trust me,” Bendy cut him off. The wolf quickly followed Bendy’s instructions.

“Now grab me and toss me up,” Bendy said, getting in front of his younger brother.

Boris looked surprised. “What? But Bendy that could be really dangerous!”

A shout on the streets behind them had the two glance back the way they came. “No time bro, just do it!”

Boris bit his lip and crouched down. He locked his hands together, giving Bendy a place to put his foot. “Ready?”

“Ready.” Bendy nodded. His eyes completely focused on the lowest rung of the ladder. Boris heaved with everything he had and slung Bendy upward. Bendy flew up to the third rung. He flailed for a second before he wrapped his hands around the second one. He grunted as he felt metal scrape his hands and arms. Still, his grip remained firm. He swung for a moment before pulling himself up. He hooked his legs through the ladder and allowed his upper body to fall upside-down. “Alright Boris, jump up and grab my hands.”

“Why not just lower the ladder?” Boris asked. He grabbed a trash can to stand on.

“They’d be able to follow, we won’t be able to raise it once it drops. That, and they’ll hear it crash down,” Bendy explained.

Boris wobbled on the trash can for a second swinging his arms to stay balanced before he got it.

“Check over there!”

“Hurry!” Bendy hissed. Boris gulped, but didn’t turn to look. His dark eyes stayed on Bendy’s hands.

“Promise to catch me?” Boris asked with a smile. His voice shook.

“Duh,” Bendy stated flatly. Boris leapt up and linked arms with Bendy. Bendy grunted with the metal cutting into his legs and the pull on his arms and shoulders.

“Bendy?” Boris asked dangling in the air. Bendy grunted again and tried to curl up so Boris could grab the lowest rung. He lost grip on one of Boris’ hands, causing the wolf to flail for a second before linking arms again. On the third try Bendy was finally able to pull him up. The boys climbed up onto the platform.
The two gasped for air as they clung to the metal railing on the platform. “Remind me to do more curl ups in the future,” Bendy puffed, with sweat running down his face.

“I thought you were going to drop me there for a second,” Boris admitted.

“Never!” Bendy gave a winded chuckle.

“There they are!” The two looked down to see a tall officer pointing at them.

“Give me a break!” Bendy complained. He groaned as he forced himself to climb up. It was only a matter of minutes before the got to the roof.

“Now what?” Boris asked, looking around the barren roof.

“Ready for some leap frog?” Bendy asked, looking at the roof across from them. Boris followed his gaze and moaned.

“Hey, if they follow us after this, they absolutely deserve to catch us,” Bendy said with a cheeky smile.

“Bro, I never wanted to run from cops again. How does this keep happening?” Boris muttered and prepared himself to jump.

“Lucky, I guess,” Bendy said and dashed forward. The two threw themselves over the distance and rolled onto the other roof. They sprung up and jumped to the one after that.

“You just have issues with authority,” Boris accused lightly. Bendy gave a winded chuckled.

A good half hour of running and jumping roof to roof had the boys spent. They stopped to breathe and see if there was any signs of the police. When they were satisfied that they had lost their pursuers, the two shimmed down a rain gutter to street level again. They sat on the pavement and just focused on resting for a time.

“Bendy?” Boris asked after his heart rate returned to normal.

“Yeah, Boris,” Bendy said, his eyes closed and a small frown on his face.

“I think we balled up, leaving before we cleared our names,” Boris said. Bendy snorted, but he was smiling. He didn’t open his eyes.

“I know,” Bendy agreed. He probed his arms on his knees. “Think we could give ‘em a ring and ask them to nicely clear us?”

Now Boris snorted. “You scrambled your brain on the roof.”

“What? I think Snoutfer was warming up to me there at the end. He kept me for a whole hour n’ a half to himself.” Bendy smirked.

“Bendy just stop.” Boris chuckled.

“No? Then maybe Hogsmen. You could use your dangerous puppy charm on him,” Bendy said, opening one eye half open to peek at Boris.

“Dangerous puppy?” Boris turned to look at Bendy fully. He had one brow raised and one ear perked.
“Bro, that puppy look is a star fallen weapon,” Bendy said.

“Oh yeah?” Boris smirked. Bendy suddenly realized what he was talking about and to whom.

“Ah,” he drew in a quick breath. “Don’t get any wise ideas there, pal.”

The smile that spread across Boris’ muzzle was downright mischievous. Bendy inwardly groaned. What had he unleashed upon the world?

“We better go find Finley and Sammy. We took a lot longer than we were supposed to. They’re prolly wondering where we are,” Bendy said. He forced his tired and sore body up. Boris grimaced, but followed suit. The two remained vigilant of any officers as they slowly made their way to the shopping district.

“What are we going to do about your pack now?” Boris asked with his ears twitching back and forth, trying to stay alert to police.

Bendy sighed and stuffed his hands in his pockets. “I guess leave it be. We might have to walk to Toon Town.” Boris’s eye twitched, but he stayed expressionless. Bendy could tell he didn’t like that answer anyway. “There’s no helping it.”

It didn’t take the boys long to find the entertainers when they reached their destination. The place was busier today and the two were getting a pretty good crowd together. The boys decided to lay low for a while and just enjoy the show.

Bendy had to admit he was impressed with the street performers. Their kindness and selfless actions touched him unexpectedly. Bendy didn’t think he would do what they did for complete strangers. He wasn’t that self-sacrificing. He idly wondered why those two were.

Boris nudged Bendy’s shoulder. “Bendy, the cops.” The wolf tilted his head to the officers that walked up the street. Oh boy. “Whadda we do?”

Bendy narrowed his eyes and looked around the street pavilion. It only took him a few seconds to come up with a plan. “Ready to do something crazy Boris?” The wolf looked at him wearily, his ears flicked nervously.

“Like what?”

Bendy approached an old man with a violin case. “Sir, can I ask a favor of you?”

In a matter of moments, Boris couldn’t believe Bendy was pulling one of his crazy schemes. “There is no way this is going to work.”

“Have a little faith, bro,” Bendy said, adjusting the cap he borrowed from another man. He now wore a spiffy vest and scarf. He had wrapped his tail around himself under his shirt to hide it.

“Oh, I have faith,” Boris said, adjusting the violin strings so it would sing the way he wanted it to. “Faith, we’ll be sleeping in a cell tonight.” He stuck his tongue out of the side of his muzzle in focus. It was delicate work and even though his Talent was music he had never held a violin before. It was easy to accidentally make it shriek instead of sing. “There is no way we’re getting away with this.”

Bendy chuckled and came up behind Boris. He whipped a shawl around his shoulders and head.

“Hey!” Boris barked in surprise. Bendy then slid a pair of glasses over his muzzle. They didn’t fit perfectly and slide a little down his muzzle, but they stayed on.
“There! Now they’ll have to look close to recognize you.” Bendy grinned. The officer had slowly made their way down the street, asking people questions and putting up wanted posters.

“Now, just one more thing and we can put on this little show,” Bendy said, scanning the crowd. It only took a few minutes for the demon to spot what he was looking for. A beautiful dame walked down the street holding the hand of another man. The way she walked and held herself gave away her ability as a dancer. Bendy guessed she might dance for the studio or something along those entertainment lines. “Wish me luck,” Bendy muttered under his breath.

Boris looked up from his fiddling. “What are you—.” He spotted the girl. The wolf gave an annoyed huff. “Really? You’re doing this now, Bendy? She’s even with someone!” The devil ignored him and bravely approached the two.

Bendy cleared his throat and took a deep breath before he took the dive. “Excuse me, miss.” She looked over to him and pushed her light wavy hair over her shoulder. “How would you feel about making a lot of people smile today?” She raised a confused brow.

“Oh?” she asked softly.

“Ya see we have all these nice families out today and my b—,” Bendy choked. Don’t call him your brother! “My best pal over there has his violin ready and I am excited to dance, but I need a good partner. You seem to be an excellent dancer. Are you willing to help?” She seemed surprised.

“Hey pal, what do you think you’re pulling?” the guy holding her hand demanded. He was wearing a suit and vest combo that screamed dough. Bendy gulped. This could get hairy, especially if the cops headed over to them.

“How do you know I’m a dancer?” she cut in, ignoring her guy.

Bendy smiled. “By the way you carry yourself. It’s obvious.” Her mouth made a little ‘o’ and she blushed.

“Oh c’mon Cindy let’s go,” the guy said, annoyed.

“It’s just a dance,” she said. “Besides, I’ve never had someone recognize me as a dancer by my walk before.” The guy’s frown deepened. “Please? I want to see what he can do.”

The man rolled his eyes. “Fine.” She gave him a dazzling smile and a kiss on the cheek. Bendy let out the tiniest sigh of jealousy before he shook it off. He kept a charming smile on his lips as he offered his hand and escorted her back to Boris.

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“Hello, Bendy!” Sammy greeted him. Bendy turned to look, his eyes lighting up with recognition. He rushed over to greet his friend. “Hey, Sammy! What’s up?”

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Bendy grinned when he spotted him. “Oh Ben—.” Bendy waved his hands to stop him from finishing his name. Finley’s smile dropped a degree. “What’s up bud? I hardly recognize ya in that get up.”

“Can I steal your crowd? I need a cover.” Finley raised a questioning brow at him. “I’ll explain
later.”

Finley shrugged. “No need to steal. I’ll introduce ya.”

“Thanks a million,” Bendy said.

“Okay folks! We got a real treat for ya! A good pal of mine has a show for ya! Hang on to your hats folks!” As Finley got the crowd excited Boris set himself off to the side. Bendy escorted Cindy to the open space at the center of the crowd. Boris began to play a hopping tune. Finley got the crowd to clap and stomp in time with Boris’ song. It was a jig more than a swing, but Bendy could work with that.

Bendy smiled at Cindy. “Ever done a jig before?”

“Show me what you got big boy.” Cindy winked. Bendy’s grin doubled as he led her around. The two hopped their steps together, spinning and laughing. Bendy spun her out and away. She took some tap steps, allowing her heels to click in time with the claps and violin. She looked at him in challenge. Oh, Bendy accepted the challenge with glee. He mirrored her moves and then added to it. She reciprocated. Each step brought them closer together until he grabbed her hand and spun her out and back in. He had her close and went hopping around the circle again, spinning in time with Boris.

“Hey, wha’d’ya say we add to this party?” he asked. She grinned. They linked arms and spun and when they unlinked, they both linked with a person from the crowd. The younger girl Bendy caught looked at him startled. Her eyes widened with alarm. She resisted.

“I don’t know the steps!” she squeaked.

“That’s fine! I don’t either. Just follow my led and have fun!” he said. He pulled her around and spun her. He led her around the circle. She clumsily hopped at his side.

“Look at you go!” someone called from the crowd. The girl grinned and as her nerves calmed her actions became smoother. She started laughing. Bendy took her around a couple more times in tight circles.

“Having fun?” Bendy asked. She nodded breathlessly. “Perfect! Now, I’m going to spin you out and when you reach the edge of the crowd grab someone and bring them in. Keep doing what you’re doing.” She nodded with excitement in her eyes. She linked an arm with a baffled looking young man and pulled him in before he could protest. Bendy rejoined with Cindy and watched as couples jumped in with enthusiasm. He kept this up, switching with girls and keeping in step. The crowd had doubled, people wanting to join or watch. The police slipped by without giving them a glance. Of course, no one would expect a pair of criminals to be dancing in the middle of the street.

The song changed, but the energy and beat remained energetic. People were laughing and having fun. Bendy got passed off to a little girl of maybe ten. She smiled shyly at him. Bendy twirled her around. The girl let out a peel of laughter that sounded like bells. Bendy spotted Cindy pulling her suited companion into the circle. He looked nervous and Bendy couldn’t help the smug smirk on his face.

He didn’t know how long he and Boris kept this up. It felt like only a half hour or so, but by the position of the sun it had been a lot longer than that. Eventually the energy died down a bit. Finley thanked the crowd for coming out and spending the evening with them. Bendy could hardly stand he was so spent, still he had a huge smile on his face. How long had it been since he had that much fun? Boris went to return the violin and their costume props. Cindy had thanked him and Boris, and even her man seemed to be in high spirits when they left.
Bendy plopped down against an alley wall and waited for Boris to come back. Sammy sat next to him and watched water drip from a gutter. “You had a lot of fun doing that,” he stated in his soft and nervous tone.

“Yeah, loved it.” Bendy sighed, still smiling.

Sammy nodded, not looking at him, but at the passing people. The sun would be going down soon. “You remind me of Finley,” he said as his tail flicked. “He’s energetic and passionate like that.”

“No way. It’s just a dumb hobby. I can’t really do anything with dancing right now. Finley is trying for a dream. He’s way better than me.” Bendy gave a small shake of his head.

“It’s okay to be passionate about something you love doing,” Sammy said. “You don’t even have to be good at it. If you love doing it, who cares. That’s the point of a dream, isn’t it?” The cat gave him a small smile. “At least that’s what Fin tells me. I’m no good at this, but I’m here for him.”

Bendy gazed at the cat for a moment before turning his thoughtful look to the street. The point of a dream, huh? He’d never thought about it like that before.

The cat shifted nervously. “You and your brother seem like standup guys.” His ears folded and his tail flickered back and forth. He sounded remorseful.

Bendy’s brows knit together in confusion as he turned his full gaze on the feline. “Yeah?” He asked. The cat nodded as his eyes dropped to the street in front of him. He looked terrified. Bendy blinked as his confusion shifted to concern. He leaned his weight on one of his hands and came a hint closer to Sammy. “What’s the matter, Sammy?” Bendy asked. Sammy’s eyes flashed up to him, then back down. He pulled his knees up to his chest and wrapped his arms and tail around them. His breathing changed.

“You seem like standup guys, so I’m a-a-a b-bit....” Sammy seemed like he was swallowing his tongue.

“What’s the problem pal? Cat got your tongue? It’s okay Sammy, you can tell me,” Bendy tried to reassure him. His worry was becoming alarm.

Sammy paled, but nodded. He was shaking now and unwrapped one of his arms to reach inside his pocket. “I’m a-a-a bit co-confused.” He pulled out a wad of paper and carefully handed it to Bendy. Sammy flinched away quickly.

“Confused?” Bendy asked. He focused on the wad of paper and started to unfold it.

“Ye-yeah.” Sammy gulped and shrunk into himself. Bendy’s eyes widened as two pages revealed themselves. “Why a-ar-are y-you and B-B-Boris want-ed for mur-murder?” Bendy gazed at the wanted posters with wide eyes. The art that made the images had a few things right and a few wrong. Boris’ muzzle wasn’t that big nor his eyes that sharp. Bendy’s head shape was a little long and...he wasn’t that short! Bendy balled his image up in frustration. They must have rushed the job to get the posters out after he and Boris disappeared. Sammy was so tightly wound up that the sudden action had him jump an inch up from the ground.

“Sorry,” Bendy said quickly. He stared at the information on Boris’ poster. It had their description, what they were wanted for, and so on. “There is more to it than this.” He indicated to the poster. “Bottom dollar, Boris and I are innocent.” Bendy glanced at the terrified looking cat.

Sammy gulped and stared at him.
“I’ll explain everything tonight. These posters are going to be a pain though. Even if they don’t look exactly like us, we still might be recognized.” Bendy sighed. He should just start accepting that his life wasn’t going to get any easier. “Seems to be one bad turn after another,” he muttered to himself.

He felt Sammy staring at him, but he ignored it. His mind was trying to figure out how he and his brother were going manage with this new development. Sadly, the only thing that came to his head was his growling stomach and the thought we are so screwed.

Sammy seemed to have worked up enough of a nerve to speak, but Finley rushed up to them before he could. “Berries! Fellas look! Look!” Finley shoved his hat into their faces. It was brimming with bills and coins. “You are geniuses! Attaboy! Look at all of it! Why if we keep this up we can get you guys ten tickets by next week!”

“Next week?” Bendy asked.

“Well, yeah. Ya wanna know what the doc has to say about your condition and all, right?” Finley shrugged with a small grin. “This way we can save up and eat like kings!” Finley chuckled. His grin and hunched shoulders showing how truly giddy he was. He looked like he wasn’t going to start skipping, he was so full of energy.

“Finley buddy, I don’t really think we’re gonna be here for a week,” Bendy said, standing up.

“Oh? Why’s that?” Finley’s huge ears twitched. Bendy scratched the back of his head. Oh boy was this going to take some explaining.

“Well, uh, you see.” Bendy stumbled with his words. “We kinda—,”

Suddenly a blade appeared at Finley’s throat from behind. “Give me all your money or the critter gets it,” a gravelly voice demanded. Bendy tensed, his eyes widened, and he looked at the person looming above the frozen fox. He had on a big coat and was huge. He was bulky with thick furry hands holding the sharp knife. His face was hidden by a hat but Bendy could make out fangs hidden in a wide muzzle. “C’mon! I don’t got all day!” he growled, pressing the knife a little more into Finley throat. The fox flinched. Finley’s eyes had become as large as dinner plates and he was shaking with fear.

“N-now, now pal. N-no need to lose our heads he-here.” Finley gulped and tried to lighten things. He forced a wavering smile. “We’ll hand it over. J-just a s-second now.” He carefully moved his hand with the hat to his side.

“Hurry it up!” the attacker demanded. Finley let out a choked sound when the blade gave him a small nick that immediately began to bleed. Bendy glanced at Sammy. The cat looked like he was about to faint, he was so terrified. Bendy focused on the attacker again. This wasn’t good.

Chapter End Notes

Okay! There we are, at a terrible cliffy again! I am so sorry. I want to post a holiday chapter and make it sooner, but the chapter isn’t ready and I don’t have time to type more and AAAAHHHHHHHHH!

Alrighty, I got that outta my system. No worries though, you will have a chapter next
week. I am just worried about the week after that cause it's finals....If I wasn't already a phantom I would ask for death...anyways!
I haven't broken my post-once-a-week-trend so far and I don't plan to. As for the cliff...well hang in there! Finley has to too. Things are going to get wild after this!
Thanks for all the comments, kudos, bookmarks, and so on. The ego monster is satisfied, but always hungry for more. I am so surprised by everyone's amazing response. Thank you for reading. Have an awesome week guys!
TAP out!
They're Back

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Things happen. Bendy and Boris decide to collect on a favor.

Chapter Notes

Hello lovelies! I can't thank you all enough. I am absolutely tickled by the interest you have in this story. This chapter was more filler than I meant it to be. I blame school. I can't focus with biology breathing down my neck! Still, I hope you enjoy. I also blame the Warners. The boys were supposed to be in Toon Town by now, but nnnoooo. Plot Warners invaded and demanded this little side problem happen. Whelp, I might as well let you get off that cliff and on with the story. Oh! I almost forgot again! Dr. Boo, the doc that Bendy is seeing is not my character. He came from the same creator as Finley and Sammy. Give steampunkseahorse some love on their tumblr and have a peek at what Dr. Boo looks like here.

http://steampunkseahorse.tumblr.com/post/161764992115/oops-i-drew-dr-boo-as-if-he-were-in

Alright that's all. See ya at the end.

“Careful there!” Finley squeaked. The brute growled and snatched the hat with all the cash. Bendy’s mind raced, trying to come up with some way to save Fin and stop the thief. Movement caught Bendy’s eye behind the bimbo. Boris hit him in the back with his backpack. The guy grunted in surprise and his arms shot out to balance himself. Bendy moved in an instant. He grabbed the wrist of the hand that held the knife and twisted. The brute cried out in pain and dropped it. Finley dove away just as the guy swung his fist and nailed Bendy in the jaw, throwing him a few feet away. Bendy landed on his back with a cry of pain. Boris kicked the back of the bimbo’s knees, causing him to stumble. Finley and Boris jumped on him forcing him to the ground. The three struggled until Finley and Boris had him pinned. Bendy scrabbled up. He spotted the knife and snatched it from the dirty puddle it had landed in.

“Get off me!” the brut growled. His hat had been knocked off in the struggle. Bendy could now see the snarling face of the angry grizzly bear as he thrashed against Finley on his legs and Boris on his back. Bendy acted quickly, not sure how long Boris and Finley could keep him down, and sunk the blade into the ground right next to the bear’s face. He froze and glared up at Bendy. The bear’s snarl turned into a feral grin, showing off all his sharp fangs. “You tryin’ to act tough kid? You don’t got the guts to use that on me,” he growled with a chuckle. Bendy’s eyes narrowed. Bendy crouched on the balls of his feet and frowned down at the grizzly. He let the silence stretch out for a heartbeat longer. He kept his glare to a minimum, but couldn’t hide the angry fire in his eyes. His fist held
tightly on the blade so the shaking in his hand was hidden.

“Do you really want to test that theory?” Bendy asked calmly when he was sure he had control of his voice. The bear laughed and spat at his face.

“A pipsqueak like you don’t scare me,” he declared and started to wiggle. Bendy turned the blade so the sharp edge faced the bear, causing him to freeze again.

“Sam, go get the cops!” Finley grunted, nearly out of breath. The cat was frozen in terror. His name seemed to snap him out of it and he nodded and began to stand and turn. He was shaking so bad he nearly fell over.

“Don’t.” Bendy turned his piercing gaze to the cat, who froze. Sammy slowly looked over his shoulder to Bendy with huge and glassy eyes. “You can’t bring the cops here,” Bendy said.

“What!” Finley barked in disbelief. “Why, in all of Warnerburg’s, not!” Bendy didn’t remove his gaze from the cat. He kept him pinned there with his eyes. “You know why, Sammy. If you bring them it won’t just be this guy they take.”

Sammy looked like he was about to faint.

“What are ya talking about?” Finley demanded and turned his outraged look to Sammy. “Go on, Sam! Call them!” Sammy looked between the fox and the devil. His brows knit together in indecision.

“Sammy, please?” Boris pleaded with wide and scared eyes. The cat turned to him and after a moment nodded.

“Sammy!” Finley shouted, exasperated and shocked. “What are you doing! What’s going on here?”

“I’m sorry Fin. Uh, I, uh.” Tears pricked at the corners of his eyes. The grizzly started to laugh. Sammy’s trembling increased and his hands went to the side of his head. He curled into himself.

Bendy turned his look back to the criminal, eyes hardening once more and scowl set. “So, you some kinda pick pocket or street scammer?” The bear sneered. A thought came to Bendy, and following it an idea. He wasn’t sure if it would work, but it was worth a try.

“Hey, you’re just the guy I wanna see,” Bendy stated softening his scowl to a slight frown.

“Oh?” The bear sounded amused.

“We’ve been looking for a thief ring that is rumored to be in these parts. They took something from me and I want it back,” Bendy said in a monotone, if not completely bored tone. “Any ideas on where they stash their stuff?”

“No idea what you’r talkin’ about, bean sprout.” The bear smirked, his tone tainting.


“That’s too bad. Well, I guess you’re useless to me then. Since we can’t hand you over to the cops, I guess we’ll just have to take care of you ourselves,” Bendy said, turning the blade around and around. The bear laughed at him.

“Yeah, right. You’ve never bumped someone off before. It’s a bluff,” the bear stated confidently.
“Oh!” Bendy smirked. He reached into his pocket with his free hand and unwrinkled the post with him on it. “Careful pal. You can’t take people at face value anymore.” He shoved the thing in thug’s face and waited a second. The guy’s brow’s furrowed in confusion until he read the post. His eyes widened suddenly.

“This—!”

“Yep!” Bendy cut him off, giving the guy his best predatory smile. He twisted the knife again and brought it just a bit closer to the guy’s face. His eyes flashed red.

“Bendy!” Boris gasped in surprise at his brother.

“Hey!” Finley sounded extremely nervous. “Bendy, pal. W-what are ya doing?”

Bendy ignored them and stayed focused on the bear. The demon watched a bead of sweat run down his face. “So, like I said, just test me, buddy ol’ pal.”

“W-what are ya gonna do?” the bear asked in a low voice, all mockery drained out of him.

Bendy raised a brow. His eyes dulled its color, and placed the hand with the poster to his chin in mock thought. “Let’s see. I guess I’ll just introduce ya to my friends. They’ll make sure you’re tellin’ the truth an’ after that.” Bendy’s smile grew into a dark and terrifying grin. “Well, after that I guess I can have my fun!” The bear’s eyes widened. “Now on your feet!” Boris and Finley stared at Bendy with huge eyes. Finley glared in outrage. Boris blinked in question. “C’mon, let him up. I know what we can do.”

Boris hesitantly let the bear go and stood close to Bendy. Finley scampered over to Sammy, who was still curled up and whimpering. “Try anything and I promise you won’t recognize your reflection,” Bendy said calmly, like he was talking about the weather. The bear slowly got up and didn’t give any indication of running.

“Swell,” Bendy said. “Now let’s go talk to my pals at Warner Studios.” Everyone looked startled at the mention of the studio. Bendy indicated the bear to lead the way. “And no funny business,” he warned the brute. When the guy had his back to Bendy, Bendy glanced at his confused younger brother and winked. Boris’ look of confusion changed. His ears perked and eyes widened. He suddenly covered his muzzle with his hands to stop a sputter of laughter. He suddenly realized what Bendy was planning.

The wolf hadn’t been worried about Bendy’s actions. He knew when Bendy was faking, but he did think his big bro had gone a bit too far in his act. This, though, was a crazy plan. Boris leaned over and whispered in Bendy’s ear.

“Do you really think they’ll do anything helpful?” Boris asked skeptically, a hand raised to cover what he was saying.

Bendy shrugged in his easy-going manner. “Who knows. Better check on those two.” He pointed behind them to the entertainers. “I think I scared them. Catch up when ya’ can.”

“No, really?” Boris asked sarcastically. Bendy snorted and twirled the knife in his fingers. “I’ll be with ya’ in a sec.”

The wolf turned around to see Sammy slowly uncurling with Finley’s gentle encouragements. When he started to approach the fox glared at him. Sammy stiffened and froze on the ground. Boris stopped, his eyes widened in disbelief and hurt. Boris raised his hands in a peaceful gesture.
“I thought you guys were decent,” Finley hissed. “Amazing how far you had the wool pulled over my eyes!”

Boris’ ears dropped and his tail tucked. “It’s not like that. I promise,” Boris said slowly. Finley snorted and didn’t buy a word of it. “No, really! I swear if you give us a chance I’m sure you’ll see —.”

“He just threatened someone with a knife! I think I’ve seen enough!” Finley said and turned away. “C’mon Sammy.” Finley said, walking the opposite direction.

“Wai—.” Boris cut himself off when his paw landed on something. He looked down to see Finley’s hat with half the money spilled around it. Sammy didn’t move. He watched, still looking terrified as Boris quickly dropped to his knee and scooped all the money back into the hat. He got back on his paws and looked Sammy in the eye. “Please wait.” Boris took a small step and offered the hat to the cat. Sammy looked between the hat and the wolf.

“Sammy!” Finley called from the exit of the alley. Sammy jumped and glanced behind him to Finley. The fox looked angrily down the alley, his teeth showing in a small sneer and his large ears turn down. Sammy looked back at the pleading wolf and the way Bendy went.

When the cat didn’t move, Boris’ face fell in sorrow and his eyes dropped to the dirt ground. He guessed they didn’t want the truth. He didn’t want to lose their new friends like this, but he couldn’t force them to come with them and show them. Boris was about to put the hat down when hands clothed in ripped up gloves stopped him. They gently took the hat and money. Boris’ eyes snapped up to Sammy’s face. He seemed nervous, but he was trying to smile.

“F-Fin has a really good sense ab-about people and I-I-I don’t want t-t-t-to believe he could be so wrong ab-ab-about you guys,” Sammy stuttered. “I want to give you a chance, but...,” he whispered.

Boris’ grinned could have lit a city block. His ears perked and tail wagged. “I promise you won’t be disappointed! There is so much we have to explain!”

“Sammy what are you doing!” Finley called, taking a few steps back to them and stopping.

Sammy turned around and looked at him. The cat fiddled with the hat. “I-I think we should give ‘em a chance, Fin!”

Finley narrowed his eyes. “No. C’mon. Let’s get outta here.”

Both the cat’s and wolf’s ear fell. Sammy turned to Boris with an apologetic smile. “I’ll talk to him.” Sammy promised in a low and hushed tone. He held the hat close to his chest and stepped away. Boris watched sadly as the cat and fox disappeared into crowd.

“Boris!” Bendy called out in an easy tone.

“Yeah, I’m coming.” Boris swiped at his eyes and turned on his heels. He quickly caught up to Bendy and their captured thief.

“Finley, wait!” Sammy called. The fox made his way quickly down the streets of Warnerburg. Sammy dodged left and right around people to try and catch up to the fast fox. “Finley.” Sammy’s voice was beginning to edge on desperation. The fox refused to speak to him after he had left Boris. After a few blocks of this the cat was finally able to catch up. “Finley, didn’t you hear me calling you?”
“Did I hear you?” Finley snapped and turned a fiery glare on the cat. “Do you think these are just for decoration?” Finley indicated to his large ears with his hand. “I heard everything just fine, Sam! And there is nothing to talk about. They lied to us and threatened someone’s life right in front of us! Bendy isn’t who I thought he was. They’re wanted criminals, just like that bear. They’re all lucky I’m too disgusted to go to the cops right now. I see any of ‘em again, I’ll turn ‘em in,” he snarled and started walking again. Sammy was shaking with fear. He could count on his hand how many times Finley was this mad. The fox had a keen sense of justice and it was things like this that could set him off, almost to the point of irrationality.

“B-but, Finley!” Sammy couldn’t believe he was going to argue with his dear friend for the sake of practical strangers. It was just something in that young wolf’s eyes that got the cat right in the heartstrings. The fear and tiniest spark of hope in those dark eyes that Sammy could so easily understand and relate to. He knew that if he chickened out and turned his back on Bendy and Boris when they needed help he would regret it for the rest of his days. It was this thought that spurred him to gather his meager stores of courage and speak up for once. “Do you really think Boris would do something like that? Sure, Bendy was, uh,” Sammy stumbled for the right words. “He was real scary, and yeah he did kinda sound like he was gonna skin ‘im, but I don’t think Boris would’a let him. That is, if it wasn’t all a show in the first place!” Sammy tried to sound hopeful. Not something that came natural to him at all.

“We don’t really know ‘em, Sam. We were too quick to trust,” Finley grumbled with his eyes fixed on the street.

“No, Finley,” Sammy said with conviction. The fox was so surprised by his tone that his head shot up to look at him. Sadly, Sammy’s nerve disappeared the moment they made eye contact. He fiddled with the hat still in his hands, money stashed away in his pockets, and looking at his hands instead of back at his friend. “Y-you have always been a good judge of character. I-I really think they are good guys.”

“I was wrong,” Finley said, but he didn’t sound angry, just tired and sad.

“No!” Sammy’s voice shook. “Boris was just as scared and confused as you. It wasn’t until Bendy said something about some friends that he relaxed. It was like he caught onto something. I think it was all an act for the crook.”

“Yeah?” Finley said skeptically, turning back to his walk, but at a slower pace now. “Well, then Bendy is the best actor I’ve ever seen. He could easily be the scariest villain ever.”

“Y-yeah,” Sammy slowly agreed. He cleared his throat uncomfortably. “B-but, remember him last night? I-I don’t think anyone would fake those things. They’re in a rough patch and are acting out of desperation, Fin.”

“So, what do you want to do about it?” Finley looked up at the cat wearily.

“M-me?” Sammy pointed to himself, looking startled.

“Well, yeah. You’re the one here trying to convince me. So, what do you want to do about this, Sammy?” Finley asked, turning around to face him fully. Sammy found himself floundering. He wasn’t the one to come up with plans and schemes. He just made a suggestion or an observation then Finley took over. He didn’t know what to do! He hardly knew why he was fighting to help Boris and Bendy in the first place. The young’s wolf fearful look came to his mind again. Bendy hunched over in pain the night before. What could he possibly do for them?

“W-we should help them with the tickets or find that bag,” he suggested weakly. Finley raised a
brow. Sammy’s nervousness started to climb. “Lo-look we just left a couple of fellas, heck, they’re still practically kids, with a bear that tried to mug us with a knife. I-I don’t know about you, but I feel pretty crummy about that. If I don’t do something, Fin, I’m gonna regret it, especially if something bad happens to them. Boris said they had a lot of explaining to do, the least we do is help with this and ask questions after.”

“What if they pull a fast one on us?” Finley asked.

“Then, we can say we tried at least, right?” Sammy responded. “We did what we thought was right with no regrets.”

“It’s risky, we could get arrested or killed,” Finley pointed out. Sammy gulped, his low ears dropping completely and all bravery completely gone.

“Killed?” Sammy asked quietly. His eye twitched. “Uh…,”

“But, ya know what, Sammy? You’re right. What kinda guy would I be to leave a couple of kids with a thug like that? It’s dangerous for them too, after all. You’re a real swell fella, willing to risk yourself for them like that. That’s some amazing courage Sammy. You’re my hero. I hope I can be just as good someday. Boy, I almost made a big mistake,” Finley said with a small smile. “We better go catch up to them so I can apologize and see if there is anything we can do.” Finley turned on his heels and grabbed his hat from a frozen Sammy as he went.

“B-but, killed? Uh, wait, Finley!” Sammy said as the fox followed the path back the way they came with new energy. “Maybe we should think about this some more.”

“C’mon, Sammy! They already have a huge lead on us. If we don’t hurry, we’ll lose ‘em at the gate.” Finley waved his arm in a beckoning motion. Sammy gulped again. Oh, he made a huge mistake. He should have just kept his big muzzle shut. He must have gone insane there for a moment. What had he been thinking?

Bendy felt conflicted. Ever since they had left the alley, Boris was quietly following with droopy ears and tail. He couldn’t turn to comfort the wolf though, he had to stay focused on the bear in front of him. The guy had tried to slip away a number of times already and Bendy had to be ready for another attempt. He also couldn’t blow his act. Bendy had tried several times to get the guy to talk but to no avail.

Even though he hadn’t managed to escape, the bozo seemed pretty smug. “What’s the smirk for?”

“Just imagining when you get caught,” he muttered. Bendy narrowed his eyes.

“Oh, yeah? No need to be so happy about it. You’d be in the slammer with us,” Bendy stated. The guys smirk grew into a grin, making Bendy feel weary.

“Nah, you can have the cell. I’ll be back on the streets the next day,” he boasted.

“Oh, yeah? That’s pretty cocky of you. What makes you say that?” Bendy frowned.

“Friends in high places.” The bear sneered, his fangs down to the little demon.

It didn’t take them long to get to the gate after that. The guard gave them a weird look when the bear suddenly lunged forward. Bendy was just about to hook his foot and make the bimbo trip again when he opened his big mouth. “Sir, these two have threatened me with a knife! I’ve been kidnapped!”
Bendy tensed and mentally cursed a string of foul words. Everyone froze for a heartbeat as the guard looked from the boys to the pleading bear.

“Oh, I gets it. Yer recruiting for the boss. Heh, you nearly got me there. Nice job.” The fat man smiled and turned to the bear. “Yours a good actor, bet the boss will be pleased.” The bear blinked in shock, his jaw dropping.

Bendy nearly fell over in relief. “Yeah. He’s a real talent. Thought the ol’ boss would like to meet him.” The guard looked between the bear and Bendy, perplexed. Bendy’s smile grew. “You have a good day.” The guard tipped his hat. Bendy and Boris gave him a nod before pushing the guy forward.

The grunt shook off his shock and tried one more time. “Wait! I’m serious! These schmucks are dangerous!”

The guard laughed. “I know! They nearly got me too.”

The bear flinched and seemed taken aback. Sweat started to bead on the large mammal’s forehead. Bendy smirked. “How did you put it? Friends in high places?” He chuckled darkly. “You have no idea who you’re dealing with.” This seemed to increase the bear’s nervousness.

Bendy quickly headed to the water tower. They gazed up at the structure for a moment before Bendy leaned toward Boris. “Mind gettin’ them? I don’t want to give this guy a chance to push us over any rails up there.” Boris nodded silently and quickly made his way up the stairs.

The bear twisted his muzzle in confusion. “Wait. What’s up there? I’ve only ever heard of the Warners…,” his voice trailed off.

“Yep. The Warners,” Bendy said, rolling up on the balls of his feet and back down again patiently. “Those clowns owe us a favor and since ya don’t want to tell me where your friends are or where you guys stash your grabs, then I’m sure they can loosen your lips.”

The bear snorted. “You think those jokers can make me sing?”

Bendy gave him a long look. “Have you ever met them before?” The bear stayed silent. Bendy smirked. “Well you’re in for an experience.”

“Boy, hoody, you think he’ll have an experience. Just wait your turn, hot stuff.” A voice whispered into Bendy’s ear. Bendy squeaked in surprise and whipped around. Dot was way too close to his face and he flinched back on instinct.

“You!” he growled. Dot grinned.

“Hi’ya handsome. Did you come back for that kiss?” she winked and leaned forward.

“Cuss no! Get away from me. I came to call in that fav—.” The sound of shoes hitting pavement had Bendy turn around to see the bear making another run for it. “Cuss! Get back here you chicken-hearted cad!” Bendy was just about to lunge after the thug until Wakko and Yakko appeared from around two corners opposite of each other. The brute didn’t seem to pay them any mind and made to run in between them. The two Warners shared a look and stood calmly with their hands behind their backs. Wakko pulled out a banana and start eating it. Only when the bear was just about to pass did they move. Wakko tossed the empty banana peel right underneath the bear’s falling foot. He let out a sound of surprise as his leg went out from under him and he crashed on the pavement. The bear’s head smacked hard against the unforgiving ground. He groaned, lying on his back in pain. Yakko whistled as he moseyed up to him in a lazy stride.
“That was quite a trip there, fella.” Yakko smiled warmly. The bear moaned.


“Wowie.” Bendy jumped an inch at the voice right next to him.

“Boris! Don’t sneak up on me like that!” Bendy gasped and clutched the front of his shirt. The wolf started and looked at Bendy. Bendy looked back at him. “How did you get here so quick?”

Boris looked around himself, then back up at the water tower and then Bendy again. His ears fell, alarm and confusion swam in his eyes, and a frown stretched across his face. “I have no idea, Bendy. I was up there a second ago.” He pointed to the tower.

An arm wrapped around Bendy’s and he grimaced as he made eye contact with Dot again. “No need to sweat the details, honey. As long as ya get where you’re going, just enjoy the ride,” she said to the wolf and then focused on Bendy. “And I think I am going to really enjoy the ri—.”

“Yakko!” Bendy called and pulled out of Dot’s vice-like grip. She pouted, then grinned.

“I love a guy that will let me do the chasing,” she purred.

“Hey ya, mailman!” Yakko waved.

“It’s Bendy,” he corrected in a deadpanned tone.

“Right. What’s up? Your pal said something about that favor. You ready to help us out?” Yakko asked, putting a hand on the bears stomach and leaning on him like he was a post.

“What? No! I’m here to get my favor from you guys.” Bendy narrowed his eyes. Wakko and Yakko chuckled.

“We know. We’re just pulling your leg,” Yakko said, waving a hand. “So, what can we do you for?”

“That guy,” Bendy pointed to the bear. “Tried to mug us a while back. It sounds like he has some friends that would help him out if we turned him in. I was wondering if you could help us find his friends.”

The three shared a look. Bendy imagined a hole of darkness opening up and just dropping the poor schmuck into the horrors these three planned for him. “He doesn’t want to introduce us?”

“Nope.”

“Rude,” Dot said, placing her fist delicately on her hip. “What? We’re not berries enough for you and your boys?”

“Uh?” the bear shook his head and looked around.

Yakko took a step back and looked at Dot. “Now, now. There could be lady thieves too. We have to be fair.”

“Oooh.” Wakko grinned. “Dame crooks sound hot.”

“Right?” Yakko grinned with a wink. Bendy was only a little ashamed that his mind kinda wandered with the idea. He only became completely ashamed when he made glancing eye contact with Boris and saw his disapproval. Dang his brother’s ability to know exactly where his mind went. He smiled
sheepishly.

Dot cleared her throat and her brothers flushed, but didn’t lose their grins. Boris took the chance to speak. “So, do guys think you can help?”

“We—,” Yakko started, but was cut off.

“Screw all you freaks!” The bear suddenly was up and sprinting faster than Bendy had seen so far. He was around a corner in almost the same instant. For some odd reason, Bendy didn’t panic. He felt Boris tense next to him.

“Oh, no! He got away!” Boris said. Bendy looked at the amused expressions the Warner’s were sharing. Yeah, he didn’t need to worry.

“I think it’ll be okay, bro,” Bendy said, putting his hands in his pockets. Boris glanced between him and the three with confusion knitting his brows.

“I’ll catch up,” Dot said to her siblings. The brothers nodded and headed to the corner where the bear had disappeared. She turned to Bendy and Boris with a gleaming smile. “We’ll take it from here.” She winked. “And we’ll contact you when we get him to sing. Should only take somewhere between a few hours or a couple days.”

“We don’t have a phone,” Bendy protested. “How are you going to—.”

“Shhh.” Dot put a finger to his lips and gave him a half-lidded flirty look. Bendy leaned back to free himself. “I’ll simply follow my heart to you. We will—.”

“Never mind. I should know by now not to ask,” Bendy cut her off and turned on his heels. “C’mon Boris.”

“Ah,” Dot complained. “No good-bye kiss?”

“Stars, no!” Bendy barked over his shoulder. Dot pouted sweetly. Bendy walked faster. “We’ll see ya later.” He waved without looking back.

“Bye,” Boris said and raced to catch up to Bendy. The two walked a small distance before Boris spoke up. “What do you think they’re going to do?”

Bendy raised a brow at Boris’s innocent curiosity. “Honestly? I don’t ever want to know. I don’t even want to guess.” Boris turned his head to the side, one of his ears dropped, and his eyes gleamed with thoughts. Once again Bendy was reminded of a puppy. He couldn’t help the chuckle that escaped him. Boris looked at him questioningly. Bendy just shook his head still smiling. It didn’t take them long to get to the gate.

The guard waved pleasantly as they passed. “So, now what do we do?” Boris asked. Bendy sighed. He was really starting to get tired of that question. He shrugged.

“We’re pretty aimless until they get back to us,” he admitted. Boris quirked his mouth in thought.

“Heya.” The boys turned their heads in surprise. Leaning against the wall was none other than Finley and Sammy. Sammy was giving them a small smile. Boris and Bendy shared a look before turning to the two.

“Hi Sammy. Finley. Uh, it’s nice to see you fellas again,” Boris said.
“Ye-yeah. Um, nice to see you too,” Sammy said, nervously glancing between the brothers nervously. Finley’s ears were folded down and he glanced up and back down before taking a deep breath. Finley shrugged away from the wall and faced the two.

“Look fellas. I’m sorry for how I acted today,” Finley started.

“Stop.” Bendy raised his hand like he could physically stop the words. Sammy and Finley looked surprised. “You were only doing what you thought was right. We came off as suspicious at best. There’s these wanted posters and I, well.” Bendy rubbed the back of his head. “I was acting like a real monster back there. I’m the one that should be saying I’m sorry and I am.”

“You don’t have to,” Sammy objected quietly.

“The only reason Boris didn’t flip his lid was because he knows it was an act. My ‘tough guy’ show and all. He knows I wouldn’t really do something horrendous to that bozo.” Bendy suddenly frowned in annoyance and muttered. “A real monster would have stabbed him for trying to run away so often.” Boris snorted and rolled his eyes. “Anyway, we have a lot of explaining to do if that’s what you guys are here for.”

Finley nodded hesitantly his brows knit together. “So, all’s forgiven?”

“Sure.” Bendy shrugged. Finley snorted a chuckle at Bendy’s attitude.

“You’re a surprisingly forgiving person.” Finley smiled.

Bendy shrugged. “Don’t get me wrong. If I was in your shoes, I don’t think I would’a turned around. I gotta respect ya for that. You’re the one offering me a chance here.” Finley blinked at Bendy’s serious answer.

“One question.” Sammy lifted a hand a little, like a shy student in class. “What happened to the thief?”

“We passed him off to the Warners,” Boris said.

“What!” Finley barked in surprise. Sammy’s eyes grew as large as saucers. The brother’s shared a glance of confusion.

“Is that a bad thing?” Boris asked hesitantly.

“U-uh, well.” Finley and Sammy shared a look.

“It’s not like they’d kill him,” Bendy said nervously. “Right?”

“Pe-people who are targeted by the Warner’s, specifically, usually end up with nervous or psychological break downs,” Sammy murmured. “Sometimes their reputations are ruined, but they can get over it with, uh, therapy. Others end up is the asylum with a complete break from reality.” Sammy gulped and twisted his tail. “Or so the rumors say. A lot of famous people apparently have res-restraining orders against them.”

Boris looked to Bendy with alarm. “Bendy, what did we just do?”

Bendy shrugged, dumbfounded. He knew they were nuts, but they wouldn’t push someone to actual insanity…would they?

“Do ya know what they plan to do?” Finley asked. The boys shook their heads and the fox scratched
his ears in thought.

“They said they’d contact us when they found out where those guys are hiding,” Boris offered.

“Then I guess all we can do is wait.” Finley sighed. “With them running around it’ll be impossible to find them.”

“Well, with the doomed soul of a crook hanging over my head why don’t we get dinner and start talking?” Bendy offered, throwing his hands behind his head in a lazy manner.

“Just like that?” Sammy asked.

“Just like that,” Bendy agreed. Sammy and Finley shared a look. These two were a strange pair. The performers weren’t sure what to make of these boys. They didn’t know what they were sticking their noses into, but at least they knew it would be interesting with brothers like them. So, with hope that the two were the good people the performers trusted them to be, the cat and fox followed.

Chapter End Notes

"I think that went rather well," Dot said.
"Yeah, and now we get to play." Wakko smiled.
Oh, no. I am not writing your madness. People need to sleep at night. Me especially. This as gone on long enough. I am wrapping up Warnerburg in the next two or three chapters.
"Awww, c'mon. You love having us in your story." Yakko grinned.
No, I love having Finley and Sammy in this story. You three are terrible. You keep getting in my author notes and making a mess of things.
"We love you too," Wakko said.
Ugh. ANYWAYS. I have some bad news. I can't post next week. It's finals and I don't have a new chapter typed so it's not just editing that has to get done. I don't have time to type and edit this coming week, so...
"Wait! You're abandoning us!" Dot gasped.
It's just for a week! I'm not abandonin' nothin'!
"You are so cruel! Leaving all of us like this! What about Bendy and Boris! And the readers! AND MOST OF ALL US?” Dot demanded.
AT LEAST IT ISN'T A CLIFFHANGER!!! UGH! YA KNOW WHAT? I'M IGNORING YOU! *deep breath*
So yeah. I'm sorry lovelies. It'll have to be the week after next. The good news is that after this I am off school until after Christmas. I'll have plenty of time to work on it then.
"Man, look how little your writer cares about you," Yakko said, forlorn.
YOU SHUT YOUR TRAP! THAT IS A LIE!
"Whelp. We'll see you guys in an eternity since TAP is so heartlessly making you wait." Wakko waved with Yakko and Dot joined in. "Please don't forget us, floating here in limbo."
I am so done with you three.
See you all after school.
TAP out.
"Maybe forever," Yakko whispered.
STOP YOUR FALSEHOODS!
It All Goes Down Tonight!

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Why is everyone gunning for Bendy's backpack? Guess he really is that popular.

Chapter Notes

Hiya lovelies! TAP here! And boy have I missed you guys.
"Oh, look, the ghost came back." Wakko put down a newspaper and took off his reading glasses.
Wha-
"We're no longer in the void!" Dot squeaked in excitement.
Stop! Let me talk to the readers!
The Warners shared a look and shrugged. "Okaaaaaay."
Finals are done! I'm free!!! Now I just gotta get a job and work until next year...sigh.
Anyways! I've missed ya and writing and Bendy! I don't ever wanna miss a Friday again. It was the worst. I missed your comments so much.
"So, look forward to when TAP abandons all of us again?" Yakko asked.
I don't what to hear that from you.
Thank Mercowe for agreeing to be my Beta reader. Go check out their story too.
Mercowe is a great writer (Even if it isn't a Bendy story) and show some love!
You guys are the best! Enjoy the show!
"See ya in the story guys." Yakko waved.
"I hope we can eat this time. I'm starving. Can we get a pizza first?" Wakko complained.
"Hey, think you could let me kiss Bendy, TAP? Please! Please? Please!" Dot begged.
Get out of my notes! Go to the story dangit! Leave!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The four waited six days with no word from the insane trio. They had a long sit down and the brothers explained almost everything to the performers. They were still hesitant when it came to Wilson. They didn’t say his name, nor the dangerous conspiracies around those issues, but they couldn’t lie about the accident that took the owl’s life or the fire. They left the ink illness and these events as separate entities to the pair. Boris wasn’t exactly sure why Bendy wanted it this way, but he didn’t argue it. Boris guessed it was to protect the fox and cat from being targeted like Bendy and he were.

The group had gotten some clothes to disguise him and Bendy during the day. They helped the performers out on their acts during the days. In the evenings, if they could find an instrument to borrow, they would get a dancing show going with Boris playing and Bendy leading people in to start. Finley was tickled with how much they were able to pull in on those couple of evenings. The brothers only had one other close call with a cop when someone complained about the music and
shouting, and had a copper sent. The guy had been suspicious, but Finley was able to charm him away. As the days continued Bendy became more anxious. He wondered if the Warners were ever going to get back to them. Maybe they should go to the tower and check? They almost had enough for tickets and rooms in Toon Town now, so it almost didn’t matter. Sure, he’d give up on some things he was going to miss, but it wasn’t the end of the world. Why was he so bent outta shape here? It was the night of the sixth day and he was a ball of nerves.

Finley leaned back and counted the dough they had made with an easy smile. Sammy fiddled with his fingers and looked very tired. Boris looked like he was about to fall asleep, leaning against a wall. Finley let out a whistle. “I think two more days o’ this will have you boys set.”

“That’s great,” Boris muttered, half asleep. Finley gave the wolf an amused smirk. Bendy sighed. Finally.

“Oh, hey, your check in with the doc is tomorrow, isn’t it?” Sammy suddenly muttered. His ears dropped. “It might be bad news.”

“Or it could be great news!” Finely said.

Ah, Bendy thought, that could be why he was a wreck. He hadn’t had another pain attack since that night. The most he’d felt was a twinge once in a while and just as he braced himself for the pain it would vanish. He could almost believe it had all been a bad dream and that he was perfectly healthy. He wasn’t so optimistic or ridiculous. Something was wrong with him and if the crow doctor could figure it out, then all the power to him.

“Ya think, Finley?” Sammy asked.

“Well, people say you should hope for the best, right?” Finley raised a brow thoughtfully at the cat.

“Yeah, and prepare for the worst,” Sammy added with a small tilt of his head, his ears falling to the side of his head.

Bendy sighed as Dr. Boo motioned for him to sit. The doctor adjusted his glasses and cleared his throat. The tilt of his beak seemed grim. Bendy couldn’t help the chills running up his spine, or the dread sinking in his stomach. Boris sat in the other chair in the corner of the room. Dr. Boo looked in between the two of them and pulled a clipboard up to his thick glasses. “I’ll be honest with you. I have never seen something like this before. You have baffled the lab and myself. I was wondering if we could get another sample for further study.”

Bendy blinked. His bro looked just as perplexed. He frowned. “It’s not like I can cough up more on command, doc.”

“Right, right.” He waved a wing like he was shooing the thought away.

“So, what shocked everyone?” Boris asked.

“Well, this substance is exactly like you said. It’s ink,” the crow explained. Bendy grimaced. “But, it’s not just ink either.” The crow sounded mystified.

“Huh?” Bendy felt his head tilt and his shoulders drop an inch. What did that mean?

“Oh, uh, you see, the properties of the substance are made of ink, the chemical make-up and so forth, but it’s also like blood. There is DNA and cells and so forth. At first the lab thought it was contaminated, but the more they looked, the more astounded they became. It wasn’t mixed, it wasn’t
like blood got into the sample. It was the sample!” He sounded excited. The boys shared a confused 
look. “See here. The cells were still functioning like they were a part of a system, like they weren’t 
removed from a host. The reactions they were going through were miraculous. They found the 
sample was acting as a component in the breakdown of tissues, but it’s very complex. It was very 
systematic in its processes, far more than a virus. We still have to consider,” he paused and seemed to 
change his mind. “But it seemed to also store the basic units of the samples we introduced it to after it 
dissolved them,” The doctor said, seeming to become lost in thought.

“Doc, you lost us,” Bendy said, stopping the crow from continuing. The crow froze for an awkward 
beat, then tilted the clipboard.

“Ah. I’m sorry. I got carried away.” He flicked through some papers on the board before putting it 
down and looking at Bendy directly. “Bottom line is, we have never seen anything like this before 
and it’s astounding. It’s, well, I’d like to think of it as living ink. It feeds and has a system of doing 
things. Because of this, I don’t know how in the world to help you, young man.” Bendy’s shoulders 
dropped in defeat. “But, I am sending in our discoveries into the Global Board of Medical Research. 
I am very glad you came in. This…ink illness could change the field of medical practice in its 
entirety. Not a virus or bacteria or a parasite. At least not one I have ever witnessed before. Yet, it is 
some form of microorganism.”

“Uh,” Boris muttered. “And that means?”

“It means that this could be very bad for everyone if we don’t find a way to combat this sickness.” 
The doctor adjusted his glasses. “It could be devastating.”

“Do you know how it spreads?” Bendy asks. The doctor shrugged.

“The lab is trying with rats, but it doesn’t act like a virus. We infect them and nothing happens. We 
check their systems, any samples we collect and they’re clean. It’s like the disease refuses them 
instead of any act of the immune system. It refuses to stick to their systems. It’ll take a while for us to 
figure out how this is reacting to certain individuals and completely bypassing others. The good news 
is it seems to ‘stick’ with very few subjects. You did say there have been other cases?” Dr. Boo 
tugged on his hood.

“We heard about them, but we don’t know any of them,” Boris said.

“Ah.” The crow tilted his head, making his glasses gleam in the room’s light. “I see. And the person 
that told you about this, do you have contact with him?”

“No. There’s no way to reach him,” Bendy said in a low tone. His face was blank.

“That’s too bad. Is there anyone else that may be considering this? Anyone I can ask questions and 
discuss this with?” The crow asked. The boys grew nervous, sitting stiffly and not looking at him 
directly. “Please? I want to find a way to help you Mr. Bendy.”

“There is someone,” Boris said.

“Boris.” Bendy gave him a warning look. The wolf ignored it.

“He lives in Toon Town. He was a friend of the person that knew about the ink illness.” Boris 
rushed.

“Boris, don’t.” Bendy started to get up.

Could they not keep a secret for more than two weeks?

“Did you say Dr. Oddswell? As in Ryan Oddswell?” he chirped.

“Yeah,” Boris said, perking one ear in question. “Do you know him?”

The crow hesitated and adjusted his glasses nervously. “Let’s just say I know of him. Interesting. I can assume he is someone you plan to see?”

“That’s right,” Bendy said, his mouth pulled down in annoyance. “What of it?”

The crow scribbled something on a piece of paper and handed it to Bendy. “That’s my personal address. If he is willing, I would like for him to send a letter. I want to know all there is about this sickness.”

Bendy glanced at the paper before stuffing it into his pocket. “Ya’ know, the last guy that handed me a note to deliver isn’t exactly on my good side.”

The doctor bowed his head so that his hood nearly covered his huge glasses. “I only have the best of intentions, I assure you, sir.”

“Uh huh,” Bendy muttered and stood up. “Well, if that’s all ya got, we’ll be headin’ out.”

“I am truly sorry I couldn’t be of more help. There is just not enough information yet,” Dr. Boo said. Bendy waved his words off and headed to the door.

Boris stopped and turned to the doctor. “Sorry about my brother, and thanks anyway. We hope you guys can find something.” Boris nodded in farewell and hurried to catch up to Bendy.

Bendy walked out to the waiting area to spot where Finley and Sammy sat. When they noticed the demon, they stood up.

“Well, how’d it go?” Finley asked.

“He knew about as much as a week ago,” Bendy stated flatly.

“Oh.” Finley’s smile dropped. “Sorry to hear that pal.”

Once again Bendy waved it off. “Forget ‘bout it. We’re burning daylight. We might as well do something productive.”

“Sounds like a plan to me,” a voice right behind Bendy said. Bendy squeaked and jumped away. He spun around on his heel and there was Wakko grinning at him.

“You!”

“Hiya! It’s been awhile.” Wakko waved.

“Oh, look it’s the Warners,” Boris said calmly as he came in. “Hello again.”

“Don’t just greet them like old friends Boris.” Bendy frowned.

“Why not?” Boris shrugged. “They’re helping us out.”

Bendy pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed.
“Yeah, why not greet us like good ol’ pals?” Yakko asked leaning on Bendy’s head. The demon flinched and swatted him away. Yakko jumped back, chuckling.

“Because I never want to be friends with psychos like you,” he snapped.

“How about a boyfriend?” Dot popped up in his arms and leaned forward suggestively with puckered lips.


“Wowie. It’s the Warners, Sammy,” Finley said. He was somewhere between entertained and nervous.

“Y-y-y-yeah.” Sammy seemed like he wanted to be anywhere but here at this moment.

“I guess you guys are here because you have something for us,” Boris said.

“Yeah, we got fuzzy-wuzzy to spill the beans.” Dot shrugged like it was no big deal.

“Where is he?” Bendy demanded.

“Eeeehh.” Yakko shared a smirk with his siblings. “Around.”

"PLEASE LOCK ME UP!! DON’T LET THEM NEAR ME! I’M A GOOD BOY! I’M BIPPY THE DANCING BEAR, HAHAHAHA!!" The officer sighed as he led the bear into the van. Another victim of the Warner’s ‘pranks’ and now the poor guy had a long road to recovery. He had rushed in and confessed to a list of muggings and robberies. Station was completely thrown. He also confessed to being part of the theft ring and how the ‘demons’ were coming for them. The officer sighed. Now he had to drive this nut job to the asylum and miss his chance to introduce himself to those cute detectives that had rolled into town. He had been trying to ask them out to drinks all week, but it always seemed they were busy. What rotten luck.

The Warners snickered.

“Ya didn’t kill him, did you?” Bendy feared the answer.

“What? Of course not!” Dot waved a hand in dismissal. Everyone let out a collective sigh of relief. “He’s just gone on holiday. He’ll come back someday.” She leaned around Finley to see Bendy again. “But is that really what we want to talk about, hottie?”

Bendy grimaced. “You know where they are. Tell us and you can consider your favor taken care of.” He shook his head. “And we won’t have to see each other ever again.”

“Can’t do that boss. This is the highest kudos story for Animanics on this site,” Yakko said.

“We can’t just leave it alone,” Wakko added.

“Besides, that wouldn’t be any fun. Oh and!” Dot winked. “You and I have to create our ship.”

“Oh.” Finley looked at Bendy in confusion. “Did you understand any of that?”

“Not a single word,” Bendy said as an annoyed scowl crossed his face.

“What ship? Are you sailing somewhere Bendy?” Sammy leaned over to ask quietly.
“Is he ever!” Dot appeared in the middle of the men.

“Ah!” All three cried out in shock and jumped back.

“No! I’m not!” Bendy huffed.

“Excuse me.” The beautiful nurse approached. “You are disturbing other families. I’m afraid I’m going to have to ask you to quiet down or to please leave.”

Wakko and Yakko turned to her with hearts in their eyes. “Hellloooooooo, nurse!” they both said and hopped up on either side of her. The Warner boys planted a kiss on her either of her cheeks before laughing and running out the door. The nurse blinked and tried to comprehend what just happened to her. Bendy’s jaw dropped. Did they just—?

“Ugh boys.” Dot rolled her eyes and made to follow them, then suddenly turned around and looped an arm through Bendy’s. “C’mon, handsome! We’ve got bad guys to catch.”

“Wait a—ugh!” Bendy tried to protest, but the small Warner yanked him off his feet with surprising strength.

“Wait for us!” Finley cried as he, Boris, and Sammy rushed to keep up.

The two relaxed against the bar, sipping their fizz wizzes and watching the other patrons make fools of themselves. The man smirked as his brother held back snickers and hid behind his drink. The two had been here a little under a week and they were having a tough time finding the brats. He had been surprised and pleased to see the wanted posters of the two scattered throughout the city. He thought it would be cake to find the boys in the big house and then take care of business. Sadly, that wasn’t the case. These two were proving to be trickier than he thought. After hanging around the station and local cop hang outs, the two hunters had pieced together that the targets had come in over a stolen bag and fled when they realized that they were wanted. The slick schmucks had given the cops a run for a life time and had disappeared.

The hunters had come up dry. It had taken them a while to try and figure out what to do after that. Finally, they figured that they could try and find the pack and lure the two out. If they had gone to the police instead of leaving the town, then that most likely meant that there was something important in the bag. Maybe it was all their cash, though only an idiot would keep all they had in one place.

He sighed, and took another drink. It had taken forever to find the right scum corner where the underbelly of the city existed, and even longer than that to find out about the big theft ring that had started up this year. He was still annoyed with how hard it was to find information on them. Still, in the end they got what they wanted and it was fun to beat those idiots to a pulp and dump the pathetic pile in the trash.

They had a shipping deal with another ring in a city up north. They stored their goods in two locations. Stolen things were in a hidden basement of a research lab and traded thing were in a prop warehouse at the edge of the studio lot.

They were going to get the lab tonight. The man drained the rest of his drink. The carbonated drink tickled his tongue and throat as it went down. He knew it was a stupidly thin chance those two would go that far for a stupid pack, but it was literally their only clue. Even if they had skipped town after that, maybe it would have a clue as to where they were headed. He really hated grabbing at straws like this. If the trail went cold he and his brother would have no choice but to go to their boss for help and he was pretty sure if they did, he wouldn’t be leaving with all his limbs attached.
“Would you like another sir?” the bartender asked.

“Sure. Another fizz wizz. Chocolate this time,” he responded. The guy made his drink and backed off to see to other costumers. The man glanced out the window. The sun was slowly making its way down the sky. Once it was dark the two would make their move.

“Hey, bro!” His partner got his attention.

“mmh?” He hummed and looked up.

The other nodded, indicating for him to look out on the floor. He turned just in time to see a tipsy patsy slip and kiss the hardwood floor with a heavy thud. Everyone that witnessed it burst into laughter. The man glanced at the mischievous and pleased smirk on his brother’s face.

“Sweet berries, bro. How did you set that up?” he laughed.

His brother winked. “Just thought the moron needed to take a trip.”

“UGH!” Ringtail moaned. “This is hopeless!”

“Oh, come now, Ringtail. It hasn’t even been a week and you’re giving up?” Featherworth organized the stack of paper at the desk across from her partner’s.

“We literally have no leads,” she groaned and dropped her head to her desk.

“This city is only a fraction of the size of home,” Featherworth pointed out.

“Yes, but we would know where to go and who to talk to there. We would be able to find some leads,” Ringtail bemoaned. “The idiots here let them slip away so easy with no way to track them.”

Featherworth sighed. She had to admit the report on the boys’ escape from the station and authorities was impressive for them and very embarrassing for the station. Those two were right in front of them for stars’ sake! On top of that, they had failed to secure any information like where the two were staying or any connections they had in the city.

Simply put, the officers here were very reluctant and embarrassed to share any information about the boys with them. Luckily, it seemed the news hadn’t caught wind of the station’s blunder.

“Maybe if we get better wanted posters. The ones that are out aren’t completely accurate. Then, if we go and ask around the train station again or the shopping district,” Featherworth suggested. Ringtail scowled and suddenly flipped the stacks of papers on her borrowed desk, sending paper flying in every direction. Featherworth’s beak dropped in surprise. There was a long pause of silence only pierced through by the fluttering of pages and the whirl of a desk fan. Ringtail and Featherworth stared at each other. “D-did you just toss and scatter all those reports?”

“What do you think?” Ringtail said flatly.

“That’s....” Joan paused. “That’s going to take at least an hour to organize all of that again.”

Ringtail shrugged uncaringly and a dark smirk crossed her face. “It’s just as useful as wandering around places we have been a hundred times this week.”

“You.” Joan narrowed her eyes. “You.” She couldn’t find the right words.

Ringtail lifted her chin in challenge. “Yes?”
“You just.” Joan leaned over and reached on the side of the desk to the pile of wadded up paper in the garbage can.

“Do you have something to say, Featherface?” Ringtail narrowed her eyes.

“You are such a—.” Joan chucked the paper at the raccoon. The sad projectile fluttered and bounced off her shoulder. “Furbrain!”

Rachel’s face darkened. “Did you just throw garbage at me?”

“What do you think?” Joan snarked.

Ringtail picked up the metal fan on her desk and looked at it. “It looks like....” She stepped around her desk and looked Joan in the eye with a deadly glint in her own eyes and a smirk. With a flick of the wrist, she turned the fan on Joan’s desk. Before the crow could do anything her stacks of documents took to the air. “You have a big old mess.”

“You know this means war, Fluffy Bandit,” Joan declared.

When Officer Jones stepped into the office to give the visiting detectives a notice for their late lunchbreak, as requested, she stepped into a scene of chaos. Documents and wadded up paper balls were flying everywhere. The two detectives were ducking behind their desks, chucking the wads back and forth and the raccoon had a fan that sent every scrap near her in the air. They were laughing and bantering back and forth as they destroyed all the carefully filed paperwork.

“What is the meaning of this?” the old woman shrieked. Both detectives froze mid-action.

“Are you two really from Toon Town? I don’t know how the agency over there handles things, but here we expect organization and discipline!” the office worker said sharply. They straightened up and looked to the older woman with shame.

“W-we’re sorry ma’am. I was forcing my partner to loosen up a bit. It’s my fault.” Ringtail grinned, scratching the back of her head.

The officer glared at her. “Then I should report your actions to your superior.”

“Then please also report me.” Featherworth stepped up. “After all, this mess had to take two.”

Ringtail narrowed her eyes at the crow. It was too much like Joan to jump under the bus with her. The officer seemed taken aback. “I-I.” She straightened her spine stiffly. “I will be sure to do that.”

“Was there any other business you had with us, Officer Jones?” Featherworth asked.

“I was simply informing you that it’s your lunchbreak,” she said, still stiff.

Joan nodded. “Thank you, officer.”

The old woman turned, then stopped. “Oh, and we found the report the suspect filled out.”

“Uh?” Ringtail’s ears twitched. “What report?”

“He came in for a stolen backpack. I had him fill out a report and description of the taken items.” Officer Jones said in her nasally voice.

“He did that before running out, like a bat outta hell?” Ringtail asked her muzzle scrunched up in thought.
The officer gave her a look of confusion. “No, he did it the day before all of that nonsense. I had told him to come back the day after he filled it out. I hadn’t received the noticed that they were wanted criminals yet. It was the next day when we were made aware and acted.”

“No one thought to inform us you had this?” Featherworth asked with an edge of annoyance in her voice.

“It had been lost in the chaos of the last couple of days. Between the thieves, the Warners, and this new development we have our hands full,” she stated in the exact same uninterested tone. The detectives shared a look. This woman would be more interested in office gossip then actual work.

Ringtail offered a paw to take the report and looked it over. There wasn’t much to go off. No contact information or address. Bendy kept everything short and to the point. He also mentioned money, but was vague on the amount that was stolen.

“Uh,” was all Ringtail could say. Featherworth took it and looked it over.

“Is there any chance he would think you have the pack?” Featherworth asked.

“No,” she answered flatly.

“You said the theft ring is targeting tourists?” Featherworth walked over to her desk. She started looking for something before sighing and shrugging at the mess that was…well, everywhere.

“Yes?” The officer furrowed her brows.

“Well then, there’s that raid of the thieves storage space that's planned tonight right? If we find the pack there, then we could find a clue,” Featherworth said.

The officer huffed with irritation. “We have been looking for those individuals for six months. We finally have a break to catch them. You think it’s so simple to—.”

“You said a bear came in and confessed to working in the ring. Did he mention the boys at all?” Ringtail said instead of asking.

“Well,…no, but he was obviously disturbed after his run in with the Warners. You can’t take his statements at face value,” Officer Jones said.

“Did anyone bother to ask?” Ringtail crossed her arms over her chest. Officer Jones fidgeted uncomfortably. The silence stretched on. “You’ve gotta be kidding me.”

“You haven’t dealt with a Warner victim before,” Officer Jones defended weakly.

Featherworth pulled on a coat and her hat. “There you have it, then. We will be joining the raiding party tonight. Have a squad ready. We will go in as soon as we are ready.” Ringtail quickly followed her partner’s actions.

“Wait! What about this mess?” Officer Jones glared with at them.

“Well, we’re cleaning up your mess, so the least you can do is clean up ours,” Ringtail said as they passed her by and headed down the hall. The officer’s face flushed with anger. Ringtail hid her smirk with the brim of her hat before disappearing out the door.

“Ready to catch some bozos?” Featherworth asked.

“Ready? I’m giddy to finally do something,” Ringtail said. The two shared a smirk. This was what
they were good at. “Been a while since we’ve been on a raid.”

“Worried you’re rusty?” Featherworth chuckled.

“I hit you every time I threw a paper ball. You’re the one who’s rusty,” Ringtail said bumping her shoulder.


“The usual wager?” Ringtail grinned mischievously, holding out a paw.

Featherworth took it and shook. “You’re on.”

Chapter End Notes

Ready for a mad house?
"Yep!" the Warners grinned.

I don't have the chapter typed, but I will do my best to have it done by Friday. I'm goin' to a family reunion so I don't know how this is gonna work.
"Abandoning us already? Seriously?" Yakko asked. "Geez that was fast."
Shut it! I'll get it done!
"Can I kiss Bendy in the next chapter?" Dot gushed.
AAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!
See ya guys next time!
TAP out!
Who Has The Key

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

The Warners steal half the chapter for their nonsense. Bendy gets a creepy feeling.

Chapter Notes

Hiya, lovelies! Feeeeewu! I made it! How in Hades did I make it on time? This chapter almost didn't! I finished it a moment ago. I don't get to edit it like I like to, so please forgive the mistakes I've made. I'll go back and fix them and sorry Mercowe! I am not making this easy for you! Still, thanks for all the help. I will work hard to get ahead again so you pals can get the great content you deserve and so Mercowe can be the awesome beta that catches all my slip ups.
"Cause you sure make a lot of them," Yakko said.
Ignoring that. I was stuck in a cabin for about four days, so I didn't get to type. Then I was really busy.
"Don't lie. You had time, you just went on a Supernatural marathon instead," Wakko said.
Hey! I typed when I watched! I got it done! Don't paint me in a bad lighting! I didn't even lie.
"I don't know. I don't think you were being completely honest there," Dot said lightly.
I don't need this nonsense. I got it done. I will work on more.
"Ooooh. Angry ghost!" Yakko said, waving his hand.
You three have taken enough of the chapter up. I don't need ya in my notes too, so everyone go enjoy the chapter and I'll see you at the end.
"Yakko, did the ghost just disappear?" Wakko asked.
"Yep. TAP left," Yakko said.
"Weird. Usually we'd go to the story now," Dot said.
"What's even in here, anyways?" Wakko turned around.
"Nothin', blank black nothin'," Yakko said. "Kinda creepy now that TAP's gone."
"Hahaha!" Wakko burst into laughter.
"What?" Yakko asked.
"It's less scary when a ghost is here!" Wakko laughed. Yakko and Dot joined him.
"But, seriously, we should get back into the story," Dot said.
"Yeah," the boys agreed.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy and his odd group of tagalongs stood in the bushes across from a tall building. The words ACME LABS glowed in the deepening dark of nightfall. A tall bridge stood imposingly behind the already overly imposing building. The surrounding city glowed with artificial light.

“So, what’s the plan boss?” Wakko grinned. Bendy sighed. It had been nonending jokes and flirting
and his nerves were already thin. He felt his eye twitch when he made eye contact with Wakko.

“Do we have a way into the basement?” Bendy asked. It’s where everything was apparently hidden until they moved it to ship outta town. Smart crooks.

“Yeah. There’s a guy with a key,” Yakko said. Bendy turned to him. “They all go by nicknames, so we got What on the backdoor, Who has the key in front, and I Don’t Know in the basement.”

“Um.” Bendy stared at Yakko. “What?”

“No, What doesn’t have the key. Who does,” Yakko said.

“That’s what I’m asking,” Bendy said with an annoyed tone.

“No, no, What is guarding the back door. Who has the key.” Yakko waved a hand in a stop motion and explained again.

“What are you asking me for?” Bendy snapped. “I’m asking you who has the key.”

“Yes.” Yakko answered.

“What do you mean yes!” Bendy grit his teeth.

“No, no, you were right. Who has the key. What’s guarding the back door,” Yakko said.

“I don’t know what the heck you’re talking about!” Bendy barked.

“I told you. I Don’t Know is in the basement!” Yakko sighed with annoyance. “And What’s behind the building. Who’s in front.”

“What are you asking me for? I don’t know!” Bendy growled clenching his fists.

“I’m not asking you, I’m telling you. Who is in the front and I Don’t Know is in the basement.” Yakko frowned at Bendy.

“Okay.” Bendy raised a hand and took a deep breath. “I’m asking you-who’s got the key?”

“That’s the fella’s name.” Yakko responded, putting his hands behind his back.

“That’s who’s name?” Bendy raised a brow.

“Yes.” Yakko smiled.

At that moment, Bendy wanted to kill him. So, he turned around and walked away before he did something stupid. Boris was struggling to understand anything at this moment. He leaned over to Dot and whispered. “What just happened?”

She shrugged. Boris frowned at the useless answer, but was afraid to push it. It was only a brief moment until Bendy returned. He was calm again. Bendy believed he had a way to figure out Yakko’s annoying word game.

“Alright Warner,” he addressed Yakko again. “So, say the guy that has the key is paid. Who gets the money?”

“Well, I’d imagine he’d get every dollar of it. I mean the schmuck stands outside a building all night.” Yakko snickered.
“Who is?”

“Yep.” Yakko went up on his tip toes and back down playfully.

“So, who gets it?” Bendy asked and blinked.

“Well, I would think so. Maybe he has a broad come by to get it? Fella could have a girlfriend.” Yakko shrugged.

“Whose girlfriend?” Bendy pinched the bridge of his nose.

“Well, it’s possible he could have one,” Yakko said lightly.

“Who does?”

“Sure. You don’t think so?” Yakko smiled and went up on his toes and back down again.

“Look Warner.” Bendy sighed. This had gone off on a wrong direction. “All I want to know is what’s the guy’s name that has the key to the basement.”

“Yeah, and I told you. What is guarding the backdoor.”

Bendy’s temper snapped. “I’m not asking you who’s guarding the backdoor!”

“Who is in front!” Yakko exclaimed at Bendy’s outburst.

Bendy’s eyes flashed red and Finley stepped up nervously to try and calm the situation. Boris approached Bendy to calm him down.

“Alright. Let’s just worry about the key later. Are there any other guys we gotta worry about?” Finley asked. Yakko and Wakko shared a look.

“Absolutely!” Wakko said.

“Alright.” Finley smiled his wide smile and felt like they were getting somewhere. “So, list ‘em for us.”

“Why,” Wakko said.

Finley’s ear twitched. “Ah, well, I don’t know. I thought we would all like to know.”

“Well, I was just starting to tell you,” Wakko stated with a frown.

“So, ya gonna tell us who else is in the building?”

“Who’s out front,” Yakko jumped in.

“Stay in the building!” Bendy snapped, still simmering in anger.

“Okay, so Why,” Wakko said.

“Because.” Finley frowned. What were these guys? Three years old?

“Oh, he’s on the staircase.” Wakko waved a hand lazily.

“Wait a minute,” Boris said. He swallowed nervously. “How about just the fella’s in the basement?”
“Okay, Why,” Wakko said.

“Because I asked,” Boris answered.

“Because is-“


“Tomorrow,” Wakko answered.

“We don’t have until tomorrow! Tell us now!” Bendy lunged and Boris held him back.

“I Don’t Know, Why, Tomorrow.” Wakko responded, looking at Bendy confused.

Bendy let out an animalistic sound of complete frustration and anger. Sammy flinched. Finley kinda agreed with the demon. Boris struggled to keep a hold of him. “Bendy calm down!” Boris ordered.

“Why not tell us today?” Finley groaned.

“Oh, Today isn’t involved. Today organizes the stuff before they ship it,” Wakko said.

“I don’t care what they’re doing today! I just want to get in there and get my pal’s bag,” Finley growled rolling up his sleeves.

“Alright, then!” Yakko clapped his hands. “Then let’s go get that key.”

“Who has the key?” Finley growled.

“Exactly!” Yakko said. The fox lunged and Sammy barely had time to move and stop him.

“Wait, Fin! I get it,” Sammy said.

“You do?” Boris said in disbelief. Everyone stared at the cat for a long moment. Bendy and Finley had even stopped struggling to kill Yakko and Wakko. The cat’s anxiety spiked to whole new levels and he began curling into himself with so many eyes focused completely on him.

“Go on, Sammy. I’m all ears.” Finley flicked one of his huge ears to prove his point.

Sammy gulped, but nodded. “It’s all a double meaning. They are all names. I Don’t Know, Tomorrow, and Why are all in the basement. I Don’t Know is the one guarding the door. Because is standing in the stair well. Then, there is What guarding the back door and Who is guarding the front. Who also has the key. And Today comes in to organize the items they ship out, but he isn’t here, so Today doesn’t matter in this situation.”

“Exactly~!” Yakko sang. There was a long moment of silence.

“I don’t even know what we’re talking about!” Bendy roared.

“Now, no need to get excited pal. Take a deep breath.”

Bendy did. “So who has the key and the staircase?”

“It's Because,” Yakko stated.

Bendy crossed his arms and rolled his eyes heavenward. “Why? I don’t know! And I don’t give a cuss!” He muttered sarcastically.
“Sorry? What was that?” Wakko leaned forward.

Bendy snapped a red glare at him. “I said, I DON’T GIVE A CUSS!”

“Oh, that’s their van driver,” Wakko commented off handedly. Boris believed he heard something snap in Bendy. He knew this was gonna be really bad, so his ears dropped. Before Bendy could act though, the last Warner spoke up. Most had forgotten she was even there, so many of the group gave a start at the sound of her voice.

“No. We are not starting that again. We have the key. I don’t care about names. I have a headache already, and let’s just get this over with,” the fox said with his brows pinched in agitation.

“Good idea,” Bendy growled and followed.
“Do I get a reward for my hard work, Bendy-boo?” Dot purred and clasped her hands. Bringing them up to her face.

“Yeah.” Ge scowled. “You get off with me not doin’ a thing to ya’.”

Dot smirked and gave a flirty growl. “Ooooh! Feisty!”

Bendy cringed and flushed. The traumatized demon quickened his pace to follow Finley. He wanted to get as far away from the female Warner as possible. The Warners chuckled before moving. Boris and Sammy shared a look of equal trepidation in their folded ears and creased brows before quickly following the group.

When they got to the front door they spotted a poor crook that had three huge lumps on his head. His long coat was dirty from the ground and his eyes where spinning. He was out cold next to the doors. “Golly,” Boris whispered. “What’d cha’ hit ‘im with?”

“The unyielding power of my love for my mailman,” Dot said in a surprisingly serious tone. Wait. Was she serious? Everyone without the last name of Warner shared a concerned look except Bendy. He looked at them with horror before they all entered the lab. It was dark and cool in the lab. The building’s walls and floors were a dull blue. Metal parts, glass beakers, and machinery were everywhere in some form of organized chaos. Bendy felt a chill run down his spine. Not one bit. It smelled of chemicals and cleaners. The machines seemed to have insidious purposes. As they quietly made their way deeper into the dark hallways and rooms they began to hear voices.

“Gee, Brain. Whadda wanna do tonight?” A high-pitched voice asked.

“The same thing we do every night, Pinky. Try to take over the world.” A deeper and smooth voice responded. The group tiptoed toward the noise.

“This is the right way?” Finley asked and glanced to Wakko.

“Stairs should be on the other side of that room,” Wakko said, pointing to a door that was slightly ajar. As they got closer the voices became clearer.

“How are we gonna do that Brain?” one of the voices asked.

“I have been working on this!” the other said with excitement.

“Eegad, Brain!” the first gasped. Silence followed. The group tiptoed to the slightly ajar door. Bendy peered in, but didn’t see the speakers.

“You have no clue what this is, do you?” the deeper voice asked with annoyance.

“Not a one! Narf!” the other responded joyfully. There was a smacking sound. Bendy tried to push the door to see if he could spot anyone, but to no avail. The door gave the smallest creak and everything fell silent. Bendy swallowed and gave a quick glance at everyone behind him. Sammy looked terrified. Finley and Boris seemed determined. The Warners…well, they just looked like them.

Bendy pushed the door open and every muscle in his body was ready for whoever was there.

Which, was no one. There wasn’t a soul to be seen. Bendy felt another shiver go down his spine. Stupid creepy lab. What the name of the stars and moon was this? Voices? Was this place haunted on top of everything else? Bendy shrugged it off and continued forward. There were plan boards
with equations, more machines, blueprints that Bendy could almost make out. Was that a growth ray? Bendy stopped and the others passed by him. A growth ray? As in grow bigger...maybe...taller? Before Bendy could follow that train of thought, Boris was passing by him.

“C’mon, bro. The stairs are this way,” the young wolf whispered. He grabbed Bendy’s arm and dragged him away from the weird stuff.

“B-but,” Bendy whispered.

“We’re gonna be left behind,” Boris whispered back and hurried. The group silently passed by a desk with a cage on it. Two white lab mice stared at the group. Boris waved at them as he and Bendy caught up to the others. Bendy did a double take of the mice. Did one of them just wave back? Before Bendy could say anything Wakko opened the stairwell door and, making a quiet motion, snuck in with a mischievous grin. Yakko closed the door and put up three fingers. He counted down then opened the door again. Wakko stood there grinning with a fedora hat that was too big for him over his normal hat.

“Because is sleeping,” Wakko said happily.

“What?” Bendy asked.

“No, Dot took care of What. He was—.“

“Don’t you start.” Finley pointed a warning finger at Wakko. Wakko grinned and saluted before turning around and walking down the stairs. The rest followed him. As Bendy went to shut the door, he swore he heard those voices again.

“Pinky, are you pondering what I’m pondering?”

“I think so Brain, but I don’t think TAP really wants anymore overly clever characters in this fanfiction,” the other respond.

“Pinky, don’t lower us to fictitious fan writing. We’re above that media. They don’t get paid, even if they had any talent. No, Pinky, I think it’s time we work in animation.”

“What do ya mean, Brain?”

“It’s time we become famous through the next generation, with something no child can ignore!” he said with grandeur.

“What’s that, Brain?”

“Cartoons!” he declared.

The higher voice gasped. “I love cartoons! Narf!” The door shut off the conversation. Bendy shook his head and hurried away. This place was too creepy for him.

The group headed down, down, down to the dark depths of the basement floor. The concrete stairs caused their light footsteps to echo ever so much. Finley’s ears twitched with every sound. Boris had all his senses on high alert. Sammy was ringing the life out of his tail in nervousness.

Bendy felt the shadows in the stairwell wither and turn with excitement. He had never felt this before. It was bizarre and a little scary. He wasn’t using his Talent, wasn’t reaching for them, but the shadows seemed to pulse around his group in anticipation. Bendy didn’t like it. They seemed malicious, like a hungry predator in wait.
The Warner’s opened the door.

“Hey! Whad—,” THUD! The sound of a body hitting the floor followed. The rest came in to see Wakko holding a mallet of ridiculous size.

“Nighty-night!” he said cheerfully.

“Alright. Then I Don’t Know is taken care of,” Yakko said.

“He’s g-gonna be okay, r-r-right?” Sammy stammered as he stared at the unconscious brute.

“Him? Pfff,” Yakko scoffed. “Just a headache in the mornin’. ” The group made their way around the man. The Warners quickly took out the other two men in the room before the normal four could blink. Bendy now understood why so many were terrified of these three.

Bendy turned his attention to the basement shelves and lockers. He only found extra parts, more beakers, and rolled up blueprints. There were even a few boxes of office supplies. Boris looked into a box to find lightbulbs. Finley found some graphs. Sammy gulped at spotting a couple of jars that held…well he couldn’t really identify what was floating in them, and for that he was grateful. He quickly turned away and rejoined Finley.

“Hey!” Bendy hissed quietly to the Warners. “Where’s the stolen goods? This is just more lab stuff.”

The three had their ears pressed to a wall and were moving about. Yakko pulled away to explain. “What? Ya didn’t think they would just have it layin’ about in plain sight, didja? Nah, they stash their diamonds, bud. Just you watch.” Yakko returned to the wall and the three took a moment to tap around. Boris and Bendy shared a look. Bendy was still annoyed and the shadows had him on edge. Boris was only confused, but he had accepted that anything involving the Warners would be confusing. Sammy was questioning why they were here for the hundredth time and Finley was wondering if there were gonna be booby traps next.

Finally, Dot found it. “Ah-ha!” she said as she pressed a spot in the wall and a seamless door slid up.

“Wowie,” Finley muttered. Inside was some more stairs going down. It took a good while for them to find the bottom, but when they did the group stepped into a huge underground warehouse. Bendy couldn’t see the end of it. The ceiling was about three stories high! Shelves filled the stupidly huge place. There were bent cars, not just boxes, but crates of coats, purses, shoes, wallets, house things like furniture, mirrors, paintings, dresses and so on. As the group crept through the warehouse they found odd things too. Full suits of armor, lawn flamingos, a mailbox, a crown (That Wakko immediately put on his double hats), and an ancient scuba suit. It just seemed to go on and on.

“Hey, ya think we could find Elvis down here?” Yakko asked.

Finley looked at him, confused. “Who’s Elvis?”

Yakko stared at him then snapped his fingers. “Oh right. He doesn’t show up for a few more decades. A real shame.” Finley just shook his head and chalked it up as more Warner weirdness.

“How are we supposed to find your pack in all of this?” Boris asked in amazement. Bendy shook his head. He didn’t have a clue.

“Well, it seems organized, so we just have to find the backpacks or maybe the street bags. Shouldn’t be too hard really,” Dot said, digging through a box of beautiful elbow gloves.

“How big is this thief ring?” Finley asked her as he put down a vase.
“Tough to say,” Dot responded. “My guess would be this is stuff from a few cities, from multiple rings. Maybe we stumbled on some mafia’s stuff? I’m sure some of these things are from the studio, though.” She pointed to an ape costume.

“T-t-the mafia!” Sammy squeaked. “Oh, nononono. That is no good. We s-s-s-sh-should get out of here!”

“Yeah, just let me find my bag. We’ve already gotten this far,” Bendy said. It took the group quite some time to find the right crate. They had already dug through three before Sammy spotted it and Boris and Bendy went to work digging for the specific bag.

“Bendy, here it is!” Boris grinned. He tugged at it until it was out from under the others. Bendy crawled out of the pile of bags and opened up the bag Boris handed him. To his delighted surprise all of his things were still there. His clothes, his book, Boris’ drawing, and most importantly, the money! All of it was still contained within the old backpack. Bendy quickly pulled out the cash and counted it.

Wakko let out a whistle. “Stars, now that is some dough!”

Yakko leaned into a shelf. “Eeeh, now wait some minute fellas. Should we really have done this for free?”

“You owed me a favor, and I said you didn’t need to come along. I don’t owe ya nothin’,” Bendy shot over his shoulder without losing count or missing a beat. The Warners chuckled.

“Guess you’re right.” Wakko sighed. “But I’m keepin’ the crown.”

“Yes. Finders keepers and all.” Dot added as jewels glittered around her neck and fingers. Bendy scoffed, but didn’t say anything. Boris looked uncomfortable.

“Now hold on a minute,” Finley said sternly. He put his fists on his hips and gave the Warners a hard look. “That stuff’s stolen! It needs to be returned to everyone that’s lost these things.”

“Look at all o’ it,” Yakko said. “It would take a life time to return it all. ‘Sides if it is the mafia’s, then there’d be a hit on which ever schmuck blew the cover on this place.”

“Ya don’t think they’d gun for guys that run off with those jewels, then?” Finley snapped back.

Yakko shrugged. “What’s a few jewels when you have all this?” Yakko waved his arms around. “I bet they won’t even miss ‘em.”

“That still makes you as bad as them!” Finley growled indignantly.

“But isn’t Bendy doing the same?” Wakko asked.

“He’s just getting back what was originally his!” Finley snapped. “‘Takin’ what isn’t yours is called stealin’ and that’s what you’ll be doing if you walk outta here with that stuff!” Bendy put the money back and sighed. If he was being honest, he wouldn’t hesitate to walk off with some of the smaller, more expensive things around here. Sadly, with Finley and Sammy here, he wouldn’t be able to. They already put a lotta trust in him and Boris, especially after seeing the wanted posters and that whole alleyway fiasco. No, Bendy couldn’t take anything here in good conscience with those two standing right next to him. He knew he could slip it past them, but it wasn’t worth their trust. They had helped him get his bag back, like they promised they would. He owed them a lot. The least he could do is not steal. This time.
“Everyone calm down!” Sammy commanded. Everyone fell quiet with surprise. Sammy’s bravo died the moment there was silence. “U-u-um. I think F-Fin is right. I-I-I-I mean. If anyone wanted to run o-o-off with je-jewels it’d be us, b-b-b-but we believe we’re be-better than that. Tha-that we’re good people and tha-that B-B-Boris and Ben-Bendy are good p-p-people too.” He swallowed and tried to calm the stuttered shakiness he’d suffered since getting to the labs. “I wanna believe you three can be good too. You’re better than st-stealing aren’t cha?”

The Warners shared a look. Sammy glanced at Boris and Bendy to see the two smiling at him. He looked down at his best friend to see that bright grin.

The three looked back at the cat and stated together. “Nope!” Sammy was absolutely crushed. Finley growled.

“O-oh,” Sammy said, his ears drooping and his tail brushing the floor sadly.

Boris was just about to speak when he heard a metallic click behind him.

“Well, well. Seems we have a bit of a rat problem, boys.” The wolf turned to see ten goons in long coats. Their hats were pushed low on their heads so he couldn’t make out their faces. All of them held guns pointed at him, his brother, and his friends. “Better get the rat poison ready,” the middle goon chuckled.

Chapter End Notes

I know. I know! I'm the worst. NOT ANOTHER ONE! Are your fingers tired of hanging off my stupid cliffs yet? I really didn't mean for this to happen. I was planning to wrap it up in this chapter. Blame the Warners.

"Don't blame us!"
You're held at gunpoint. You aren't allowed here this time.
So the first half of the chapter is inspired by Abbott and Costello Who's On First and you can check that out here.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTcRRaXV-fg

And yes, Pinky and the Brain. I couldn't NOT have those mice show up at least once in this nonsense. ^^
So, tell me, what do you think? My Ego Eagle is excited to be fed (Psst, thanks for naming my ego Twinfeather ;D) by your comments. Thank you all for throwing me your kudos, bookmarks, comments and most of all, just taking the time to read. I am happy that you lovelies like to read this. You all are swell! The bees knees. I look forward to see you again next week.
TAP out.
Bendy clenched his teeth. This was bad. He didn’t know if he would be able to act fast enough to stop all of them. The men took aim. Ice entered Bendy’s veins and his heart jumped into overdrive. Was this really how he was gonna meet his maker?

“Woah, woah fellas! No need to burn powder on us,” Yakko said lifting his arms up and waving them in a surrendering motion. Half the guns turned on him.

“How are there so many of you? This isn’t what he told us,” Dot complained with her jeweled hands on her hips.

A couple of guys froze in the lineup. The middle goon growled. “What was that?’

“Yeah, no kidding,” Wakko said. “He must have chiseled us, had us distract these boys so he could go off doin’ whatever.”

“Uh,” one of the other guys said, uncertainly. “What they talkin’ about Monday?”

The guy in the middle clenched his hand around the tommy he had. “It seems we had a squealer.” He turned from his group to the Warners. “Who was it? Come ‘ere and tell us!”

Yakko straightened up and walked casually toward the group, Wakko following shortly. “Well. Eh, his name was.” He stopped and thought. “Cheese and crackers. What was it?” Yakko turned to Wakko. “Do you remember?”

Wakko stuck his tongue out further in thought. The boys passed Bendy and Boris. Bendy hissed quietly. “What are you guys doing? You’re gonna get yourselves killed!” Neither acted as if they heard him. Yakko put his hands behind his back.

“Wasn’t it Bippy?” Wakko asked.
“No that’s not right.” Yakko waved him off. “Bobby?”

“No, no. That isn’t it either,” Wakko denied. The goons lowered their guns to follow the Warners.

“Stop there and spit it out!” Monday ordered.

What were these nuthouses doing now? If they angered these guys they were all dead! Bendy felt sweat run down the side of his face. What could he do? How could he save them? “Psst!” Bendy glanced over his shoulder. Finley and Sammy were carefully backing away toward the corner of the shelf aisle. If they got around the corner they would be safer from bullets. Bendy looked back to the Warners.

“We’re trying! Seems the bimbo’s name has slipped our minds. What if we described him to ya?” Yakko suggested. He waved one of his hands clasped behind his back. It was hidden from the men with guns, but the message to Boris and Bendy was clear. Go.

The middle guy hesitated.

“C’mon. I’m sure ya fellas can’t have a squealer in your little party goin’ on here, right? Help us help you palm” Yakko said lightly.

“Alright,” the guy said. “Wha’ did he look like?” Boris gave Bendy a worried glance as the demon grabbed his arm and slowly stepped back.

“Uh.” Wakko bobbed his head back and forth. “Kinda tall.” He lifted a hand way above his head to show the height, but was too short for it to be accurate. “Big palooka.”

Bendy slowly continued back, Boris followed, but stared at the Warners with worry in his dark eyes.

“He had a smart mouth too,” Yakko added thoughtfully. “A real yapper. What was he again? A panda?”

“No way. He was some kinda cat,” Wakko argued, looking at his taller brother.

“What? Like a puma?” Yakko shook his head. “Nah, bro. He had to have been a bear.”


“A bear?” One of the men asked. “Think it could have been Scotty?” He asked his pals.

“Shut your head!” The middle guy whacked the one that spoke. “Don’t go droppin’ names.”

The guy groaned and looked up. His eyes made contact with Bendy’s. The demon’s breath stopped and the world froze in that moment. Bendy watched pain and surprise shift to cold understanding. It was the first time he’d faced pure murderous intent. By instinct he used his Talent. “They’re making a break for it!”

“Bendy!” Boris gasped. The guns were up in a second. That same moment Bendy wrapped himself and Boris in shadows and threw them back and around the corner. The shadows were still in their overexcited state. Bendy barely realized what was happening until he and Boris were slammed into the shelves. Bendy felt something hit his side at a sharp angle. The darkness dropped them to the floor. Bendy let out a grunt of pain. Gunfire deafened him. The shadows twisted grotesquely at the sounds of violence. Adrenaline had him back on his feet, and he pushed the horrible throbbing pain in his ribs aside. The shadows tried to twine around his legs. He tried to force them away, but that seemed to only excitement them more. Fear spiked in his heart. They had never acted like this before.
Sure, he had struggled in the past with his Talent, but never to this degree. What was this?

He pulled his legs free and rushed to Boris. The wolf was trying to sit up. He had a long cut above his left eye that was bleeding profusely. “Boris!” Bendy shouted in worry. He grabbed onto his bro’s arm to help him up.

“Well!” Boris tried to wipe the blood out of his eye with his free arm, but to no avail.

“What the hell was that?” The gruff voice on one of the goons shouted around the corner. “Hurry! They’re getting away!”

“We’ve gotta run!” Bendy yanked the wolf to his feet and moved as fast as he could. He could already hear the goons’ footsteps coming.


“There’s nothing we can do for ‘em! Run!” Bendy shouted. The shadows around them were going nuts. Bendy tried to dismiss them, pull back, anything! It was no use, he had lost complete control. The darkness pushed items and threw crates off shelves. He heard cursing and shouts of surprise behind them, but didn’t dare look behind them. He had to jump to the side to dodge a huge mirror that shattered as it hit the ground with vigor. Boris choked out a sound of surprise and stumbled, but Bendy refused to let him fall. Gunshots started up behind them. “Move! Move! Move!” Bendy shouted over the sounds of gunfire, crashing, and shouting.

“Bendy, what are you doing?” Boris demanded, still half blind and scared out of his wits.

Bendy grit his teeth. “It’s not me!” He admitted like the words physically hurt him. The boys had to dive forward to avoid a crate that cracked open on impact, spilling its contents everywhere.

“Wh-what do ya’ mean, it’s not you?” Boris shouted as they got back up and start running again. They took another turn, but it seemed the chaos continued to spread.

“I’m not doing this, okay!” Bendy snapped, hitting a purse that had been sent flying at him.

“Then who is?” Boris sounded panicked. Bendy glanced back at him with a look of distress. He had never really explained his Talent to Boris or anyone. How could he explain that shadows were like living creatures? That it didn’t really come from him, but that it was more like the shadows responded to his call. No. That was nightmare jazz and he didn’t want to scare his brother like that.

“I don’t know, so keep running!” He shouted instead and took another turn.

“What about Finley and Sammy?” Boris reminded him.

“They were ahead of us. Hopefully they got away.” Bendy began gasping for breath.

“Duck!” Boris shouted. Bendy did and a lamp flew over his head and smashed against a shelf. It was a few more minutes of running before they spotted a familiar line of cars. A familiar pair of ears was sticking out one of them. “Finley!” Boris shouted. The ear perked and out appeared the fox.

“Bendy! Boris! What in sam-hill is going on? Things are flying around like fireworks on New Year’s!” Finley shouted.

“We don’t—.”
“It’s me!” Bendy cut Boris off. The two finally reached them, panting, sweating, and gasping for breath. Boris gave him a questioning look.

“What!” Finley barked. Bendy could feel Boris’ eye on the back of his head.

“I’ve lost control,” he said. It was the closest to the truth he was willing to come. Sammy was suddenly next to Finley and hopping out of the vehicle. All the fear was gone from the surprisingly calm cat.

“Ya gotta breath, Bendy. Calm down and focus on breathing,” Sammy said, resting a hand on Bendy’s heaving shoulders. The cat looked him in the eye and Bendy was sure his eyes were glowing full force. Still, there was no nervousness from Sammy. “I’m guessin’ you can’t focus or somethin’. You gotta breathe. I’ll count and you follow me, okay Bendy?” Sammy said in a soothing voice. Bendy just nodded. He followed Sammy. As this was going on Boris was approached by Finley.

“Pal! Your face! Are you okay?” Finley’s eyes widened when he saw all the blood.

“Ye-yeah. It’s just a cut,” he answered. “Duck!”

The two dropped and a picture flew over them and skidded across the top of the vehicle. They stood again and looked around. The items-shadows were slowing down.

“Here. Lemme take care of that.” Finley pulled out a worn handkerchief and started dabbing gingerly at the half dry wound and mess on his face. Soon, Boris could open his other eye again.

“Thanks. What were you guys doing in the car?” Boris asked.

Finley flushed, but focused on the wound instead of looking Boris in the eye. “We were gonna use it to drive by and save ya guys from those goons. Headed to it the moment we got outta sight. Figured it was the best way to save everyone from getting full of lead.”

Boris couldn’t help blinking in wonder. “You two were gonna come save us?”

“Well, of course!” Finley stated until his ears fell again. He glanced to Boris’ eyes and away quickly. “That is, uh, we were, ‘til we figured we had no clue how to jump a car.” Boris stared at him silently as the fox tied the handkerchief around his head. Boris couldn’t help it, he burst into giggles.

“You don’t know how to hotwire a car?” he laughed. “What? Were you hoping the keys were in the glovebox?” Finley flushed again and stepped back now that the wound was taken care of.

“Look, I don’t know kid. I can count on my hand how many times I’ve ridden a car. Never drove one neither. It was a stupid idea, but I couldn’t think of anything else. It sounded pretty good at the time,” Finley said, flushed. Boris only chuckled more. “What? You saying you could do better?”

“Bendy and I are mechanics, ‘course I know how to jump a car.” Boris smiled innocently.

“O-hoh!” Finley mock laughed. “Well, look at the briches on you! Watch that high horse, ya might fall off it.” The fox grinned. “At least one of us is good in a getaway. Hey, speakin’ of which, where’s the Warners?”

The wolf’s demeanor fell immediately. The fox’s ears reflected Boris’ drooped ears as the wolf sighed. “Yakko and Wakko were distracting them when they noticed—-and Bendy acted so fast! I don’t know what happened! They were between us and those goons when the shooting started!”
“Oh stars,” Finley murmured. He put a hand on Boris’ shoulder. Sure, the Warners were annoying and unhinged, but they didn’t deserve to be bumped off. They were just kids! “W-what about Dot?”

Boris’ head jerked up. His eyes grew huge. “Dot! We left Dot! I didn’t see her anywhere! We have to go back an’ get her!” Boris made to turn around, but Finley stopped him by tightening the hand on his shoulder.

“Wait! You can’t go runnin’ back there,” Finley said.

“We can’t leave her! We already let down Wakko and Yakko. I can’t leave Dot!” Boris pleaded.

“You said you know how to hotwire a cab?” Finley flicked his thumb over his shoulder to the car. Boris looked up with a determined gleam in his eye. With a nod, he got to work.

At the same time, Bendy was finally able to wrest his Talent away from shadows. The crates, boxes, and stolen goods dropped and stilled. The shadows, still withering, were forced to stop their physical interaction with the world, and instead were pushed back to their regular state. Bendy felt the heat in his eyes cool and gave Sammy a small smile. “Thanks, Sam. I didn’t know you could be so reliable in an emergency.”

The cat flushed and fiddled with his gloves. “It wasn’t ‘nything,” he muttered and looked down.

“How’d ya know what to do?” Bendy asked as they walked closer to Finley and Boris.

“Fin says it’s my Talent. Something about bein’ calming and makin’ others happy. I don’t think so though,” Finely said with a nervous shrug. “I just knew you were in trouble and I wanted to help somehow.”

“My friend, it is definitely your Talent. Most people don’t run toward me when I’m using my-.” Bendy cleared his throat uncomfortable. “Uh, when I do that.” Sammy flushed again.

“’S no problem,” Sammy said.

“Hey! Do any of you hear that?” Finley’s head suddenly shot out of the car as he looked around.

“Yeah, Sammy was able to—.”

“No! Not that. There’s no more shouting. It’s quiet,” Finley said. Sammy and Bendy stopped and listened. Finley was right, there wasn’t a single sound besides their breathing and Boris’ shifting in the car.

“Ma-maybe they’re bad at dodging?” Sammy offered weakly.

“Then we’d at least hear them cursing over their injuries,” Finley said. “I wonder what ‘appened.”

“Prolly the Warners,” Bendy stated flatly.

“We’re gonna go check,” Boris said from inside the car.

“What!” Bendy barked. “But the exit is right there!” He pointed to the door in the wall they had come through. It was just a few rows away from them. “It’s dangerous. We gotta go.”

“We can’t leave ‘em bro! They helped us,” Boris argued. “A lot. They could be hurt too.” Bendy sighed. “It’d be our fault, Bendy. We brought them down here.”

“I told ‘em they didn’t have ta come! They could’ve stayed home,” Bendy weakly said.
“Bendy,” Boris said with disappointment coloring his tone. Bendy knew he was right. He couldn't just leave the Warners to those bimbos.

“Fine. But we don’t all have to go back there. You, Finley, and Sammy should get outta here. I’ll go get ‘em and meet ya outside,” Bendy said.

“Now, hold it there, pal. You can’t snag all three on your own and drive. I should come too and Sam and the kid should escape,” Finley huffed.

“But Fin,” the cat tried to argue.

“This isn’t up for debate. Boris is right. If I hadn’t gotten my pack stolen or been so bent on getting’ it back none of you would be here in danger. I don’t want anyone else gettin’ hurt,” Bendy said.

“But bro,” Boris stuck his head out of the car to glare at Bendy. Suddenly there was a loud clank behind the group. They all jumped and looked over to the source of the sound.

“Oops!” a guy said and stepped from around a corner. He didn’t seem to notice them. He chuckled. “I think I busted it Cups!” He was a strange lookin’ guy. Bendy couldn’t help staring. He wore a simple shirt and gloves, and a there was a scarf wrapped around his neck that was so long it nearly touched the ground. His pants were tied high, at the waist, with a string to keep them up. But the oddest thing about him, though, was that his head was a cup. He even had a twisty striped straw sticking outta the top of his head. On his face he had a large round nose and a goofy smile.

“You moron,” another, rougher, voice chuckled. A second person stepped out holding a dented device that Bendy couldn’t quite make out. This guy also had a cup for a head. His eyes were larger and his nose was smaller. He also had a straw sticking outta his head, but unlike the first guy this guy’s straw was bent. He also had hair that came over the edge of the cup and acted as bangs, nearly covering one of his eyes. Except, the hair was fluffy like foam or whip cream on hot chocolate....So was it foam or hair? Bendy wasn’t really sure. He had on a coat with the collar turned up. He wore a turtle neck under that and long pants.

“I can’t help it. There is so much stuff here. It’s like we found buried treasure,” the first guy said.

“Yeah. Those schmucks’ skimmed on some details ‘bout this basement. Maybe this is the warehouse? Stars, this isn’t just a small sting, that’s fer sure,” the second said.

“Whatever. It’s berries, Cuphead. We should take some of this with us,” the first said.

’Cuphead’ scoffed. “Don’t forget why we’re down here, idjit. We’re on a job.” He tossed the device behind him and outta sight. Bendy heard it crash into the ground. “If ya do. Take small stuff that’ll fit in your pockets, Mugs.”

“Alright. Think we’ll really be able to find the backpack in all this?” Mugs asked, turning towards his brother, with his back to the group.

“Ya kiddin’ me? In all this junk? Nah, we’re just screwin’ around now,” Cuphead said with a relaxed frown on his face and his eyelids half closed. “We hit a dead-.” He cut himself off when his eyes hit the group staring at him and Mugs. Bendy felt himself tense when the man’s surprise changed to a predatory grin. “Well, look at what we’ve here,” he chuckled. “Today must be our lucky day.” The other turned around and grinned a huge grin too. Though his seemed more...innocent, Bendy decided.

“Uh.” Finley cleared his throat. “Hiya, boys. Need help ‘r something?” Sammy was inching behind him and toward the car that Boris was hanging out of. Cuphead’s smile became a sneer.
“Yeah. You and your cat can scram. We got business with the other two,” he said.

Finley raised a brow. He shot a look to Bendy, but the demon seemed just as confused as him. “Strange place for business,” the fox commented.

The one in the scarf scoffed. “You know how hard it is to track those two down?”

“Sorry? Do we know you?” Boris asked. Bendy narrowed his eyes.

“Us?” Cuphead put his hands in his coat pockets. “Nah, but we know you pretty well. Had a lotta fun at that little club of yours back in Sillyvision. That skirt who owns it is a real looker,” he chuckled. Bendy and Boris shared a look.

“Are you guys cops? Did Featherworth send you?” Bendy said, alarms ringing in his head. These guys looked like bad news to him. The one with the scarf chuckled.

“No way!” Mugs said. “The name’s Mugman and this is my big bro, Cuphead. Cups and Mugs for short. Not that it really matters.” Cuphead suddenly whacked him on the back of the head.

“The heck you tell them our names for?” Cups demanded.

Mugs rubbed the back of his head. “What did I do wrong?”

“You idiot,” Cups muttered.

“Boris, is that car ready?” Bendy murmured quietly.

“Not quite,” Boris answered, just as quiet.

“Get back to it. I gotta bad feeling about these guys,” Bendy said.

Boris quietly did what he was told. “Well,” said Cups. “Doesn’t really matter, I guess. Not where you’re headed.”

“Now wait a second. What are you plannin’ to do with Bendy and Boris?” Finley demanded, making sure he was between the two strangers and his friends.

“Oh nothin’, we just want to take them to their good pal, Wilson the birdbrain.” Cups smirked. Bendy gave a start. His eyes widened.

“You knew Wilson?” he asked before he thought. The two laughed.

“You could say that. The bird really gave us a run for our money, but in the end we didn’t even need to lift a finger.” Mugs laughed.

“Yeah, who knew that not looking both ways before crossing de street would be what did him in!” Cups added. Bendy felt his teeth clench.

“Are you the people that were after him?” Bendy scowled.

Cups sensed his anger and stopped laughing. He straightened himself up. “Yeah, what of it?”

“That owl was terrified! He was a nervous wreck when I met him and it was all because of you!” Bendy pointed at them accusingly. They both smiled.

“Good. He shoulda been,” Cups said.
“Why? Why were you chasing him? What did you want?” Bendy demanded. Finley looked between Bendy and the two. This wasn’t good.

“Why don’t I show you what we want?” Cups pulled one of his hands out of his pocket and pointed it at Bendy. Bendy’s brow furrowed in confusion. It looked like the guy was giving him a finger gun. Weirdo. Then Bendy’s instinct screamed. The shadows twisted double time too. Bendy dropped down that same instant. He heard a bang behind him and heard Finley and Sammy shout in surprise. He glanced behind him to see a burning hole in the box his head had been in front of.

He heard a whistle and looked at the two cup brothers again. “You’re fast!” Mugs said like it was a compliment. The end of Cups finger…was smoking. What?

Cups sneered. “Won’t do him good for long.” The villain’s eyes flashed red.

“Move!” Bendy shouted and jumped back to his feet. He grabbed Finley by his shirt and yanked him into the back of the car. Boris and Sammy were already in the front. There was a flash of blue and Bendy heard another bang right as he shut the door. “Is this thing ready!” Bendy turned to his brother. Boris flicked his wrist and the car roared to life. Another flash of blue had everyone duck. The windshield shattered.

“Everyone, hang on!” Boris floored it and the car lurched forward toward the two attackers. The tires screech as the vehicle lunged. The two dove out of the way and Boris twisted the wheel to take a sharp turn away from the strange blue blasts that their enemies shot at them.

“Boris, the exit is the other way!” Bendy called out from the back seat.

“We still have to go back for Dot!” Boris said as he took another sharp turn to head back toward the place they had been ambushed. The way wasn’t smooth, items were thrown all around from the earlier chaos. The car pushed them aside or ran them over, causing the ride to be bumpy and for Boris to scrape the car against shelves to try and maneuver around the worst of it.

“Why are those guys after you?” Finley asked. Sammy was clinging to the seat in front of him, his claws sinking into the expensive leather.

“It’d take too long ta explain!” Bendy said as Boris took a turn so sharply that the tires screamed. There was barely enough room for the car to move through the aisles of stolen goods. “There!” Bendy pointed to the shot-up crate of bags. Several bozos were laying around it, hopefully unconscious. Boris hit the brakes and Bendy and Finley were out in a flash.

“Yakko! Wakko! Dot!” Bendy called out. He didn’t see them amongst the fallen. He tried kicking away cloths and bags, trying to find them, but to no avail. “C’mon! Where are ya Warners? We need to get outta here!” Boris and Sammy jumped out of the car to help them look for the missing trio. Desperation began to climb as the minutes ticked by.

“Wh-what if they got thrown?” Sammy suggested when they couldn’t find them anywhere near the crate or goons.

“Good idea. Spread out,” Finley said.

“I don’t know how long we have until those guys catch up to us,” Bendy said. He looked around with a dark sick feeling sinking into his stomach. The others moved out in different directions. Would the shadows have done something to them? Was this his fault? Maybe he could have reached them in time, dragged them around the corner with him and Boris. Bendy clenched his fist. Now was not the time to second guess himself. He had to get them outta here fast. “C’mon Warners. We’re all
in danger. You guys have to be alright. I...” Bendy groaned. “Just, please, be alright. You guys drive me nuts, but that doesn’t mean I wanna see ya hurt!”

“Aww,” Dot coed. “He cares about us! Did you hear that? He really cares!” Bendy whipped around to see the three grinning at him.

“Nice to see ya missed us, pal.” Yakko winked.

“Yeah, a real friend you. You even brought the cavalry.” Wakko grinned and threw a thumb toward the car. “Can I drive?”

“Don’t know if that’s the best idea for someone who’s been shot,” Dot said nonchalantly.

“He’s what!” Bendy barked with his eyes widening. Bendy came closer to the trio.

“She’s being a drama queen. It’s just a flesh wound.” Wakko waved a hand like it was no problem. Bendy saw the blood. It was a scrap across his shoulder.

Bendy sighed in relief. “Of course an idiot like you would just brush it off like a papercut.”

Wakko straighten himself out proudly. “Spiffy aren’t I?”

Dot rolled her eyes.

“Look guys. We don’t have time for your wisecracks. We have some trouble boys after us and we gotta fly.” Bendy said, a relieved smile still on his face.


He turned away from the Warners and called out. “Hey! I got ‘em. Let’s scram!” Finley, Sammy and Boris came rushing, all looking happy and relieved to see the three mostly unhurt.

“The reunion is great, but we gotta go,” Bendy said from the car.

“Okay. But seriously, can I drive?” Wakko asked.

“No,” Bendy stated flatly. Wakko pouted.

“C’mon. We better patch you up in the back,” Finley said, patting the hat wearing Warner on the back. Wakko winced. “Sorry,” Finley said sheepishly.

Everyone piled in and it was a tight squeeze. Wakko, Yakko, Sammy and Finley were crammed in the back. Boris, Bendy and Dot shared the front. Boris, behind the wheel again, pulled away from the crate.

“I’m so happy we’re so close my sweet mailman.” Dot smiled and leaned more into Bendy.

“Try anything like earlier and your walking.” Bendy frowned and leaned as far away as possible in the small confines of the front seat. Sadly, that wasn’t very far and Dot sighed in contentment as she rested her head on his shoulder. Boris was about to turn toward the exit they had entered in when a blast hit the side of the vehicle.

“There you wimps are! Come out and play Bendy!” Cups shouted and started running toward them, shooting more blasts. Boris turned the opposite way and hit the gas again.

“Are these new friends of yours?” Yakko asked.
"No!" Bendy barked.

"Funny. They look like they wanna play ball with ya," Yakko said turning to look behind them. They all ducked as a blast hit the end of the car.

"Then they’re asking the wrong guy." Bendy glared at the figures.

"I’ll play them!" Dot announced and crawled over Bendy.

"What?" Bendy gasped.

"Keep the car over there, sugar!" Dot ordered Boris as she hung half her body out the window. She pulled out a bat and stuck out her tongue.

Wakko pouted. "I wanted to do that."

"Tough luck," Yakko said in sympathy. "Peanut?" He offered a bucket of them and Wakko took a hand full.

A blast sailed toward the car again. Dot readied her bat and took a swing. The bat was destroyed in a flash of blue light, leaving only the burned end and the handle in Dot’s hand. She blinked a couple of times, climbed back in, and took her seat between the brothers again.

Yakko whistled. "I think that’s a foul."

"They don’t really play fair, do they?" Wakko asked.

"Oh, like you do?" Bendy rasied a brow at him, which caused all the Warners to chuckle. Boris got to the end of the aisles and took another turn. The two villains disappeared from view again. Finley sighed in relief.

"C-c-can we leave now? I’ve had enough adventure for one li-life time," Sammy asked.

"But it’s fun!" Wakko said.

"You’re bleeding! Don’t argue about staying!" Finley snapped.

"They gotta point there," Yakko said.

"We can’t go back that way," Boris said.

Dot sighed. "Well, if we must. There is a garage exit on the opposite side of room from the door we came from. It should be that way." She pointed with the burned stump of a bat. "Turn here." Boris did as directed. As the group spotted the doors off to the side of them, they saw that the doors were slowly lowering. There was a small huddle of thugs around the doors shooting outside.

"Oh boy," Bendy muttered. "Everyone duck!" The moment the thugs spotted them, bullets started pinging off the vehicle. Boris sat low and pushed the pedal to the floor.

"You’re gonna hit the door!" Sammy squeaked.

"No, I’m not!" Boris turned the wheel and the tires screamed their protest. Everyone screamed as the car fishtailed and thugs dove out of the way. The car straightened out and the roof of the vehicle scraped across the edge of the door. Sparks flew off the metal and then they were through.

The car skidded, then Boris kept going. Bendy nearly sat up when he heard gunfire again. Boris
gasped and he turned the wheel, throwing everyone to the side before he swiveled the other way. "Hey! What the heck Boris?" Bendy demanded.

"Cops!" Boris shouted as he maneuvered as best he could. He was going too fast to stop hitting the blockade. Boris hoped he didn’t hit anyone as the car smashed through and continued upward. Bendy pulled himself up to see they were in a sloping tunnel that went upward. He looked back to see cops were scattered everywhere along the blockade.

"Head out, bro!" Bendy ordered.

"But!" Boris began to slow.

"They’ll just arrest us if we stop!" Bendy barked and the wolf sped up again. Bendy looked back again. His eyes widened in surprise when he made eye contact with a familiar crow and raccoon. The two female detectives stared at him in shock. He couldn’t help giving them a sheepish smile and shrug. Then they disappeared from his view.

"Those cops are gonna be on us in a second," Finley said grimly.

"Don’t worry, we got some tricks when it comes to the coppers," Yakko said, leaning back in his seat.

"I don’t wanna know," Bendy said.

Chapter End Notes

I know Bendy! The Warners are nuts but they are good at it!
"Yeah, we are," Dot said.
And you are back in my notes.
"We missed you too," Yakko said.
"Why did I get shot?" Wakko demanded. "I wanted to swing the bat!"
Sorry, man. It happens when you stare down a group of thugs with guns!
But-but! Cupbros! Finally! They are finally named! HAHAHAHA!
"Yeah. It only took you sixteen chapters too," Yakko said.
Shut your face! I'm happy with this chapter. Leave me to my good mood.
"But it isn't even edited!" Dot said, dramatically.
Mercowe will be on it and I'll go back and fix things. I just really wanna share it now!
"So impatient," Wakko tisked.
"Don't worry," Mercowe commented from the sidelines. "I just finished editing it." :D
Whatever, you three. See? Mercowe has my back!...and is also in my notes. It's becoming a party in here, huh? Either way, you're my hero, Mercowe! The boys are leaving for Toon Town next time, so I won't have to deal with you Warners anymore. Ha!
The Warners share mischievous smiles.
...You're not leaving are you?
Oh, stars...
Help me.
Goodbye Warnerburg

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

It's time to say goodbye to Warnerburg.

Chapter Notes

Hello lovelies! Holy cow! Your responses were amazing. I've been giddy all week due to them. Consider the Ego Eagle stuffed like a Thanksgiving turkey. And someone brought up a great question last chapter. What are the Warners' Talents? Hehehe. I promise to spill at the end of this chapter.

"But they're our Talents! You shouldn't say anything!" Dot complained.

Oh, hush. You guys have been around long enough that they deserve to know.

"But it's boring to explain. Leave our Talents as a mystery. This story is supposed to be a mystery right?" Yakko said.

"Yeah, it's even in the title," Wakko added.

Whatever. So, before I let the cats outta the bag I'll give you all a hint. They've been using their Talents the whole time. ;)

"NOooooo!" the Warners complain together.

And thank Mercowe for being my grammar angel!

Enjoy the chapter and see ya at the end!

Bendy woke up at the site of the disappearing stars. The sun was coming up. He sat up and looked around. Boris was next to him and Finley and Sammy were beyond him. All of them were still asleep. They were on some sorta flat roof. He spotted Dot sitting on the edge with her legs dangling over the lip and looking at the rising sun. Bendy quietly got up and tip toed over to her. She looked up and smiled at him. “Why Bendy, how romantic. Watching the sun rise with the girl of your dreams.”

“Can it,” Bendy huffed as he sat down. He raised a knee so he could rest his arm on it. “I just came over here to ask what happened last night?” Bendy spotted the water tower. They were back at the studio?

“You don’t remember?” Dot asked with surprise in her eyes and tone in the muted predawn light.

Bendy pursed his lips in thought. They sat in silence for a time as he tried to recall. “We broke through a cop barrack. Boris was driving us out of the tunnel. When we got out, there were cop cars on us is seconds.” Bendy paused. “He was following Wakko and Yakko’s directions. Then....” Bendy trailed off. What happened after that? The memory tickled the back of his skull. He furrowed his brows and brought a hand to his chin. He made a noise of mild frustration.

“I don’t remember,” he finally said. He glanced over at Dot. She seemed uncharacteristically
uncomfortable. Her brows furrowed and shoulders tensed as she looked out to the sunrise instead of at Bendy. “What happened?” Bendy asked cautiously.

“Ah. You, um, had an attack.” Dot cringed a little. “It looked really painful.”

Bendy blinked. Oh yeah, that’s right. It was coming back to him now. The pain had started up and he had thought it was going to be like the other times. It wasn’t. It had just gotten worse. The inferno in his lungs and chest caused him to scream. He began coughing violently. He was choking and gagging. He was coughing up ink. It wouldn’t stop. The others around him had shouted, but he hadn’t been able to understand them. He hadn’t been able to focus. All he had known was pain and suffocation. He had felt a hand on his shoulder. He didn’t know if it was Dot or Boris or someone else. Bendy had felt sweat run down his face and tried to wipe it away with shaky hands. His gloves were stained with ink. It wasn’t sweat, it was ink. His jumbled thoughts had been running a mile a minute. Was he finally melting? Was he dying? Bendy remembered panicking at that point.

He didn’t know how much longer after that, but eventually the pain had receded. The world came back into focus. Bendy had been able to breathe deeply again, but he had been so tired. Boris had been holding him tightly. The car had slowed down. Bendy had choked out Boris’ name and Bendy thought he heard all the occupants of the car sigh in relief. He remembered being carried up a staircase and being put down.


Dot smiled, but it wasn’t her real smile. “You were kinda out of it, handsome.” She swung her legs back and forth, knocking her heels against the wall gently. “Boris couldn’t drive when you started screaming, so Wakko jumped up and took over. We argued about whether we should take you to a hospital, but the pup, uh, convinced us otherwise.” She sighed heavily. “So Wakko and I lost the cops and we stopped at the studio after that. Everyone was pretty tired and we all called it a night.”

“That’s it?” Bendy asked.

Dot got a thoughtful look in her eyes. She tapped her chin with a finger. “I guess there was a lot of screaming and shouting. Yakko asked some questions. I did too. There might have been a few pies involved.”

Bendy scrunched his nose up in confusion. “What?” Dot giggled, but it died quickly. She looked down and grew quiet. Bendy had to suddenly squint his eyes. The sun had finally crested over the horizon.

“That ink illness is some pretty serious stuff, huh?” she whispered.

Bendy blinked and pulled his hand up to shield his eyes. He looked over to her. She stared down the long drop to the ground. Her face unusually sober. “Yeah.” He answered just as quietly. “Yeah, it is.”

Silence fell over the two. Bendy was honestly surprised that Dot had a side to her like this. He had figured that the Warners were always so ridiculously carefree. One of them had gotten shot last night and they had brushed that off like a bee sting. Bendy turned his head upward to watch the last of the stars disappear. He guessed he was wrong. There was more to them then he had thought.

“Boris said you guys are looking for a cure.”

Bendy didn’t respond immediately. It took him a moment to pull himself from his thoughts. “That’s the plan.”
“Huh.” She pouted and looked disappointed. She still hadn’t looked up from the ground and her heels tapped against the wall.

“What?”

“Well, I had imagined you and Boris were vigilantes that went around taking down bad guys and mobsters or dashing adventurers or epic mailmen that would go through rain, sleet, and snow to deliver lifesaving news or medicine.” She shrugged.

Bendy chuckled. “I’ve told you guys twenty times now. I’m not a mailman.”

Dot chuckled too and looked up. “You still look like one.” Bendy rolled his eyes and leaned back, placing his hands behind him.

“You are ridiculous,” he muttered.

“But we never have a dull moment,” she responded.


Dot smirked. “It was nothing.” Her smile suddenly became predatory. “But if ya really want to thank me, I wouldn’t mind another smooch.” She leaned toward him a little.

He scooted back. “Not in your life! That was gross and I didn’t agree to it!”

“Aww,” she pouted. “Way to kill the mood.”

“You did that yourself,” Bendy grumbled, watching her warily.

“You know you liked it.” She winked.

“Not even a little bit,” he growled.

“Was that your first kiss?” She suddenly asked innocently.

“W-why would you ask that!” he sputtered. Bendy’s face flushed darkly.

Dot grinned like she won a prize. “It was! Oooh! It was!” She covered her mouth with her hands and giggled cutely.

“Sh-shut your trap!” Bendy hissed and clenched his fists. “No, it wasn’t!”

She fell back in her giggles. “No one believes a liar!” she sang lightly.

“I take back every compliment I ever gave you. You Warners are the worst.” Bendy glared as his face cooled down.

“Doesn’t matters. We’re friends forever now.” She grinned.

“No.” Bendy shook his head.

“Yep. You have no choice.” She pointed a finger up like she was a parent declaring a rule to a child.

“Friendship is a two-way deal,” Bendy argued. “And I ain’t agreein’ to the nonsense you three pull.”

“Not when you’re a Warner!” Dot grinned again. Bendy sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose.
“C’mon. Look around. You have a ton of friends now.”

“Yeah,” Bendy said sarcastically. “Three psychopaths and two street performers. People are really smashing down the doors to get on my friend list now.”

Dot raised taunting eyebrows. “Have you ever had so many friends before?”

Bendy frowned. “Of course I’ve had friends before.”

“How many? Name them!” Dot demanded.

“Ah, uh, why?” Bendy gave her a confused look.

“Do it!” She waved her arms.

“Okay! Okay! Stars. So.” Bendy shifted. “There’s Boris, of course. And, um, I knew a weasel named Marty. He taught me poker. There was a pair of old mechanics, Brick and Brack. They showed Boris and I how to work cars so well they purred. Those guys could do anything with machines, man. Then th-there’s Sasha—.”

“Who’s she?” Dot narrowed her eyes and stared at him intensely.

Bendy felt his face warm, remembering the last time he saw the club owner. “Ah, well, she’s, um, she’s a friend!” he stuttered. Dot’s eyes widened.

“Rival,” she muttered to herself. She turned away from Bendy with a calculated look. She rested her chin in her hand. Bendy felt his face pale.

“W-wait! No! Whatever you are planning, leave Sash alone!” Bendy demanded.

“She even has a nickname from you!” Dot accused. The sun’s reflection put a dangerous glint in Dot’s eyes.

Bendy’s mind scrambled to answer her. He feared if he wasn’t fast enough this girl would go after Sasha! He still didn’t know what had happened to the bear he left with them! The first coherent thought that came to his mind came spilling out of his mouth. “Then I guess I could call you Dottie.”

She poked his chest with her finger. “Call me Dottie and you die.” She tapped his chest as she said it to emphasize her point. She wasn’t smiling and Bendy couldn’t be sure if she was kidding or not. There was a part of him that couldn’t let that slip away.

“What?” He smirked. “I can’t call you Dottie? After you’ve called me mailman so many times?”

“No,” she stated and drew her hand back. “No one can call me that.” She looked away. Oh, he had to use this.

“Not even me?” Bendy raised a questioning brow and leaned over to look her in the eye.

“No!”

Okay. Now to see if he could mess with her for a change. “But it’s cute.”

Her face deepened into a blush that glowed in the morning light. Bendy held back a snicker and straightened up again. Dot hid her face in her hands. He glanced back at the others. He guessed he didn’t joke around with strangers like this, but man it was weird to think of all these people as friends. “I guess we are friends, but if anyone asks, I’m denying it. It’s just weird.”
“Exactly! And you should have seen how many fans you have!” Dot cheered and sat up, completely composed again.

“Fans?”

“Don’t worry about it.” She waved a hand dismissively. “So, it’s on to the next quest for the great adventurers, right?” Bendy had to take a moment to catch up to Dot’s sudden subject change. He must have really gotten to her.

“Um, yeah. We really weren’t planning to stay here so long,” Bendy said.

Dot nodded like this made sense. “Heading to Toon Town and meeting that doc.” She stated it like it was a fact.

Bendy startled. He didn’t remember telling the Warners anything about that. “How did you know?”

She shrugged. “Doesn’t matter. But I got some advice for you.”

Bendy furrowed his brows. Doesn’t matter? He was trying to keep it secret! Stars and moon! Couldn’t he keep anything hidden?

“Stay away from anyone with a halo. They’re just trouble. And remember.” She winked. “When you’re in a tight spot, just think like a Warner.”

Bendy blinked. “What kinda advice is that? Halos? And the last thing I ever want to do is think like one of you nutso Warners.” He half lidded his eyes and leaned back again. Friendly silence fell between them for a few minutes.

“So, when are you planning to go?” Dot asked.

“As soon as Boris is awake,” Bendy said. She hummed. “Where are your brothers?”

“Probably getting Wakko’s shoulder taken care of,” Dot said. “After that we’ll help you get on the train.” Bendy’s head snapped to her with his eyes wide.

“We can’t. They have wanted posters of us!” Bendy protested harshly.

Dot giggled like he’d said a joke. “Silly. Like we can’t get you on a train.”

“It’s too dangerous.”

“But it’s the fastest way to Toon Town, right? Can’t drag your heels, handsome. Don’t you worry, we are experts at getting past the po-po.” Dot lifted her nose with a smug smile stretching her face.

Bendy shook his head. “There’s no point arguing with you, is there?” Bendy asked, deadpanned.

“Not really. But you are cute when you’re frustrated.” She rested back on her hands. Bendy sighed. He figured as much. He had learned a lesson here: Warners only do what they want. After the madness of last night, Bendy pondered if there was anything the Warners couldn’t pull off. He reviewed his memories. He had been sure the boy had been shot, but that turned out to be false. He guessed Wakko had been grazed, so they weren’t invulnerable. Still, they acted like nothing could bother them, at least not what would normally bother people. Another thought crossed his mind.

“Your brother is gonna be okay, right?” Bendy asked. If he wasn’t, then it would, technically, be Bendy’s fault.
Before the demon could really worry about this, Dot snorted. “He’ll be fine. We’ve seen a lot worse than that. He was careless, so it’s his fault.” Bendy almost asked what ‘a lot worse’ meant, but decided against it. A different question came instead.

“Hey Dot, can I ask ya a question?” Bendy asked.

“You just did.” Dot didn’t miss a beat.

Bendy scowled. It wasn’t worth it.

“Okay, go ahead. Ask another.” She tried to hold back her giggles.

“What happened to the car we escaped in?” Bendy asked, tilting his head a little in question.

“Oh, we parked it in a tree,” Dot stated easily. Bendy stared at her. It was like she had said it was gonna to be a cloudy day.

“Uh, what?” Bendy asked. He must have misheard her.

Dot rolled her dark eyes. “We parked it in the park.” She waved her hand lazily, gesturing to the gate and beyond it to the park. Oh, the park. That made more sense. “In the big tree.”

Bendy pursed his lips and scrunched up his nose. He didn’t mishear her then?

“Look. You can even see its silhouette from here.” She smiled. She pointed this time. Bendy followed her finger and, sure enough, he could just barely make out the outline shadow of a huge rectangle shape the size of a car in the branches. Wait a second. That tree looked familiar.

“Isn’t that grumpy squirrel’s tree?” Bendy asked. Dot’s grin grew mischievous. Bendy stared at her. “I want outta here before she finds that thing.”

“But it’s going to be sooo much fun!” Dot threw her arms up in celebration.

“No. I already had my head bitten off by her once. I don’t ever wanna meet ‘er again.” Bendy crossed his arms.

“Okay, but I get a good bye kiss this time.”

“Over my dead body!” Bendy had to hold himself back from screeching. He didn’t want to wake Boris or the others.

“But who knows how long it will be before we meet again,” Dot complained.

“Swell. Never is fine with me,” Bendy said with a cheeky smile.

Dot scowled and crossed her arms. “You’re a terrible friend.”

He laughed. “Can’t help it. Never really had friends like this before.”

“This is a great learning experience then,” She said. “Remember no matter the distance or time, we’ll still be your friends.” She looked back at the sleeping group. “All of us will.”

“Wow that was almost—.”

“Except me.” She suddenly sprawled across Bendy’s lap and looked up at him with a dangerous smirk. “I plan to snag that girlfriend card.”
Bendy scowled down at her. “Never. And if you don’t move in three seconds I’m pushing you off
this roof.” She’d be fine if he did. Bendy was almost certain of it.

She pouted and gave her best puppy dog eyes. They weren’t nearly as effective as Boris’ eyes.

“Three....”

“You wouldn’t push a girl,” she said with certainty.

“Two....”

She sighed and sat up. “Killjoy.”

“Yep, that’s me. Painfully straight-laced.” Bendy smirked and grabbed the edges of his vest like it
was a fancy coat.

Dot snorted. “Innocent maybe, but I would never think of you as straight-laced.” Bendy’s smirk
grew into a grin. He heard snickering behind him and turned. Boris was up and trying to smother his
laughter in his hands. Wakko and Yakko stepped onto the roof through the doorway and Sammy
was beginning to stir.

“So, how are you guys planning on getting us on that train?”

“We’ll tell you on the way,” Wakko said. Finley sat up and stretched. Sammy yawned.

“Good mornin’ everyone,” Boris said. Everyone answered him.

“What’s this about a train?” Finley asked, yawning, still half asleep.

“Apparently the Warners are shipping us to Toon Town by train,” Bendy answered.

“How? The cops are probably lookin’ for us everywhere,” Boris asked.

Yakko raised a finger to his lips. “It’s a surprise.” He winked. Boris gulped.

“I still wanna know why we got shot at by a pair of cups with magic fingers,” Finley said and
seemed to consider something. “Golly, that sounds weird no matter how I say it, huh?”

Wakko snickered.

“Ho-how’s your arm?” Sammy asked him.

Wakko blinked, then gave a thumbs-up. “No worries. Tis just a flesh wound.”

Bendy shook his head, but found himself smiling.

“You’re lucky it wasn’t one of those blast things. I have to go get a new bat,” Dot huffed.

“Think it was their Talents?” Finley asked. The Warners shrugged.

“Magic?” Sammy suggested.

“Magic cups? Where have I heard that before?” Yakko asked and tapped his chin.

“Why were they after Bendy and Boris? They knew your names.” Finley looked over to Bendy.

Bendy sighed and shared a look with Boris. Through a small frown from Bendy and a concerned
furrow of the wolf’s brows in reply, and finally an ear twitch the brothers agreed that they couldn’t endanger everyone.

“Do you guys know them?” Finley asked. Bendy looked over to him. He could see the wariness in the fox’s eyes. He tried not to judge the fox harshly for any mistrust. Bendy would have done the same. Though, it still stung a little.

“We’ve never met them before,” Boris said.

“But we have a pretty good idea why they’re after us,” Bendy added. The brothers shared another glance, but Bendy shook his head.

“And?” Sammy asked.

“And we can’t tell you. You might become targets too and we don’t wanna do that to ya,” Bendy said.

“But those bimbos were trying to kill you!” Dot protested.

“And I don’t want ta give ‘em a reason to go any of you!” Bendy snapped back. “Look, we got dragged into this mess and we’ll handle it, but I refuse to drag anyone else in. It’ll be fine. We know what’s goin’ on.” Mostly. “And ya gotta trust us. I’m being honest when I say there is nothing any one of you can do beyond what you’ve already done. Soon, there won’t need to be secrets.” He thought. “And we’ll all be on the same page, but until then, trust Boris and I to take care of ourselves.”

The Warners shared a strange knowing look and Finley and Sammy seemed disappointed, but content. “Just tell me that you didn’t do anything bad.”

“We didn’t do anything bad,” Boris promised.

“Alright,” Finley said. “Guess we got to get you two out of here before those guys catch up to you again.”

“Sounds swell.” Bendy sighed gratefully.

“I know you know this, and I know I’ve said it a dozen times now, but you’re insane,” Bendy stated.

“We know.” Wakko sounded pleased, like Bendy had just complimented his hat.

Bendy sighed. “I know you know. I just said that.” The group was standing in an alley a block from the train station. Bendy and Boris were wearing the disguises they had from their performances with Finley and Sammy. Bendy tugged his hat a bit lower on his head.

Finley came around the corner and handed Bendy a couple of train tickets. He gave the demon a grin. “Two tickets for Toon Town.”

“Thanks Fin.” Bendy tucked the tickets into his pocket.

“So, I guess this is goodbye huh?” Sammy asked. His ears were down in sorrow and his eyes wide. Boris patted him on the shoulder.

“Yeah, it’s time we get ouotta here. But hey, if yer ever in Toon Town, we should go out for dinner again. It’ll be on us,” Bendy said. Sammy nodded with a small sad smile.
Finley lifted his hand and Bendy took a moment to shake it. “You watch yourself on your adventuring. Remember, don’t forget us little guys.”

Bendy snorted. “I doubt I’ll have any more adventuring. Warnerburg should be the most exciting place I’ll ever visit.”

Finley grinned. “That was pretty wild, huh?”

“Maybe you should consider adventuring yourself Fin.” Bendy smirked. Finley rolled his eyes. “Sammy would never go for that,” he mock-lamented. Bendy chuckled.

Finley turned to Boris. “You take care of your big brother. He has an knack for trouble.”

“You don’t have to tell me,” Boris said. He grinned at the fox. Bendy grumbled. Then he turned to the Warners. They grinned with their hands behind their backs, looking expectant. Bendy gave them a deadpan look. A small silence stretched out. The sound of train wheels clacking on the tracks could be heard in the distance over the sound of people walking, absorbed in their own conversations.

“Bye, weirdos.” Bendy turned away from them.

“C’mon,” Yakko said. “You can’t say bye to friends like that.”

“Not friends. I’ll do as I please.” Bendy didn’t miss a beat as he adjusted his overcoat. It was a bit warm for it, but it covered his figure and made hiding his tail easy. He felt someone get close to his face and lifted a hand. He covered Dot’s puckered mouth with the palm of his hand without even looking. He turned to her. “And what do you think you’re doing? I said no kiss! Stars, I’ve told you a hundred times!” She kissed his hand and jumped back with a giggle. “Ugh!” He wiped his hand on his trousers. Everyone laughed except Bendy, who scowled. The train whistle blow announcing its arrival. That was fast.

Wakko appeared at Bendy’s side. “It was fun. Invite us to more schemes in the future pal.” He gave Bendy a strong pat on the back that caused the demon to grunt and went to say bye to Boris.

“Yeah.” Yakko leaned on Bendy’s head. “Don’t be a stranger and write us sometime. You know the address, pipsqueak.” He ruffled Bendy’s hat.

Bendy growled and swatted his hand away. Yakko turned away to join Wakko with a please smirk on his face. “Pipsqueak! Who you callin’ a pipsqueak ya floppy eared-bumbling—.”

“And remember to be safe and have fun, my handsome mailman,” Do purr, way too close to his face. Bendy gasped and lunged back, nearly falling. Dot smiled as she slowly walked past him. Bendy narrowed his eyes. “You too…Dottie.”

She spun around, her eyes wide and face flushed, but she didn’t get the chance to reply.

“Alrighty!” Yakko clapped his gloved hands. “We’ll go distract the security and any cops in the area. You boys better jump on that train.”

“Okay.” Boris smiled and waved as the Warners strolled away. Dot made a sound of protest. Yakko led her by the arm. She reluctantly followed and looked back at Bendy to see him wink. She blushed again and turned away. “Bye!” the wolf called. The three trouble makers disappeared into the crowd.

“We’ll walk ya to the platform. They’re lookin’ for two fellas, not four,” Finley said and threw his thumb toward the train station.
“Thanks, Finley,” Bendy said. The fox gave his large signature grin and they were off.

“So, you really think you’ll find help in Toon Town?” Finley asked.

Bendy shrugged. “It’s the only lead we got.” They climbed the stairs to the building. Bendy heard a scream and glanced behind him. Somehow a large statue of Wakko in a toga holding a vine of grapes had appeared in the middle of the street. A car swerved to dodge it and a cop blew his whistle. Bendy rolled his eyes and entered the building. Man, he couldn’t believe he was already so used to the Warners shenanigans that they didn’t really faze him anymore. At least, not on shock value. By the lack of reaction from the others, it was the same for them. Well, Sammy looked like he was about to run, but that was normal for the cat.

The group headed to the platform, Sammy nervously twitching and glancing around like a sinner in church. Luckily, no one stopped them or gave them a second glance.

“We’ll hear fr-from you?” Sammy asked.

“Definitely.” Boris smiled.

“There’s a good chance you’ll find us in Toon Town soon.” Finley gave them a cheeky smile. “It could be our big break. We just need to wrap some things up here.”

“Look us up when ya pull in.” Boris’ tail wagged a little and Bendy bit back a chuckle.

“So, we’ll see ya fellas later?” Bendy asked.

“Plan on it.” Finley grinned again. The two stepped on the train. “Oh, and fellas!” They looked back. “Don’t forget about your dreams! I want to hear all about ‘em when we meet again.”

“Only when Sammy hands me a copy of his book!” Bendy replied. The cat blushed and ducked his head. Finley laughed and patted the cat on the back. He had to reach up to do so.

The brothers chuckled and waved.

“Bye, Sammy! Bye, Finley!” Boris called. The two waved and turned to leave. The boys entered the train to find it packed. The brothers had to move up a few cars to find seats. They shared a booth with an elderly couple that had already claimed the spots near the window, so the two sat close to the aisle instead. “We’re finally goin’ to Toon Town bro!” Boris said excitedly.

“I hardly believe it,” Bendy said, leaning back in the cushion and sighing. Cushions, oh, he missed cushions. His sore back muscles relaxed. This was a million times better then cardboard boxes or streets or a few blankets on a roof. He was so excited to see a bed again.

“Think we’ll see the doctor today?” Boris asked, already digging into his backpack.

Bendy shrugged. “Who knows? I have no idea when we’ll pull into town or where the university is, so you’re guess is as good as mine.”

Bendy got comfortable to take a nap. He glanced at the couple next to them. The woman was dressed rather nicely in a prime floral dress and a hat with a matching flower attached to the ribbon that wrapped around it. She had pearls adorning her slightly more than slender neck. To Bendy’s eye they seemed real enough. She sat straight and proper. The man across from her was in a suit of equal quality and a wore a tie with a jewel pin that glinted in the light occasionally. His hat was removed, showing his comb-over and a handlebar mustache that twitched as he looked out the window to the clearing platform. He had a newspaper folded on his knee. They appeared harmless enough. Bendy
was a little surprised they weren’t sitting in first class. Bendy shrugged off his train of thought and went back to his planned nap. The train gave the whistle of departure and the locomotive gave a little lurch before smoothly pulling away. Finally, they were off.

Chapter End Notes

Finally. FINALLY!
So, that's it. The Warners and our pals Finley and Sammy are gone for now. The boys have to move on. I'm...more sad about that than I thought I would be. It was fun writing all these guys.
No. I still don't know if ya'll will leave my notes, even if you're outta the story for now. Dot giggled and put the box away.
So, the Talents.
Yakko has a way of being persuasive with his words. Ya know, making people agree to things they never normally would. He also uses it to confuse people to no end.
"I'm just charming." Yakko winked.
Dot can mess with space. She's the reason things disappear and reappear outta nowhere. She can also make people disappear too. It's how they escape all the time and have all that random junk. She's also the reason they seem to fit anywhere when hiding.
"It's not junk! They are important tools for all of our work," she protested.
Then there's Wakko.
"Hello!" He waves.
Ugh. He's the reason they are here. He has the ability to break the fourth wall, because of this the Warners are aware of way more than they should. It also works in an unique way. He can break the wall between his Talent and those of his sibling's, so Wakko can use Yakko's persuasion and Dot can be fourth wall aware and Yakko can pull things from Dot's space. He literally blurs the line between their Talents, so all three of them can use all three Talents.
"Yep!" Wakko grinned.
They also combine their Talents: using both Wakko's and Dot's Talents, they are in my notes and outside of the story.
"Correct," Yakko said.
And it's these things that make them so dangerous and seem to break the laws of reality. So, now you know.
"And tell no one!" Dot added. Yeah, you three would be in a lot of trouble if people figured out how you do what you do. But that's stuff for later chapters. I plan to get deeper into Talents and what all that is about.
For now, on to Toon Town!!
"WAIT!" Yakko called. "You forgot."
Right!
Okay guys, I need you're help! I can't make up my mind, so I'm leaving the choice to you.
It's not next chapter, but the one after it.
Do you want to:
A. (Finally) get to Toon Town and see Dr. Oddswell (more plot)
or
B. have a detour and meet Alice Angel (cause ;) )
It's up to you! The vote closes next Friday when I post the next chapter.
Alrighty. That's all for now.
"Bye everyone!" The Warners wave. "We'll see you all later."
TAP out

...Mercowe here. Is it just me, or have Tap and the Warners been getting along strangely well lately?
Chapter Summary

Warnerburg is left baffled, just like the Warners like it.

Chapter Notes

Oh my stars. T-T
The Warners laugh madly. They can't breathe it's so funny.
Well everyone, the vote is in. And it was close.
"It was a tie!" Yakko laughed.
It was broken just before I posted this!
"Y-you." Wakko fights to breathe. "You were looking for a quarter to flip."
Shuddup! It was broken! A choice was made. Geez.
Thank you, everyone that voted and commented. Just like the morons said, it was dead even until just a little while ago. I thought the universe was out to mock me again.
"No just us." Dot smiled.
So, looks like Alice won by the skin of her teeth. It's still not gonna be the chapter anyone is expecting. ;3 But that's the fun of it. Don't worry, everyone that wanted to see Toon Town, we will probably still get there by the end of that chapter...proly. Don't worry, it's not a huge come in either. It's in honor of chapter three of BATIM coming out next month, so more of a Stan Lee kinda cameo. I am so excited for that next chapter! Meaty is awesome. XD
"How about you go enjoy the chapter. The ghost is gonna go get lost in a fan freak out."
Dot rolls her eyes and point down.

Featherworth groaned, her beak turned toward the ceiling and her feet propped up on the desk. Ringtail sat across from her with her head in her folded arms. Both detectives had dark circles under their eyes. They had spent the night and all morning doing the raid and then trying to find the fleeing boys. They had just returned after discovering the car abandoned in the tree house of a very livid squirrel.

“Oh, come now, you two! You helped bust one of the biggest theft rings of the century. Why in the world are you so low?” Officer Jones demanded as she placed two steaming cups of coffee on the desk.

“We didn’t get our men,” Ringtail’s muffled voice replied.

The old woman scoffed. “That’s hardly a reason to be throwing such a fit.”

“How did it even get up in that tree? There were no broken branches to suggest it’s launched trajectory,” Featherworth muttered as she stared up at the ceiling blankly.
“Magic!” Ringtail threw her arms up. “Who cares? The point is they’re gone. Again!”

Officer Jones huffed, “You two make the sorest winners I have ever seen.”

Featherworth tilted her head down to see Ringtail bristle and flash her fangs. Before the raccoon could do something to get them in trouble Featherworth spoke. “This isn’t a victory ma’am.” She sat up and pierced the older woman with her gaze. “That is the second time they’ve slipped past us. They are wanted for murder and we believe they are involved in a case that has been going on for two years now. If we are correct, then the lost lives of over a dozen people can be linked to this case.”

The woman raised an eyebrow and her wrinkle framed eyes widened. “But they were a couple of boys! Kids even! They hardly seemed all that dangerous.”

“And yet they come smashing out of a warehouse full of stolen property in the middle of an ongoing shoot out.” Ringtail swung a hand that matched her sarcastic tone. “Completely innocent, little good doers.”

The officer huffed and turned away. She stopped at the door and looked back at them. “The commissioner wants you at the press release this afternoon. Apparently, a journalist has been causing problems and the commissioner wants this handled before anything else is dragged out to the public that isn’t under his thumb.” She shut the door before either detective could comment.

“Oh for Pete’s sake!” Ringtail thunked her head back onto the table. “Can’t we get a break for five minutes!”

Featherworth chuckled weakly and sipped her coffee. It was a little too sweet, but would suffice. “You’re acting like a rookie after their first full night. Don’t you usually have sleeping problems anyway?” She tilted her beak back up to stare at the ceiling again.

“Shaddup.” Featherworth heard her muffled mutter. There was no fire behind the words. Not even a spark. “They drove right past us. That pipsqueak cussing smiled at us!”

Featherworth snorted a weak laugh. “To be fair, he looked apologetic and just as surprised seeing us as us seeing him.”

“You and your stupid good bird sight,” the raccoon muttered.

“Just drink your coffee.” Featherworth sighed. The crow heard her partner shuffle about and take her cup.

They had a thoughtful silence. Featherworth nearly dozed off when Ringtail’s voice snapped her back to reality. “Hey, you said he seemed surprised to see us?”

“Yes.”

“So, he wasn’t expecting us. Probably didn’t even know we were in town,” she seemed to mutter to herself more than talk to the crow. “All that stuff and he just took his bag back? Well, that and that stolen car.”

Featherworth hummed. “If that stock list was honest, there were also some missing jewels, collectable coins, and a couple of knifes.”

“Think it was them?”
“Probably not.” Featherworth sighed. “What are the facts again?”

“It’s amazing how organized it seemed. Well, until some sorta tornado went through,” Ringtail said. “How did it get that trashed? Only two places were riddled in bullets; our shoot out and a spot in the middle. There should have been a ton more people in there for it to get that messed up.”

Featherworth hummed ‘I don’t know,’ and drank more of her coffee by pouring it down her beak.

“How do you do that without choking?” Featherworth could practically hear the way Ringtail scrunched up her muzzle.

“You’d need a beak to understand,” Joan said with a small smirk.

“Hmph,” Ringtail grumbled. “Anyway, where was I?”

“A ton of people for the warehouse to be that messed up.”

“Ah, right.” She cleared her throat. “Then there were circular burn marks in some places.”

“And on the car. Don’t forget that,” Joan added.

“Right. Then the boys were being shot at, maybe, by…who?” Rachel asked. The crow groaned.

“So many questions,” she lamented.

Rachel chuckled. “It seems that is what those two are good at.”

“And we also found that little bit of black residue on the front seat of the car.” Featherworth sighed heavily.

“Which you think is that demon’s condition getting worse,” Rachel said and took a big gulp of her drink.

“It looks like ink. It’s called ink illness.” She shrugged. “So far, it’s one of the few things that make sense.”

“This case is getting crazy,” Ringtail murmured. “No sense crying over questions. Best get some wink of sleep before the interview.”

“Then why are we drinking coffee?” Featherworth asked.

Silence answered her.

“Cause I’m an idiot.”

“We’re going to go talk to that bear in the asylum,” Joan reminded her.

“I don’t think I can go. They will absolutely lock me up. I’m losing my mind,” Rachel said.

Saying Cuphead was angry was like saying a bucket of ice water to the face is uncomfortable. Cups couldn’t believe those two had escaped. They had gotten away and so easily! When he discovered they were gone he’d taken his frustrations out on some nearby lowly nobodies that were yelling something about intruders and cops and such. It was the cops that had him and Mugs bail on getting more goods. Now, here he was again at this crummy bar, eating breakfast with no clue where they went!
Still, Cups felt the jewels in his pockets, he guessed it wasn’t a complete bust. These would at least keep him and his brother nice and comfy for a while. It wouldn’t help with this mess though. Just like in Sillyvision, those two had slipped the cops and vanished.

Cups had to admit it was almost entertaining how unpredictable those two acted. He thought back to that night and narrowed his eyes as he stuffed a fork full of eggs into his mouth. The short one had begun to duck before Cups had fired. Bendy had sensed his blast somehow. That had never happened before. The only people that knew to dodge had been people who knew what to expect, and the only one that had kept dodging had been that owl.

Beginners mistake, he mentally shrugged to himself. Anyway, bottom dollar was if he caught ‘em off guard he could waste ‘em easy. No one expects a blast coming from someone’s finger. They always waited for him to try and pull a stupid gun. But not this kid.

Oh well, he would have to chase them down again and next time not let them get away. It was simple enough. They were either still in town or on the run again. If he couldn’t find them then he would go for their little friends and make them talk. If he couldn’t find any of them then they left. He didn’t want to think beyond that point.

“Hey bro!” Cups looked over to see Mugs rushing to him with a newspaper. He raised a brow at his younger sibling. Mugs had always found the paper boring. “Look! Look!” Cups lifted his drink and plate as his sibling slammed the paper on the table upsetting everything on its surface by the force. Several others looked over to them in the ruckus. Cups only gave them a quick glare before setting his things down and looking over what Mugs was pointing at excitedly.

It was the front page. The picture caught his attention first. It was the car that the squirt, wolf, and others had escaped in. It sat suspended in the branches of a large tree. Cops were standing around, looking up at it. There was a very ticked off squirrel that seemed to be yelling at them.

Cups glanced up at the headline and nearly burst into laughter. Speed Demons Escape. Oh man, that was priceless. Maybe there was something here that could help them out. Cups looked up to is little bro. “Nice find, Mugs.” The other glowed at the approval. Cups went back to eating while he read through the article.

_Last night a high-speed chase took off in the street of Warnerburg. The police had been hot on their tails when the individuals in the car started throwing pies, of all things._

Cups had to bite his lip again. The heck were these people he was after? This was hilarious.

_The strange choice of projectile proved effective, however, in both blinding the police in pursuit and in slipping up the cars. The police lost them at a seemingly dead-end turn at the Odd Corner Way. They had, seemingly, vanished until the reappearance of the car in Miss Slappy’s quiet tree house. Miss Slappy had this to say, “Mad? Of course I’ma mad! There’s a car in my house! Dang Warners did this! Who else is this-this-ugh! Look, this used to be a decent enough place to live. A little too many people, sure, but there used to be a time when I didn’t have to come out every morning to check the roof of my home, ya know? I didn’t have to worry that some young spittins are stuck up there or a star fallen car! This is the last straw! I’m giving those Warners a piece of my mind.”_

_The Warners Miss Slappy mentions are three local agitators, Yakko, Wakko, and Dot Warner. They are well known in Warner Studio and throughout the city for their pranks and strange humor. There is no definite evidence of their involvement, but the police admit these events matches their m.o._

_Cups skimmed through the rest. He already knew what the whole warehouse deal was, it didn’t even_
seem to be mentioned. Excuses for the police, accusations, speculations, and blah, blah, blah. He flipped through the rest to be sure, then pushed it aside. The Warners. It was a start. Cups finished the last of his coffee and went to pay. It was a tall fella that took his money, seemed a little on the dumb side and older than Cups. He inquired after the Warners and got some more interesting information. They had caused a scene at the junction of Main and Transverse, near the train station. Cups smirked.

“And when did they do that?”

“Not too sure, sir. May been ‘bout seven this mornin’,” the man said. Cups grinned.

“Thanks. Oh and one more thing. Where can I find the Warners?” Cups asked lightly. The chump gave him a look like he had gone mad.

“Y-you don’t want to find them, sir. They’re an unstable lot,” the man stuttered. That didn’t really matter to Cups. He had to be sure that the schmucks weren’t in on the brother’s mess. Otherwise, he would get another harsh ‘talking to’ from the boss and have to come back here anyway. Just like that damned bird. No, better to cover all the bases now.

Cups gave the man a lazy stare. Then he dropped a bit of ice in his tone. “I’ll be the judge of that. Where are they?”

“War-Warner Studios. The water tower! But you really don’t want to go there, sir!” he said so quickly that he seemed to forget to breathe.

“C’mon Mugs.” Mugman grinned and stood up to rush out the door. Cups was not far behind him.

“Where we headed bro?” Mugs asked.

“There are two ways we could go. We either go to the station and look at the destinations of the trains that left ‘bout the time that ruckus ‘appened ‘r we go see these Warner characters,” Cups said.

“Why the station?” Mugs tilted his head with a confused furrow in his brow and finger raised to his chin.

“I think they were causing a distraction for those schmucks to sneak on a train,” Cups said.

“Ooooh.” Mugs beamed. “You’re so smart Cups!”

“I know. So, I was thinking of going to the Warners,” Cups said putting his hands in his pockets.

Mugs grinned. “That sounds like berries to me, bro.”

“I thought you’d like that choice better.” Cups smirked. “Let’s go.”

It hadn’t been hard to find. It was kinda a sore thumb in the studio. Mugs and Cups had a little problem with the flat tire of a guard. Before Cups could do anything, Mugs had broken the guy’s hand and knocked him out. That’s what happens when people try to grab the younger brother. Cups only shrugged and they headed to the middle of the Studio.

They paused at the bottom of the rickety looking staircase and glanced up and up. Cups gave it an impressed whistle. It was a lot taller than he had thought. He turned his half lidded look to Mugs.

“Ready?”

“Yeah! Let’s go!” Mugs exclaimed and went up without any more hesitation. Cups watched the
view change as they climbed. He liked the far horizon and the bright sky. The buildings stunk away and the cars seemed to become toy sized. It was a relaxing view, really. Before he knew it, they had reached the top. Mugs appeared around the side, giving Cups his most confused expression. He had a brow raised and his usual smile, which turned down in a small frown. He tugged his scarf up to his round nose, but the confusion still showed through his eyes.

“What’s up bro?” Cups asked, stepping up next to Mugs. He looked up to the large WB logo on the water tower.

“There’s no door or window or nothin’ai. Mugs pointed to the logo. “How do we get in?”

Cups raised his own brow at this. “Think that bimbo at the bar was pullin’ our leg?”

Mugs shrugged. “M-maybe we just knock?”

Cups rolled his eyes as Mugs walked up to the logo and knocked twice. The metal made the knocks echo loudly. “You idiot. That’s not gonna—.” Suddenly the sign swung open and the two jumped back so they wouldn’t be hit.

“Hello?” A high pitch voice asked. Cups smirked as he made eye contact with the little minx he recognized. She had hung out the window of that car and had taken a swing at one of his blasts with a bat. It had been funny to see the shock on her face. It was just like the shock she had on now.

“Hiya kitten,” Cups said straightening up. “Long time, no see.”

Xedo Tiptail adjusted his metal-rimmed glasses up his snout. He pulled out his little notebook from his bag and overlooked the notes he had taken so far. The journalist felt he was on the brink of the story of the century. The fox looked up the street to pass a circle of people that were watching a couple of performers. He would have liked to watch too, but he had a conference to get to. He felt the companion he had with him slow to glimpse into the crowd.

“C’mon along Wiston. We don’t want to be late,” Xedo said.

Wiston made a complaining sound. “But those things are boring! Can’t I stay here and watch this instead?”

Xedo gave the younger fox an unamusing glare. “And let you burn down the entire shopping district?” Wiston grinned, showing his sharp canines to the elder fox. “I don’t think so pup.”

“Don’t call me that.” He pouted and crossed his arms.

“Then don’t act like one,” Xedo shot back. The journalist turned back to his notes. He had done a little research on the detectives that would be speaking. He had been interested since they had come from his home city, Toon Town, and it was odd for them to speak on the local affairs. He knew them of course. These two women had been a big claimer for some time until they suddenly slipped the spotlight and their big bust stories stopped a little over a year ago. He hadn’t quite been able to find the reason for their sudden arrival here except possibly two criminals from a small town. What was it? Ah, there it was, Sillyvision, that’s right. But once again what did that have to do with two big city detectives with reputations like theirs? No, there was definitely something going on here that the police weren’t talking about. That’s why he got the ticket to Warnerburg the very same day these events were presented to him.

He was equally pleased and frustrated by the facts he had been able to collect so far. It seemed that local trouble had mixed and muddled the larger affairs, which only added to confused accounts by
witnesses only looking at the surface events. He had found the most recent wanted posters for the
two from Sillyvision and had tried to piece together the activities of the two detectives that would
link them together. Sadly, all he had found was a high-speed chase, a bear gone crazy, and a list of
local muggings and robberies. The first two events were speculated to be tied into three individuals
called the Warners, or as Xedo saw it, local trouble. Nothing seemed to tie together yet.

Speaking of trouble. Xedo looked up from his notes and narrowed his predator eyes. It was too quiet.
He looked to his side to confirm his fear. Ah yes, the little firebrand was gone. Xedo slowly turned
his head, looking for any sign of a fox tail or fire in any direction. He could see the location of the
conference tantalizingly near. Xedo sighed and thought. If he were Wiston, where would he go?
What would he do? Well, he could have gone back to the performers to just innocently watch their
little show. Xedo looked back up at the conference location. It would be nice to think that.

The fox made his way into the conference building and showed them his identification papers. The
old woman that was helping him gave him instructions to the room in a nasally and not quite pleasant
voice. Xedo made his way in, but instead of entering the audience section that the reports were
expected to be in he headed to the section behind the small stage and podium.

It only took him a moment to find the pointed ears of a fox standing in front of one of the stage
curtains holding up a lighter. Wiston was flicking it.

Xedo cleared his throat, causing the other fox to jump and fumbled with the lighter, nearly dropping
it. “Big brother! What are you doing here?” Wiston asked way too nervously to come off as
innocent.

Xedo blinked with an unamused frowned on his muzzle. “Come along, you pyro. Hand it over and
let’s get out of here.”

“I-I.” The fox’s ear dropped and a look of panic came across his face as his eyes widened. “I don’t
know what you’re talking about!”

The journalist sighed and gave him an exasperated glare that practically said ‘really?’ as he put his
hands on his hips. “The lighter, Wiston. Just give me the lighter. We don’t want to be caught back
here by the police, now do we?”

Wiston’s shoulders dropped in defeat. “No sir.” He slowly, painfully stretched out his hand. “Can’t I
at least flick it once? I won’t light anything!”

Xedo snatched it away. “No, no. We wouldn’t have any of that here. Now, let’s get to the right side
of this so I can ask som-.”

“You! What are you doing here!” Xedo turned to see the familiar snarl of Detective Rachel Ringtail
a foot from his face. He inconspicuously slipped the lighter into his pocket.

“Ah, Detective. It’s so good to see you again,” Xedo said, completely unfazed.

“Cut the pleasantries. Why are you here?” she demanded again.

“I heard there was a story out here. What a great surprise to find some of Toon Town’s greatest out
here of all places.” He smiled and adjusted his glasses.

“Why you little—.”

“Hello again, Mr. Tiptail,” Featherworth interrupted her partner. Xedo nodded in greeting. Detective
Joan Featherworth was a harder nut to crack than her partner. Ringtail’s short temper was easy to
stirrup and get good leads from, but the crow clammed up and was excellent at diverting a conversation or dodging questions. Xedo had forgotten how difficult it was to follow these two while they were on a case. When he had, it had been some of the more…exciting moments of his career. He felt a thrill shoot from the tip of his bushy tail to the top of his pointed ears.

“Hello, Detective Featherworth. I am glad you both seem to be doing well,” Xedo said with a pleasant smile. He felt a tiny brush of his pocket.

“Very well. My partner does have a point to ask, why are you back here?” The crow gestured and Xedo felt his tail give an embarrassed flick.

“We had just taken a wrong turn. I look forward to the conference,” he said. He clamped his paw down on the other furry hand that had tried to reach for the lighter within. He grinned at the two detectives as he dragged his younger sibling out of the room by the paw he had captured.

“That’s not what I meant! How did that sly fox find us!” he heard Detective Ringtail snap at her partner. Sadly, the fox couldn’t listen in. He had his own riffraff to deal with. He gave the younger fox a sharp glare. Wiston looked sheepish.

“Did you try to pickpocket me?” he asked.

“Oh, no?” Wiston sunk his head into his shoulders, trying to look as small as possible.

“I taught you how to do that.” Xedo rolled his eyes.

“Hehe. Sorry?”

Xedo sighed and dragged the other into the conference room on the correct side. He found their seats, pleasantly near the front. He hissed to his younger brother. “Just no more of your antics until this is over. Do you hear me? Try anything and see if I ever take you out of the city again.” Wiston slumped in his seat with a heavy pout.

“Hello.” Another reporter sat next to Xedo. She was a pretty little canary bird. “I’m sorry. I don’t think I’ve seen you around here before. Are you new?” she asked conversationally.

Xedo smiled kindly. “I’ve come to visit. I’m Xedo Tiptail from the Toon Town Times.”

Chapter End Notes

Warnerburg is a mess of questions! And it's all thanks to the boys and the Warners.
"You're welcome," the three say together.
I wanted to have more of our Cupbros, but I decided to cut it there for it's own chapter.
XD Still those two are the closest to catching up to the boys if they survive the Warners!
I also brought in two new OCs. Xedo and Wiston are actually from Twinfeather. I've decided that when I need a new OC I'll ask one of you awesome people if you want to help out! Your opinions and thoughts matter here! The story thrives because of you! So, thank you for everything you give, even if it's just coming back to read. You make a little soul happy. ^^
You three are being oddly quiet.
"You're giving us an entire chapter to play with," Yakko said.
"We can be nice for a note or two." Wakko shrugged.
What have I done?  
Whelp, that being said let's get back to our Bbros.  
All aboard for next week!  
TAP out.  
(And don't be mad at Mercowe. It's my fault for being slow, so it's unedited until that 
majestic beta blesses it with amazing grammar and correct punctuation. Mercowe, my 
angel!!)
**A Certain Casino**

Chapter by [ThisAnimatedPhantom](mailto:ThisAnimatedPhantom)

Chapter Summary

Bendy reads a newspaper.

Chapter Notes

Fan art! AH!
"Oh boy." Yakko sighed. "We've really lost the writer this time."
"Think it's sickness?" Wakko asked.
"That and TAP hasn't stopped looking at that gift since TF showed it to 'em." Dot shook her head.
Oh and yeah I'm sick with a horrible stomach bug. I don't wanna eat or drink anything.
So, writing from bed.
"And a little loopy," Yakko whispered behind his hand.
Hmmmm, circles will only make me more sick. Hehe.
"How about we just take over from here and you get some rest?" Dot suggested.
B-but I gotta warn 'em the chapter will be like nothing they expect.
"Well, ya just did, so go on and count some sheep." Wakko made a shoo motion with his hands.
Mmkay.
"Thank ya guys for writing comments, leaving kudos, and reading, TAP really does love hearing from you," Dot said. "And thank you Twinfeather. That really touched the ghost."
"Is touching a ghost cold?" Wakko asked.
"I bet it's wet. Like sticking your hand in fog," Yakko said.
"Isn't that going through it though?" Wakko asked.
"True."
"Boys!" Dot snapped. They fell silent and stared at her. "It's probably like touching cold glass. Anyway...."
"Right! For everyone that voted for Alice, here ya go!" Wakko said. "And boy she's grrrr!" He purred and winked.
"Yep a hottie for sure. She has legs, a real cat's meow. Ten outta Ten," Yakko said.
"In other words...." Wakko said.
"Hellooooo Angel!" the boys crowed together.
Dot rolled her eyes. "Just go read and ignore the idiots."

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy pulled himself out of his novel to at the strange coughing noise. He made eye contact with an old man with a mustache for a split second before the man buried his face back into his paper. Bendy lifted an eyebrow, but shrugged it off before turning back to his book. Felix had just gotten into the
The explorer had figured out the deadly fire trap when—.

Motion from the corner of Bendy’s eye had him glance up again. The man was sweating and bouncing his leg nervously. Bendy blinked and tried to focus on his book.

He had figured out the deadly fire trap when the shift of stone and the fall of dust had the cat look up. Small portals roughly the size of his fist slowly opened from above and from the sides. Not waiting to see what would come, the explorer sprinted across the room. He heard something small fall behind him. Felix chanced a look over his shoulder to see hundreds of giant red flame ants scuttling across the floor, walls, and ceiling toward him. The great explorer reached for his trusty bag and—.

“Dear, I am going to go see if there is a lounge car. Would you mind joining me?” The man had put down his paper and leaned over to the woman. Bendy grit his teeth.

“No, thank you! You’re the one that wanted to travel cheap and not have such things brought to you. Now, you have to go fetch it yourself. You decided this yourself without any thought of what I wanted, so you can go get it yourself,” she hissed acidly. Bendy bit back a sigh. Why did it have to be at a good part?

“Please, dear?” the man seemed to beg. He took her hand. “I rather do have something important to discuss with you in private.”

“This will likely be the most privacy you can get back here. The lounge will be that much worse,” she argued. The man gave him and Boris a quick glance. Bendy would have missed it if he was still in his book.

“Not here, dear, please.” The man lifted the folded paper in his other hand. “It’s quite important.” Bendy did not like the look the guy had given him and his brother. Bendy lowered his book a little to see the wolf snoozing comfortably across from him. He had a small smile on his muzzle, most likely from a pleasant dream.

This was not how the man had acted for the whole ride. What had suddenly changed? Bendy lifted his book again and pretended to read. He observed the man from the corner of his eye. He was pale and there was definite sweat gleaming on his balding head in the over light. His mustache twitched every so often as he tried to convince his wife to leave with him. He also had a death grip on the paper.

“Alright, alright! I’ll come. Good heavens, it’s like you suddenly spotted my mother’s ghost.” She tittered a laugh as she got up. Before they passed Bendy, though, he cleared his throat.

“Excuse me, sir.” The man froze like death itself had called for him. He turned his head slowly to look down to Bendy. “Sorry to bother you, but if you’re done with that paper, could I have a look?” The man paled even further. Bendy thought he may faint.

The man opened his mouth, then shut it, and handed the paper over with his shaking hand. “Thanks, pal.” The moment he retracted his hand he was out to the corridor with his wife dragged behind him. That’s not good, Bendy thought to himself. He quickly unfolded the slightly crumpled newspaper. He took a half second to look at the front and the headliner with a smirk. Shaking off his amusement he flipped through the pages until he spotted what had the man spooked. Somehow, the wanted posters for him and his brother had been put in the paper. There was updated information on them too. Bendy didn’t have time to worry about that. Their disguises were good in public, but that man had been sitting close to them for hours. It was obvious that he had recognized them.
Bendy rolled up the paper and stuffed it in his bag. He kicked Boris’ leg to wake the wolf up. Boris jumped with a start. “Uh! Whazza gonin’ on?” he asked, blurry. Boris blinked looked around without really seeing.

“Wake up and pull your stuff together. Our cover’s been blown and if we don’t move quick we’ll be all wet,” Bendy said, putting his book back carefully. Inwardly, he pouted that he couldn’t finish the chapter and was forced to wait at such a good spot.

“What!” Boris blinked awake and fumbled with his open bag.

“Move it, Boris,” Bendy ordered and peeked around to see if anyone was coming for them yet. The couple had headed toward the front, so they would have to head to the back. Boris was finally ready and the two stood.

“What happened?” Boris whispered as they got out of the car and entered the next one.

“Parently we made the paper,” Bendy said bitterly.


Bendy groaned. “No, you mean infamous. Famous people don’t have to run down a train so they won’t be arrested.” Boris made a sarcastic scuff. They got through the car and onto the next one. It was a bit more crowded and Bendy nearly tripped twice on legs or bags that were half in the walkway.

“No, they run from bad guys,” Boris said. “And we are doing that too.”

“Bro, life ain’t supposed to be film,” Bendy said, deadpanning over his shoulder and nearly tripping on a lady’s little dog. The little rat barked at Bendy and the lady gave him a dirty look that he ignored.

“Oh? Our lives seem to be for weeks now.” Boris raised a brow. They got out of the car and Bendy sighed.

“Look. Can we do this later? When we’re not about to get thrown into the slammer?” Bendy asked over the sound of the howling wind. Boris’ ears fell and he looked away sheepishly.

“Yeah, that’s a good idea,” Boris murmured. Bendy had to read his lips. “So, what now?”

“We bail into the woods,” Bendy said.

“Swell,” Boris said sarcastically. “I don’t think I can survive that jump. So, unless you have a trick I don’t know about....”

“No?” Bendy looked away to the blurring scene flashing past them.

“Bro,” Boris said.

“Fine! What’s your plan?” Bendy demanded.

Boris smirked and pulled Bendy back into the car they had just left. “This.” He lifted his hand to the cord that ran the car and pulled it. At the same time he gave the little mongrel a kick hard enough to make it angry. It yipped and started barking and nipping at the ankles of anyone near it. The other
passengers cried out and the dog’s leash slipped out of the lady’s hold. It started to race around the
car, barking. Others began to stand. The train screamed on its brakes, making many lose their
balance and brace themselves on anything they could grab.

Baggage and anything that wasn’t hung onto was thrown forward. Bendy felt himself slip and Boris
hooked an arm around him as he clung to the doorframe. “This is a terrible plan!” Bendy shouted.

The train began to slow. Boris yanked Bendy out of the car and around the edge. “Yeah, it is, but at
least we’ll survive this one,” Boris said. “Ready to jump?” Bendy looked out at the trees and brush.
It wasn’t a blur anymore, but they were still moving. He couldn’t hear the shouts of the people over
the squeal of the brakes, but he knew that it was only a matter of time before they were spotted.

“Yeah.” He grabbed the straps of his backpack and jumped as far as he could. He tried to roll with
the momentum, but instead tumbled end over end. He felt rocks bite into his skin and couldn’t tell up
from down. He stopped when he hit a thick bush. Swirls spun in his eyes and his body ached
terribly. Bendy hoped that Boris had jumped too. He waited for the world to stop swinging around
before looking about for his brother. The train was still slowing. Boris was a little away from him,
farther down the line. He had also rolled into the underbrush. Bendy could just barely see the wolf’s
tail sticking out of the twigs and leaves.

Bendy struggled out of the bush and stumbled toward the tail. He ignored his bumps and bruises.
“Boris! Can ya walk, bro?” Bendy called out.

“That was the dumbest thing we have ever done!” Boris cried out as he tried to pull himself out of
the bush.

Bendy chuckled. “You don’t have to tell me that.”

“Yeah, you two! Hold it right there!” Bendy spun around to see an angry looking conductor. The
man glared at the two, leaning out toward them.

“Uh-oh. I think they spotted us,” Bendy muttered. Boris got out and reached back to yank his large
pack out.

Bendy kept an eye on the conductor and other trainmen that were quickly running through the train
and jumping off.

“Let’s go!” Boris said and dashed into the forest. Bendy right on his paws.

“Stop!” Bendy heard behind him, but he didn’t look back. He had to focus so he didn’t trip on the
rocks or branches. Boris had harder time getting through the vegetation and Bendy managed to pass
him.

“Keep going,” Bendy said as he pulled ahead a little. He tried to lead Boris on the clearest route.
Brush caught on his clothes and slashed at any exposed skin. Luckily, it was only a few minutes
before he believed they had lost them. Bendy stopped and Boris skidded to a stop right behind him.

“Think they’re gone?” Boris gasped and panted.

Bendy nodded. “They won’t go far from the train. They have a schedule to keep and they aren’t the
coppers. They don’t get paid to chase us.”

Boris nodded and pulled off his pack. He dug through it until he found a water canteen and drank.
He passed it to Bendy, who also drank gratefully.
The boys took a moment to catch their breath. Boris asked, “So what’s the plan? Walk?”

“Yep,” Bendy said, rolling his neck. “The train was heading mostly east. If we keep going east we should get there eventually.”

“We could try to find a road,” Boris suggested.

“We would be wandering around aimless. That would be more dangerous. We’ll go east and if we come across a road we will start following that.” Bendy pulled his pack on again. It didn’t take long for the boys figure out the right direction using the sun. They started out. As they walked Boris asked what happened on the train and Bendy explained, showing him the newspaper. The wolf laughed at the front page and complimented the Warners on their creativity. The two talked back and forth about the Warners and Warnerburg as they walked. They tried to imagine what a game of hide-and-seek would be like with those three. The boys laughed and were rather lighthearted, despite walking for hours. With no one around, the two were free to speak of everything and anything. It was this freedom that brought up their mission, ideas on Dr. Oddswell, and the two strange men that had chased them. Sadly, all they had were guesses. It was Boris’ next question that made Bendy uneasy.

“So, what happened last night with your Talent, bro?” Boris asked. “You said it wasn’t you and then you told Sammy and Finley it was.” The wolf gave him a confused look.

Bendy took a deep breath. “I-.“ What was he supposed to say? This was Boris, so he could be honest. “I don’t know how to explain it without scaring you.” The demon admitted uncomfortably. The wolf turned his head to the side with his ears perked.

“I won’t be scared,” Boris said with certainty. “You can tell me anything, bro.”

“I know,” Bendy muttered. Bendy took a moment to figure out what to say. “So, uh, explain how you play an instrument.”

Boris cocked his head the other way before smiling. “Well, I make sure it feels right in my hands and that I’m holding it the way I’m supposed to. Then, I test its sound. It, uh...,” he trailed off thoughtfully. He lifted a finger to tap at his chin. “Gee, I guess the best way to put it is I hear the instrument’s ‘voice’ or something?” He shrugged. “It only takes a little listening to its voice to make any changes I need to before I can get it to sing for me.”

Bendy nodded. “Okay, so, uh, my Talent is kinda like that. But instead of hearing it’s like feeling, kinda. I mean, uh, not like touch feeling, but...” Bendy sighed. This was harder than he thought. “Anyway, so I can feel the shadows around me and it’s not, uh, they’re not just there like a tree or a book. They move and act, okay?”

Boris blinked, but nodded slowly. His wide eyes seemed more interested than scared so far. “They act sorta like animals, but not so much?” Bendy scratched the back of his head. “See, they can’t really touch or do anything unless I reach out and let them. It’s like a dog on a lease or something.” Boris nodded, still gazing at him like he was telling him a story about Micky. “Last night, the shadow were really excited. I have no idea why and I knew I wouldn’t really have any control so I didn’t want to use them, but it was the only way I could think of saving us.” Bendy started talking faster and faster. “I didn’t mean for them to get out of control like that. I didn’t mean for them to throw us or chuck things everywhere or break things. They wouldn’t stop and I couldn’t stop them and I was a bit panicked and I didn’t tellyoubecuaseididn’ttwantyoutobescaredofmeand—.”

“Bendy!” Boris almost shouted. Bendy snapped his mouth shut. “I’m not scared. It’s fine.” Bendy glanced up at Boris to see his worried, but serious, face. His muzzle was set in a small frown and his dark eyes glinted with kindness. “You’re my big brother. I know you would never mean to hurt me.
I’m actually really happy you told me. I always wondered about it, but I never knew how to ask you. It sounds tough to control and it’s berries how much control you do have, bro.” Boris bit his bottom lip for a second before opening his muzzle again. “Can I ask a question?”

Bendy fought the urge to joke and lighten the serious mood. “Sure.”

“Are you afraid of your Talent?” Boris asked with that worried look.

Bendy’s knee jerk reaction was to brush it off. “Me scared? Pfft.” Bendy waved a hand. Boris raised a brow and Bendy ducked his head. “A’right, maybe a little.”

Boris snorted, but quickly focused again. “That’s why you don’t use it very much, uh?”

Bendy hunched his shoulders. “That and it scares the cuss outta people.”

“Not me,” Boris said. “Guess you’ll just need to practice, bro.”

Bendy blinked and stared up at the wolf. “That’s it?”

“Sure, bro,” Bendy mumbled, a little dazed that Boris took it so well. Bendy didn’t think anyone finding out that shadows live and move all around them would be a comforting discovery. Bendy again was reminded with how amazing his little brother was. Bendy felt a weight he hadn’t been aware of lift off his shoulders.

“Hey look! There a road.” Boris pointed excitedly. Bendy followed the wolf’s finger to the narrow path of pavement. “Looks like we don’t have to stomp through bushes anymore,” Bendy agreed and it was only a few moments before the boys were standing next to it.

Boris chuckled and plucked a twig out of Bendy’s goggles. “We look like we just got out of Miss Slappy’s tree.”

Bendy scowled. “don’t remind me.”

“Bendy, what’s that?” Boris asked. Bendy and Boris stared up at the impressive architecture of a lone building. It seemed to be some kinda…casino? Out here in the middle of nowhere?

“Dunno, bro. It’s sure snazzy,” Bendy said. The bulbs for the sign were off, but they glinted in the noon sun.

“What’s it doing all the way out here?” Boris asked.

Bendy shrugged. “As long as we can get directions, who cares?” He headed through the entrance to the sound of the chips, machines, and jazz. The entrance was grand with a crystal chandelier hanging above them and a staircase that parted down the two sides of the wall and wrapped with the large circular room. Bendy glanced to Boris, whose mouth was hanging open in awe. Bendy couldn’t help but agree. This was the ritziest place either of the boys had ever been in.

“Welcome to the Black Hat Casino.” Bendy turned to a smartly dressed man. He was gazing at the two of them curiously. Bendy blinked, feeling extremely out of place. This guy was so snazzy in his pigeon suit compared to the brothers in their packs and pocket vests with twigs and leaves sticking out here and there. Still, he tried to seem as calm as possible.
“Thank you,” Boris said. “Do you know how far Toon Town is?”

The man looked a little startled. “Uh, um, why yes, sir. It’s a just east of here, about a forty-minute drive.”

The boys sighed. It would be a long walk, but it was closer than Bendy thought. It would take about half a day or so.

“Thanks,” Bendy said.

“Of course. Is there anything else I can help you with?” he asked with a slight bow. He had a brow raised and Bendy thought the look in his eyes was a bit condescending. Bendy then heard Boris’ stomach growl. Bendy looked up to his brother to see the wolf duck his head a bit in embarrassment.

“Got any food ‘round here?” Bendy asked. He wasn’t sure, but it seemed the man almost sneered. Bendy narrowed his eyes, but the fella turned away.

“Yes, this way gentlemen,” he said as he walked.

“Bendy we can’t afford—.”

“Yeah, we can. Take a load off, bro. We’ve been hashing it for hours and it’s time for a break,” Bendy said and followed the penguin suit. Boris rolled his eyes, but a smile spread across his muzzle.

The boys were led past tables of cards, chips and players. The smell of alcohol and a little tinge of cigarettes hung in the air. Laughter, cheers, and groans filled the space with life over the jazz. Bendy felt his eyes drawn to a game of black jack, but he held back. He couldn’t. It was the money Sasha gave them, half the money they earned with Fin and Sam and the rest was the stuff he had saved for emergencies for years. He also didn’t know when he was to come across an opportunity to earn some more cash, so he had to play it smart. Gambling wasn’t smart, he told himself as his brother and himself were guided to another room. There was a bar on the far side of the room and tables scattered around. There was a pool table in the middle of the room that had a circle of men around it.

“Here you are, gentlemen,” he said. Bendy nodded and headed to the bar with Boris close behind him. They put their stuff down and Bendy jumped up on a seat.

“I’m gonna go wash up real quick,” Boris said.

Bendy nodded his head. “I’ll watch our stuff.” Boris headed out and Bendy decided to watch the room. For such a ritzy place, it sure had a mix of characters. Most were as nice looking as the penguin suit fella, but there was a peppered number of guys that were shady. Low hats, long coats, stained shoes. Bendy furrowed his brows as he continued to gaze around. He watched the people, going table to table as they made cheers of victory or groans of defeat. There was something a little…off. Before Bendy could put his finger on why he felt that way, he felt someone behind the bar come up to him.

“Good day. What can I getcha?” a pretty female voice said.

Bendy smirked and turned around. “Yes, could I....”

She was a knock out even in a light vest and black-tie uniform. Her hair was dark and long. She had it braided down to her waist. Wisps of locks had escaped and curled around her face delicately. Her full lips were painted dark and her rich eyes sparkled in the lights. Bendy also noticed a little mole under one of her eyes. But that wasn’t what made him freeze up, it was something else. There was a…something…coming from her. It was like having the sun suddenly come from behind the clouds
to warm him on a chilly morning. A gentle warmth that was so relaxing he almost wanted to sigh, but there was that off feeling again.

Just as he gave her a quick once over, she did the same to him. Unlike him, she froze and seemed to tense. Her semi-forced smile became strained. Bendy felt his tail twitch at the reaction. He quickly cleared his throat. “Ah, sorry. I would like two fizz wizzes. One cherry and the other chocolate and what do ya have to eat around here, doll?”

He saw her twitch before turning around. Oops. She probably dealt with a lot of flirts, jerks, and drunks. She was working drinks, after all. He just had to play it cool, treat her like a person. Something she wouldn’t expect. Umm…well, easier thought then done. She had probably heard it all…Oh, that’s a good start!

“We have a wide menu, sir.” She shoved a menu toward him and got the drinks out. Boy, if that greeting was the sun then this was the artic, that tone subzero.

He scanned the menu and asked, “So how long have you been working here?”

“Long enough,” she answered curtly. Geez. Was it the pet name? What had he done in the three sentences they’d shared?

Outwardly, he hummed. “What do you like here?” he asked, glancing over to her. She refused to look at him. She was leaning away from him and cleaning the counter. He furrowed his brows. Did he smell? He shouldn’t smell that bad…. Did he? He hid behind the menu and tried to take a quick whiff of his shirt.

She interrupted his thoughts. “I like the grand chicken salad and a raspberry cheesecake for dessert.”

“Oh,” he said and took a sip of his drink. Then his eyes fell on something that made his stomach almost sit up and beg. “C-could I have some bacon soup? And an order of ribs?”

“Yes sir,” she said.

“And you can call me Bendy. I ain’t dressed up enough for any title,” Bendy said, returning the menu.

“Understood, sir,” she said just as coldly. Oooh, it was gonna be like that. Bendy wondered how much he could mess with this cold dame before she either blew or smiled. He smirked to himself. She walked away to give the kitchen his order. Bendy continued to sip his drink and waited for her to come back. Before he could say a word though, she was taking a load of drinks out to the floor. Bendy frowned. He had struck out before, but rarely was it from the first sentence.

He glanced over his shoulder to see her frowning with another guy. He was one of those smartly dress boys, tall, with dark hair combed back. He had put a hand on her shoulder and she shook it off to say something to him. Bendy couldn’t see the fella’s face, but he did see the angry look on hers. She went to pick up her drinks when the schmuck grabbed her around the waist. His buddies seemed to be laughing. She immediately started to struggle, pushing away from him and trying to get his arm off her.

Bendy was up before he had really thought about it. He was quick to get to the start of the ruckus.

“Let me go or I will call security and have you removed, sir,” she growled at him.

“C’mon, kitten. Looshen up, I jush asked fer a kisshh,” the schmuck slurred. He leaned in and Bendy grabbed one of his wrists and twisted.
The guy cried out and let go of the girl to shove at Bendy. Bendy easily stepped back and dodged the guy's flailing arm. "Hey pal, the lady said no. Are ya deaf or just stupid?" The guy growled and took a drunken swing. Bendy ducked and tripped him. His friends cackled with laughter. "Well, I guess that's my answer. You're drunk and stupid." The fella groaned and struggled to get up. He looked like a fish on land. "Do yourself a favor. Stay down," Bendy suggested. Security showed up then. Bendy turned to the bar lady.

"Hey, are you okay?" he asked. She looked angrily at the man, then to Bendy.

"So like a demon to start a fight." She sneered.

Bendy was taken aback. "Uh, wha—."

"I didn't need your help. I was fine. Now you've hurt a drunk that won't remember why his wrist is bruised," she huffed.

Bendy's jaw dropped. "He was assaulting you!"

"He was drunk. I had it under control," she said again.

"It didn't seem like it to me!" Bendy shook his head.

"Well, that shows what you know." She picked up her serving tray.

"What does that mean!" Bendy demanded.

"Violence and pushing around your weight," she said glancing over at him. "That's it right? That's how you deal with people when they don't do what you want?"

Bendy glared at her. A dark dread came over him. "No, that's how I deal with schmucks that are harassin' dames! What's your problem?"

She opened her mouth, but someone spoke first. "Alice. My office. Now." She snapped her mouth shut to turn around. He was a tall man with grey skin wearing a tall black hat and small glasses perched on his nose. He spotted Bendy and gave him a smile. Bendy's eyes widened at the man's shark like teeth. "I am very sorry for any inconveniences, sir. I hope Alice wasn't troubling you." Bendy just shook his head. The man nodded and turned to her. "Alice, apologize to our guest."

Alice glared at Bendy bitterly. "I'm sorry," she growled.

The man rolled his eyes and turned around. "Good enough. Now come." She turned and followed him. Bendy was frozen in place. That feeling of dread wasn't from the girl, it had been coming from him. Bendy felt a chill go down his spine. What the heck was that? The shadows clung to him like Bendy had never seen before. He had felt like he had been in the room with a dangerous predator.

Bendy had just made it back to his seat when Boris appeared. "Sorry I took so long. This place is like a maze."

Bendy just nodded numbly. Boris noticed his dazed stare into his drink. "You okay, bro?" Bendy swallowed and looked up to the wolf. His ears fell a little and he looked at Bendy with a worried knot between his brows.

"I, uh, I think we better get our food to go, Boris," Bendy said in a shaky voice.

"Did something happen?" Boris asked. His eyes widened with how shaken up Bendy seemed.
“I-I’ll tell ya everythin’ when we’re outta here,” Bendy said. The boys quickly collected their things and food before leaving. Bendy took a sigh of relief. He didn’t ever want to go in there again.

Chapter End Notes

What? You thought they were gonna get along the first time meeting? HA! He's a demon! Of course she'd have issues...I better not say more. My everything hurts. I'm gonna go sleep. I leave everything else to you Mercowe. Mercowe enters. Well...It's looks like I've been left in charge. You can tell that TAP has it really bad. Yakko, Wakko and Dot didn't even show up in the end notes, which means that not even Wakko's amazing fourth wall powers could help TAP. Whew! Well. I edited the chapter. And Alice hates him. I should have seen that coming. He is a devil and she is an angel. But I didn't. Oh well. o-o Btw, while I'm here...Thanks for the thanks Twinfeather. I appreciate the appreciation. :D And I hope the rest of y'all enjoy this chapter as much as I did.
Chapter Summary

The Warners get their chapter, but it's not exactly what they expected.

Chapter Notes

I almost want the title to be "It's No Longer A Note!" but the Warners didn't find it funny. Again, sorry it's late guys. Thanks for being patient and understanding. You are all the bees knees.
"You made us late!" Yakko whined.
It was a crazy week for me. This month doesn't look much better, but hey! I'll keep working at it. I'm afraid if I don't stay on some kinda schedule I will blink and then suddenly it'll have been three months without an update. Ill_-_
I had a lot of fun with this one.
"You would. You like trouble more then we do." Wakko smirked.
That's it. You two are gonna be late to the chapter.
"What! You can't do that!" Yakko pointed a finger in the air.
"I think she already did," Wakko said pointing down.
"Oh."
Anyway. I'll do better next week. I'm starting online classes soon and I'm a bit nervous.
But next week's chapter shouldn't be affected.
With that, enjoy the chapter!
TAP out!
"Did that seem odd to you?" Yakko asked. Wakko shrugged.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Dot turned to face into the water tower. Cuphead fired a blast that flew past her face and missed by an inch. “Ah-ah, doll. It’s rude to turn away from someone that’s talkin’ to you,” he said with a grin and smoke rising from the tip of his finger. Dot froze, half facing away from Cups. Her eyes snapped back to him. She slowly turned back to face him, her face neutral. “Good. Now, last night you were hangin’ outta the car that had a couple of twerps in the cab. Ya know where they are kid?”

She blinked at him. “Who?”

“Bendy and Boris. The two that were in that car wit’cha,” Cups said.

She turned her head sideways and put her hands behind her back. “Um, I dunno. Describe ‘em to me.” She rocked up on her toes and back down. Up and down like a playful child. A small smile started to spread across her face.

The smirk on Cuphead’s face grew cruel. “I don’t think I need to.” His finger started to glow bright
blue.

Suddenly Dot moved. Cup fired. Dot ducked and threw something. Cups’ eyes widened as it collided with his face. Cups spurted and the large pie tin fell leaving the cream all over his face. “What the—.”

Mugs burst out laughing. “Oh, wowie! She just pied you, bro! Look at your face!” Mugs clutched his sides from laughing so hard.

Dot looked over at you and said behind her hand. “I had one left over from last night. Banana cream. Does wonders when you’re in a sticky situation.”

“MUGS!” Cups growled as he tried to wipe the sticky cream and pudding out of his eyes.

“S-sorry,” Mugs wheezed.

“Shut up and get her!” Cups shouted.

Mugs straightened up and focused on the Warner sister.

“You wouldn’t hit a girl, would you?” Dot asked cutely while putting a finger to her chin.

Mugs rushed forward. “Yeah, I would!”

Dot gasped with both hands on her cheeks. “You big brute!” Dot reached up and pulled a rope. Mugs stopped a foot from her and looked up. He jumped back, barely dodging an anvil with ACME printed on the side in big white letters.

“Wh-where—.” Mugs didn’t have time to finish as he jumped back again when a second one fell. “Ack!” His eyes widened in panic as a third came and then a fourth. Mugs jumped and rolled, his back hitting the guardrail. He gritted his teeth, expecting another attack. Luckily, it didn’t come, and he was able to quickly scramble up and away from the edge.

“Mugs, are you alright?” Cup asked with wide eyes.

“Y-yeah.” Mugs smiled nervously. “That was a close one.”

Cups glared at the girl. This little girl wasn’t what she seemed. She was one of the zanier characters Cups and Mugs had ever faced. He had thought the Warners would be a handful, but this was crazy.

“Careful boys!” Dot suddenly said. “It’s high up here. You might fall and die and crack your heads open and your brains might leak out aaaaaall over.” Her hands were behind her back again. Cups narrowed his eyes. “Actually, do you fellas have brains or would it just be spilt milk?” Dot suddenly appeared on Cups’ shoulder. Cups tensed. “’Cause you’re an open drink. Is that even milk? You fellas don’t spill when ya move around either, why is that?” Cups went to grab her, but she pulled herself up on the rim of his head. She wrapped a hand around his bent straw and peered down at the top of his head. “So, if I spin this will I be stirring your mind?” Cups gritted his teeth. This was bad. “Hey, can I pull this out? Can it come out or will you bleed out if I do? Milk out? Is your brain attached to the end of this straw? Is it? Is it?” Dot asked becoming more and more excited.

Suddenly a blue blast knocked the female Warner off him and into the metal wall of the water tower. “You okay, bro?” Mugs asked, his finger smoking from his blast.

Cups smiled. “Yeah, thanks Mugs.”
“That hurt!” Dot yelped from the ground. Cups refocused on the strange girl.

“Oh, you’re gonna hurt a lot more when I’m done with you,” Cups said. He took two steps toward her when two other people appeared in the open door of the water tower.

“Hey, who’s on our lawn?” Yakko demanded.

“We have a lawn?” Wakko asked, looking up to the older Warner with a confused knot in his brow.

Yakko shrugged. “Semantics.”

“Oh, lookie.” Wakko spotted the cup brothers. “It’s trouble!”

Yakko gasped. “Dot!” The two brothers rushed to the girl. She was half leaning against the tower’s wall. Yakko knelt and gingerly lifted her. “Are you okay Dot?”

Dot gave a small cough. “Yakko, is that you?”

“I’m here Dot,” Yakko said softly. The Warner brothers shared a worried look.

“It’s so cold.”

“You’ll be alright. We’ll get yeah fixed up,” Yakko promised. Dot coughed again.

Cuphead raised a brow and stepped closer to Mugman. He leaned over to whisper. “Did ya nail her, bro?” Mugs was staring at the scene in confusion and shook his head in bewilderment.

“I thought I’d only grazed her. It wasn’t a strong hit. Maybe enough to kill a bird, but.” Mugs waved his hand helplessly. Cups narrowed his eyes. Something was up here. He didn’t buy this for a second.

“Keep your guard up,” Cups ordered and took a half step forward.

“D-don’t let…them hit you. Th-those guys,” Dot coughed.

“Sis?” Wakko asked. Dot didn’t respond.

“Dot?” Yakko asked his eyes widening.

“Alright, you two. Where are the schmucks you were with last night? Talk and we won’t do to you what we did to her,” Cups demanded.

The two turned towards him with dark looks. Cups felt an actual chill go down his spine. If the girl had been a handful, these freaks might be too much. Plus, she had been playing around, and these guys were angry.

“You thinkin’ what I’m thinkin’ Wakko?” Yakko asked.

“On it, Yakko.” Wakko ran back into the water tower. Cup pointed to Yakko.

“Last chance.” Cups held the blast, letting it glow on the tip of his finger.

Yakko put Dot down and turned to face Cups. “Well, ya see uuuuuuuuhhhhh, we don’t really take kindly to bullies. Not only are ya threatenin’ a pair of pals that have given us some real fun around here, but you hit my sister, sib.”

“Jump!” Cups shouted and jumped over the railing, pulling Mugs with him.

“FIRE!” The tower rocked at the power of the blast. Heat roared down to the tumbling brothers. Mugs screamed in surprise. Cups did his best to straighten himself out and see where they were going to land. It looked like it was going to be a hard ground landing until the two Warner boys appeared and pushed a pool of water under the cup brothers. The Warners grinned as a monstrous shark jumped up and snapped it’s jaws. Cups gritted his teeth. He could have sworn he saw the thing grinning at him.

“CUP!” Mugs shouted. Cups tightened his grip on the scarf and waited. They came closer…closer. The shark jumped up, it’s jaws opened wide, and Cups fired his blast. It hit and Cups swung the scarf and his brother to the side. Cups was swinging his arms around and screamed, panicked at everything. The momentum threw him in the opposite direction, and the two tumbled to either side of the coughing, smoking shark. Cups hit the water with a painful slash. It took him a moment to figure out which way was up. When he did, he swam quickly for the surface. The shark was sinking down in a pained daze, but Cuphead ignored it.

“Mugs!” Cuphead shouted. He looked around for his younger brother. Worry quickly took hold of Cup, and he dove under to try and find his little brother. He had to swim around the sinking shark to find his scarf clad partner. He was thrashing and trying to move. Cup grabbed him and pulled them both up. He shrugged, but managed to get himself and Mugs to the edge of the huge pool. Mugs was coughing and spurting and clung to the edge for dear life. Cups growled, “Are you alright?”

“Will be. What about the shark?” he asked, looking around.

“Forget it. Just pull yourself out,” Cups said. Cups helped push him out of the tank and quickly pulled himself up.

Wakko pouted. “You shot Bruce.”

Cups reacted quickly and took a shot at him. Wakko hopped and dodged it. Cups didn’t stop. He blasted shot after shot. Wakko and Yakko bounced, jumped, twirled, and tumbled. “Gotta do better then that!” Wakko said.

“My grandmother can shoot better than you!” Yakko grinned. “Are you blind or slow?”

“Bro!” Mugs cried out. Cups turned to see Mugs aimed his blast behind him. He looked back in time to see the end of mallet before he saw stars then everything went dark.

“I don’t know. I think you hit him too hard.”

“He’ll be fine.”
“Uuuuuhhhh, I think Wakko might have point there.”

“Well, it’s his fault. He shouldn’t have threatened a lady.”

Cups’ focus was fuzzy and the voices sounded like they were coming from far away. His head felt like it was pounding with every word. He couldn’t move his hands to hold his throbbing head. He gritted his teeth and tried to clear his mind, to awake up fully.

“It’s amazing that it didn’t crack.”

“Even when we moved them up here whatever it is in their heads didn’t spill out.”

“It feels like stiff foam.”

“Don’t poke them! You might catch their evil.”

“Eh, I think most newspapers claim we are the ultimate evil.”

Cups groaned.

“Oh, lookie. He’s waking up!”

Cups squinted his eyes in the bright light that assaulted him. He couldn’t see anything in the darkened room except the light shining in his face. He turned his head to see Mugs tied to a chair next to him. He tried to lift his hand to find it tied too. What happened? How did they get here.

“Mornin’ sport!” Yakko appeared at his side. Cups tensed. “You’re lucky. We really thought Dot was gonna end ya there.”

The girl Warner huffed and appeared on his other side. “I wasn’t gonna kill ‘em. That would have cut our chapter short.”

“True.” Yakko smiled kindly to her.

Dot turned to him. Cups tensed and narrowed his eyes. “Hey. You’re actually kinda cute.” She leaned closed to him. “Ya know, in that bad boy kinda way.” Cups blinked and wrinkled his nose in equal confusion and disgust.

“You seem oddly uninjured,” Cup commented, still trying to think straight.

Dot grinned. “Did I pull off a good death scene?”

Yakko snorted. “Nah, we need to get ya some acting lesson or something.”

Dot wrapped an arm around Cups shoulders and leaned back dramatically. She raised her other hand to place it on her forehead. “Oh, the horror, the pain! My brother says my skills are not up to par!”

Yakko rolled his eyes. “Sisters. Am I right?”

“What the cuss? Where are we? Get off me!” he demanded. Dot let go and jumped down.

Wakko appeared in a trench coat and fedora hat. He grabbed the large lamp that was the only source of light and angled it into Cups’ face. “We’re the ones askin’ questions here, bub.”

“Oh! Oh! Good cop, bad cop!” Dot smiled. “I want to be the bad cop!”
Wakko turned to her with a frown. “I’m the bad cop, Dot.”

Yakko appeared with a glass of water in one hand and a button up dress shirt and slacks. “Yeah Dot, there are only two spots and I got good cop covered.”

Dot pouted until an idea lit her face. Cups had a bad feeling and worked on loosening his bindings without them noticing. He was tied around the wrists, ankles, and torso. The chair seemed rickety, but held firm to his movements. He glanced over to Mugs quickly. He was still out. There seemed to be a bump on the side of his head, but otherwise he seemed okay. He was tied the same as Cups. They were obviously indoors, but due to the light Cups couldn’t get any details of the space.

“Well, we could have the good.” Dot pointed to Yakko. “The bad.” She pointed to Wakko. “And the ugly!” She pointed to herself. “But not really ugly, because I’m adorable!”

The boys shared a look before Yakko shrugged. “Hey, sure. Why not?”

Dot spun and was suddenly in a Sherlock-like costume, hat and all.

She suddenly grabbed Cups collar and jumped into his lap. She yanked him forward, so they were nearly nose to nose. “ALRIGHT! Why are you after our mailmen?”

Cups furrowed his brow. “Ma-mailmen?”

Dot shook him. “Don’t patronize me! You know who I’m talking about! What business do you have with Bendy and Boris?”

Cups sneered at her. “None of ya beez wax.”

Dot growled, but Yakko gently pulled her off him. “I’m sorry for my sister. I’m Yakko, what’s your name?”

“Take a hike.” Cups frowned.

“Hehe. Weird name.” Yakko smirked as he leaned a hand on the armrest of Cups’ chair.

Cups rolled his eyes. This was so stupid. He couldn’t stand idiots like this.

“How do you schmucks even know them, anyway?” Cups muttered to himself.

“They did us a favor, so we helped ‘em out.” Wakko grinned. “It was a lot of fun!”

“WAKKO!” the others snapped at him.

He shrank a little. “What?” Yakko smacked his forehead, and Dot shook her head in disappointment.

Cups inwardly grinned. It was time to mess these guys up, but not with a fist. Not on zany nuts like these. Cups knew what he what to do with them. He and Mugs had spent enough time here. They needed to get back on the trail.

“So, you guys are willing to die for them?” Cups asked. The three turned to him with confused looks.

“Uh? Come again?” Yakko asked.

“Well, I figured you fellas know the trouble they’ve dragged you into by association. I mean, it’s not like they would just leave you here with no clue of how much danger you’re in, right?” Cups said
with a raised brow.

“What danger?” Dot asked innocently.

Cups widened his eyes, then burst out laughing. “Ho-holy crap, they really didn’t tell you anything!”

“I think we’ve shown you that we are more than able to take care of ourselves.” Dot raised her nose in the air.

“Yeah,” Wakko said. “You talk tough for a guy strapped to a chair.” Cups only laughed harder.

“Pal, you don’t know what you are up against! The best part is they left you like hanging meat to wolves! They ditched ya to die, and you still believe in them! Haahahahaha!” Cups felt tears prick his eyes from all his laughing. He gasped air to calm himself down. The Warner siblings were frowning at him.

“We don’t believe you,” Dot stated with a huff. “My mailman was a knight in armor.”

“Yeah, they were swell fellas. Completely sincere,” Yakko agreed.

“Then why the hell are they wanted for murder?” Cups shot back with a raised brow.

“Th-that was a misunderstanding. They didn’t do it!” Dot growled.

“Ah, but what if I said that if they had done things differently then the person who died would still be here? That they lie and manipulate to get what they want?” Cuphead said.

“Hardly gives you the right to shoot at them,” Wakko said, tipping his hat up a bit.

“Hey, wait a minute! We are supposed to be the ones asking questions!” Yakko said. Cups chuckled.

“Yeah!” Dot and Wakko said with mirror frowns of frustration.

“Why are you shooting at them? What’s your beef with Bendy?” Yakko demanded.

“It’s my job to stop them!” Cups snapped. “Besides, the junk they’re gettin’ all screwed up in could really mess up everybody. They gotta be stopped.”

Dot’s eyebrows furrowed in confusion. “What does that mean?”

“Pfft.” Cuphead scoffed and looked away from her. “I don’t gotta explain nothing to you. You schmucks don’t know anything, so it doesn’t matter.”

The Warners shared a look. “We could put them in the padded rooms. That way they can’t catch up,” Wakko suggested.

“Yeah, that sounds like fun. We should show them the author notes!” Dot suggested. Cups glared at them. This couldn’t be good. If they got in the way of him and the mission, things would get bad fast. He and Mugs couldn’t end up like that bear he had heard about.

“Touch us and your friend will—.” Crap. He spoke without thinking! What was he gonna say now? “He’ll screw us all over! Alright! They’re after something that shouldn’t ever see the light of day!” Crap! Crap! CRAP! Now, he’d said it! Oh man, the boss was gonna skin him alive!

“And what is that?” Yakko asked with a raised eyebrow.
“You idiot! Like I can tell you!” Cups barked. Right then Mugs moaned. “Mugs! Bro, are you okay!”

Mugs rolled his head with another groan before lifting it. “Cups?”

“Yeah, Mugs,” Cups said with a little relief.

“Ugh, what happened?” Mugs squinted, his eyes open. “My head is killing me.”

“Ah, that’s just a bump in the road.” Yakko hopped up and landed on Mugs lap. Mugs looked down at him. “Good morning, sleeping beauty.” Yakko batted his eyes at the captive. Mugs groaned a third time.

“I am so confused,” he muttered.

“Yeah, tell me something that’s new,” Cups responded. Mugs stuck his tongue out at him. Cups chuckled.

Dot was in Cups face again, shaking him. “Hey! No getting distracted! Explain about Bendy! What’s he after? What’s so dangerous?”

“Paperclips.” Cups sneered.

“EEEEHHH! Wrong answer!” Dot said.

“You can go jump off a bridge,” Cups said with a smirk.

“HEY! You guys were helping them on a train, right?” Mugs smiled. “I thought the statue was funny.”

Wakko grinned. “Really?”

“Ab-so-lutely!” Mugs agreed warmly. “Gee, I hope they didn’t have a long way to go. Long train rides are the worst.”

“They are? How far’s Toon Town?” Wakko asked.

Mugs looked thoughtfully up for a moment before looking back at Wakko. “Not sure, exactly, but I think it’s pretty far.”

“WAKKO!” The other two barked at him.


Dot frowned. “Never mind. What does the story say?”

“Uh?” Wakko gave her a confused look and raised a finger to his chin.

“The story! The story! The one you snipped from TAP!” Dot waved her hand and jumped down to walk over to Wakko.

“Oooh,” he said, snapping his fingers. “That’s right!”

“Didn’t you eat that?” Yakko asked as he hopped down from Mugs chair.

“Yep!” Wakko grinned. Dot smacked her forehead.
“Well?” Dot asked.

“Well, what?” Wakko asked.

“Is that beverage telling the truth or not? Are they after a dangerous what’s-it-called?” Dot pointed a finger at Cups and frowned at Wakko. Wakko got a thoughtful look in his eyes. He stuck his tongue out and crossed his arms. Yakko and Dot leaned forward and waited. Cups raised an eyebrow, but decided to ignore them. He had almost freed his left hand. The bonds were becoming slack the more he pulled. If he could just get into his jacket pocket!

“I. Don’t know,” Wakko said hesitantly. He blinked and looked at his hands alarmed. “I can’t tell.”

“Whadda ya mean, you can’t tell?” Dot blinked in confusion. Wakko shrugged with the same worried knot in his brows.

“It’s just blank. I can’t see anything ahead.” Wakko waved his arms. “Golly, I can’t even tell how this bit is gonna end.”

Yakko put a finger up to his chin. “That doesn’t make any sense! We can still see the fourth wall. What about before?”

Wakko nodded. “Still got it, and Alice was a dame in that uniform.” Yakko purred in agreement before Dot cleared her throat.

“Boys,” she said with an annoyed eye roll.

“Well, you two try,” Wakko said. The Warners shared quizzical looks.

“So, what’s the problem Wakko?” Dot asked.

Wakko shook his head helplessly. “It’s like someone turned off the light on the coming chapters.”

“Anyone else notice we can’t remember what you looked at ahead of time, either?” Dot asked.

“Hey, yeah, you’re right!” Yakko dropped his fist into his palm. He turned. “Hey, writer! What are you doin’ to us, uh?”

Dot gently smacked his arm. “TAP isn’t gonna answer you in the chapter. We have to get to the author’s notes.”

“Fine. End the chapter. I want answers!” Yakko demanded dramatically. The shaken Warners all jumped when there was a loud metallic banging. Cups froze when all three of them looked to him. He had no idea what was going on. He was used to rambling zanies, though and knew it was better to ignore them. He had freed his hand and grabbed the pocket knife in his jacket. He hid the knife up his sleeve and hoped they didn’t notice the missing rope around his wrist. After a long silent pause, there was another bang.

“This is the police! Open up!” a muffled female voice shouted. The Warners shared another look.

“Are one of you gonna get that?” Mugs asked.

“Yeah, it’s rude to keep the cops waiting,” Cups added with a smirk. The Warners shrugged.

“Together?” Yakko asked. The other two nodded and followed him into the darkness. Cups didn’t hesitate. He made quick work of his bonds and stood to free Mugman.
“Boy, Cups. I couldn’t follow any of that,” Mugs whispered.

“Don’t worry about it, bro. We know where they went and those idiots don’t know anything important beyond that.” Cups cut the last rope. Mugs stood and stretched. He rubbed his wrist and turned to Cups.

“So, we don’t have to bump them?” Mugs asked.

“Nah. I’m not sure we even could,” Cups admitted.

“That’s good. I think they’re kinda funny.” Mugs smiled and adjusted his scarf. Cups rolled his eyes and pocketed his knife.

“Whatever. Let’s go.” He grabbed Mugs’ handle and gave it a yank.

“Eeeouch!” Mugs hissed and rubbed the side of his head. “That hurt!” He whispered after his brother. Getting out of the spot light revealed the layout of the dark room they were in. Cups figured it was the interior of the water tower with the circular shape and metal walls. The Warners had a lot of random stuff placed everywhere. A pool, a mini train set, chairs, cushions, dolls, a landline in the shape of a character bunny Cups didn’t recognize, and the list went on. He looked for an exit, but it seemed the only way out was the giant metal sign they used as a door.

“You see anyway outta here, Mugs?” Cuphead asked. Mugs put down some darts he was fiddling with and looked around. Cups started thinking of a way to escape the Warners and go through the front. It would be tricky, especially with the cops there. He felt a tug on his sleeve.

“Bro, up there.” Mugs was pointing up on the second floor. There was a small wrap around walkway. On the wall Mugs was indicating there seemed to be some kinda door.

“Perfect. Nice job, Mugs.” Cups praised before heading up. It only took them a little fiddling before they got it open. Cups let Mugs jump out first and then slipped out behind him. “Later, losers,” he chuckled as the two escaped the Warners’ tower. Now it was time to head to Toon Town and find their real targets.

Chapter End Notes

"TAP, YOU HAVE SOME ANSWERING TO DO!!" Yakko demanded.
"The ghost isn't here." Wakko pointed out.
"This is ridiculous," Dot grumbled. "We know you're around here somewhere! Come out, come out!"
"Think TAP's hiding in the comments?" Wakko asked.
"We should check," Dot agreed.
NO, LEAVE THEM ALONE!
"There you are." Dot smiled sweetly. She reached out and attempted to grab. Nope!
"Explain!"
It wasn't me.
"That makes no sense!" Yakko said.
Look. I am sorry about your Talent, Wakko, but honestly the plot is outta my hand now. This story kinda has a life of it's own, just like you guys.
"But you know what's going on," Wakko complained.
I can't say anything. That's headed into spoiler territory. I'm sorry. Again. It's not me. "I don't like this," Wakko whimpered. Yakko patted his shoulder. Dot glared. Sorry. I can't do anything here.

Thank you guys for reading, leaving your kudos, bookmarks and comments. I can't believe there is 3000+ hits on this story and nearly 200 kudos. It's way more than I ever expected! Thank you.

I hope you have a wonderful week.

TAP out!
Toon Town...FINALLY!

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Welcome to Toon Town!

Chapter Notes

How? How is this my life?
Hello, lovelies! My everything has crashed. No phone, no wifi, no outside connection. This is what I get for living on a mountain. Ugh! I don't know how long this crappy connection will last. It comes and goes, so if you don't hear from me for a while, that's why.

Also, I ticked off the Warners. They refuse to talk to me. I won't explain things to them so I get my author's notes back to myself. That's nice, at least until they decide to forgive me. (But Mercowe knows a good bit of my plot, so they may never forgive me.)

I made a tumblr page for the story, so you can ask them anything over there. They still love you guys, just not me. XP

https://www.tumblr.com/blog/theinkymystery

I will also have some art over there.

Last of all, a warning. This chapter gets a little dark so yeah...TRIGGER WARNING. Someone says he wants to die. I WARNED YOU! DX

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Look Bendy! Look! It’s Toon Town!” Boris shouted excitedly. Bendy took a couple more steps to get to the top of the hill and saw the beginning suburbs of the sprawling city. Bendy sighed in relief. They had finally made it. He couldn't believe it. Toon Town. He must be dreaming.

Let’s hurry! The sun is already going down!” Boris said.

“Alright, alright. Hold your horses. We’ve been going almost nonstop since that casino.” Bendy chuckled. They had paused to eat their meals warm, and golly, that bacon soup had hit the spot. Bendy almost considered the casino worth returning to if they were ever in the area, but the memory of the cold girl and that dark feeling from the man in the hat had made him freeze up. The girl, he had figured and wasn’t bothered by her. Not really. He had dealt with people judging him for what he was his whole life. It was all water off his back. Just because she was cute and in trouble at the time didn’t make her any different. She was just like the rest of them, and it didn’t bother him. She didn’t bother him.

It had been that fella in the top hat. Boris had suggested that maybe the schmuck had a similar Talent to Bendy’s and that was what he had felt. Bendy wasn’t too sure of that. He had never felt that
cornered or helpless before. It felt like the guy was big cheese material, a real heavy hitter in a game Bendy hadn’t even realized he was a part of until they had made eye contact. The penalty for losing had felt like death. Yet, he hadn’t died. The guy had chuckled and been polite and then dismissed Bendy like he wasn’t even worth his time. The demon wasn’t an idiot, he had been let go and some deep instinctual part of him knew that if he came on that guy’s territory again, he could very well never walk out of those shiny doors.

Bendy had never felt such instincts before, and he never wanted to again so there was an easy solution: never go back…no matter how good their bacon soup was.

Boris hopped back up to him and raced down the hill again.

Bendy chuckled and pushed his thoughts away. “Seriously, where do you keep all that energy?”

Boris grinned over his shoulder. “I’m just excited!”

“Well, pass it along if you can, bro,” Bendy said.

“No can-do, brother,” Boris said gleefully. “Find your own.”

“Dang.” Bendy snapped his fingers. “I’m just too lazy for that. Are you sure you can spare a cup of excitement? I could really use it about now.”

Boris laughed. “What? Are you not excited?”

“It just doesn’t seem real to me yet,” Bendy admitted with a shrug and an easy-going smile. “I’ll be excited when I see a clean bed to fall on.”

Boris hummed in agreement.

The boys still had to walk for a while before they could find a place to stay. It was a little bed and breakfast that glowed a cozy light into the dark night. The kind host gave them a room with a bright smile and instructions on when and where breakfast would be in the morning. Bendy was tempted to just collapse on the clean sheets, but he was covered in twigs and dirt from the woods. With a little coaxing from Boris, Bendy reluctantly took a shower. The hot water felt amazing after days on the streets. It was sad how he almost forgot the little niceties life could offer. His muscles slowly relaxed under the pressure of water. It felt like nonstop urgency had been the focus of his life ever since their apartment had been broken into back in Sillyvision. Bendy grabbed a towel and began to dry himself off. How many weeks ago had it been? It felt like a lifetime since he had seen the Dancing Lady or that annoying Officer Snoutfer. How were they all doing back home? Had everything calmed down after they left? He hoped so.

He tossed the towel aside and got dressed for the night. He looked at himself in the mirror. How long had it been since he actually got dressed for a real bed? He shook his head. This just felt too domestic after everything. He leaned in closer. His wide eyes gazed back at him curiously. The points of his head and his hair were a little messy and still damp. His pale face was the same. He still had his winning fanged smile. Maybe the circles under his eyes were a little darker. He didn’t know if he expected to look different or not. Maybe he should look older than eighteen years old after everything, but he still had his usual youthful face. He flicked some water off his tail and walked out of the steamy room.

“Okay, bro, your turn,” Bendy said. Boris gave him a smile before passing by him. Bendy sat down at the desk Boris had just been sitting at and leaned back. He slouched comfortably as he heard the water turn on.
Sillyvision was safe, right? Those two weirdos showing up in the warehouse basement gave him hope. They were after him and Boris, not Sasha. Maybe he should write her and let her know they were okay. Would that be okay or would that lead those blasting schmucks to her? Bendy chewed on his lip in deliberation. It had already been weeks, if she were here she would ring his neck for not writing. With a deep breath, he took out paper and pen, but froze.

What could he even say to her?

Hey, we made it? Golly, sorry we haven’t written. We were busy running for our lives, but I had a few moments to write this to you? Yeah, right. She’d be thrilled to hear that. Bendy’s mind wandered back to the wanted posters in the newspaper and grimaced. Then again, compared to what the papers might start saying about them, that could be mild.

He didn’t know how long he sat there thinking. Boris’ hand made Bendy jump and he dropped the pen. “What cha doin’, Bendy?” He asked, flicking his wet ears. A towel was wrapped around his neck, and he was in his night ware, loose pajama pants and a light shirt.

Bendy ducked his head a little and looked away. “Was thinkin’ of writin’ Sash, but I got nothing,” he muttered.

Boris gave Bendy a mischievous smile. “Ooooh. The crush back home.” Boris wiggled his eyebrows suggestively.

Bendy swung a hand at him half-heartedly. “Shut up,” he said, trying to hide his smile.

Boris ducked and laughed. “Do it later. I want to go to bed. It’s late.”

Bendy hesitated for a moment before giving in. It wasn’t like he was making any headway. Just as promised, both he and Boris collapsed on the soft mattresses with sighs of comfort. Boris grabbed a pillow and hugged it close. “An actual bed,” his muffled voice practically purred.

“Yeah. No joke. This is heaven,” Bendy said.

“Think we’ll be able to find the doctor tomorrow?” Boris asked.

“I hope so,” Bendy muttered, already feeling sleep pull at him.

Boris hummed. Bendy drifted into comfortable silence.

Bendy wasn’t sure how long it had been. It felt like it was really late when he sat up coughing. He awoke to horrible pain wracking his body. The fire was already burning in his chest. He coughed again and felt his throat close up. Bendy hunched over and coughed more. The pain tightened around his chest and stomach. His limbs were weak and useless. His head pounded with the pain and heat. He didn’t know how he managed it, but he was able to strip off the shirt that felt far too hot and restrictive. Still, the pain only increased. His body trembled with it, and he felt something drip down the side of his head. He couldn’t move without spiking the pain, but he couldn’t stop coughing. He couldn’t get a deep breath. He panted for shallow gasps between the coughing fits and kept a hand over his mouth to try and hold it back.

This was worse than the last time.

A terrible nausea swept over him. He groaned as the horrible sensation made his head swim. Then, he felt his throat close up for a different reason. Oh stars, no. Not this. The hand over his mouth clamped down harder as he tried to fight the rising sensation. He somehow forced himself to sit up and
look around in the dark for anything. Anything that could—a small metal trashcan was thrust into his hands just in time. His pain racked body convulsed, and he nearly choked on the thick acidic taste of the liquid that poured from his mouth and into the empty cylinder. He gasped for breath only for more to rise up his burning throat again. Tears ran down his face and he shook. Everything burned, and everything hurt. The thick liquid, the ink, wouldn’t stop. Were his insides liquefying? Was he turning into a puddle from the inside out? He wanted to sob and scream, but all he could do was gasp and moan. He was dying. There was no way he could continue with all this pain. There was so much ink. The bucket was half full. He spat up more, and then was finally able to breath.

Bendy felt something brush his bare back. He forced himself to breath. He looked up and, to his horror, made eye contact with Boris. The wolf had worry in his dark eyes. His ears were pinned to his skull, and his muzzle was pulled down in a frown. He was gently rubbing Bendy’s back. How long had he been awake? The wolf looked like he was on the verge of tears as he watched Bendy struggle. “Bor-ugh.” Bendy gasped and huffed. He spat into the bucket to try and clear his mouth. “It’s okay, Bendy. I’m here. You’ll be okay,” Boris muttered quietly to him. Bendy felt ten times worse that his brother had to see him like this…but he felt a hundred times better that Boris was there. Bendy clung to his presence like a drowning man to a piece of drift wood.

He threw up once again, and the pain was only getting worse. He clutched the can closer to him. Bendy tried to focus on the cool hand on his back and his brother’s quiet murmurs. He felt grounded even as his pained body heaved and shook. He stared down at the pool of ink and groaned. More of the black substance dripped from the side of his head and down his face, mixing with his tears. The burning in his chest suddenly dropped. “Ugh!” Bendy jerked his arms around his stomach. The quick movement upset the trash can, causing it to tip and roll away from him. It dumped the black ink across the end of corner of his bed and the floor.

“Bendy!” Boris leaned forward, but stopped short. The pain was too much. He was burning up. He was melting. It was running down his face. He was going to die. Why hadn’t he died yet? It hurt! Ithurtihurtihurt! Somehow, Bendy was able to force his voice out. “I’m GoNna DiE! Eugh! !I WANT to Die!” He sounded so rough. He shrieked and hunched in on himself. He gritted his teeth to stop. He shut his eyes and just wanted it all to stop. “N-no!” He heard Boris’ voice shake. “Be strong. Please! You’ll be ok.” Boris scooted closer and put his other hand on Bendy’s knee. Bendy glanced to the wolf from the corner of his eye. Tears. Boris was crying. Cuss! Bendy couldn’t fall apart yet. Boris was right there. He couldn’t die like this in front of his little brother! Bendy refused!

The pain slowly subsided. Little by little Bendy could think again. He slowly and carefully sat back from his hunched position. After a few deep breaths, Bendy sighed. He could breathe again. It stopped. He pulled up a leg and rested an arm on it. “Boris,” Bendy said softly.

Boris wrapped his arms around Bendy. “It’s okay! It’ll always be okay! I know you’re strong enough! You’ll be okay!” Boris was blubbering into Bendy’s shoulder. Bendy felt new tears run down his face, and he hoped the ink and old tear tracks hid them. Stars, what was wrong with him? How could he have scared Boris this badly?

“I’m not strong,” Bendy admitted softly. He smiled and turned his head into his brother’s embrace. “You’re the reason I keep on fighting, Boris.”
Boris laughed wetly and his tail started thwapping against the bed. “A-as long as you keep fi-
fighting.”

“Promise, bro,” Bendy muttered. He felt really tried and a bit sticky. He should take another shower. He should make sure Boris was okay. He should clean up that mess. But he was falling asleep. He was so tired.

“I’ll clean up the mess,” Boris said and shifted, causing Bendy to snap awake.

“You don’t have to do that, Boris,” Bendy said around a yawn. Boris wiped at his face with his arm.

“It’s okay, bro. I can handle this. You should be clean up,” Boris said and nudged Bendy toward the bathroom gently.

“Mnhmm,” Bendy answered and pulled himself off his bed. He didn’t want to think. He didn’t think about his brother cleaning up all that ink. He didn’t think about anyone else hearing his screams and knocking on their door and Boris having to make up excuses. He didn’t think of the ink mixing with the water before washing down the drain. He didn’t think about the pain. He didn’t think about what he had shouted, nor the horror on his brother’s face when he had said it. No, he didn’t think at all. If he did, he would break. So, he simply felt the cool water run down his body and the soft towel take away the moisture. He felt the cold tiles under his feet and the darkness shift when he flipped off the switch. He felt the shadows roll and twist around him lazily in the late night. When he came into the bedroom the light was already off and Boris sat on his changed bed.

The wolf smiled softly at Bendy. “I got ya new sheets. You must be tired.” Bendy only nodded.

“Then you should rest, bro. We have a big day tomorrow after.” Bendy walked up to Boris and ruffled the top of his head, making his ears flap around. “Bendy!” Boris swatted his hand away with a chuckle.

Bendy smiled and withdrew his hand. “Thanks, bro. You spoil me.”

Boris stuck out his tongue and jumped back to his bed. “Night!” he said playfully.

“Hmm, night.” Bendy hummed and crawled under his sheets.

The need to find the doctor ignited with a new urgency within the little demon. Bendy wasn’t sure if he could handle another attack like that. Wilson hadn’t said it, but Bendy wondered whether those who had died of ink illness had died from the illness or from the madness and pain.

He didn’t want to find out.

The morning came far too quickly, in Bendy’s opinion. Before he felt like he was fully awake the two of them had gotten ready, eaten, and left. He was still yawning as they walked further into the city. It was another hour or so before he could fully focus on what was going on around him. Boris had gotten the address and directions for the college. Bendy just followed him blindly until he finally woke up. After he could go more than fifteen minutes without yawning Bendy suggested they hop on a bus.

It wasn’t long before they found themselves in the center of the city and surrounded by tall impressive buildings and crowded streets. The boys were leaning out the window to stare in awe at all the amazing new sights and sounds and smells. There were more people and animals than Bendy and Boris had ever seen. Everyone was rushing around this way and that. The smell of café coffees and bakery goods drifted out of their shops, making the boys’ mouths water. The college was soon within sight.
It was a sprawling campus with curved and somewhat zany shaped buildings. There was an old, yet noble, look to the tall towers and winding walkways. The buildings all looked different, yet all of them matched with marble arches, wood facades and brick walls. The students were much like the city folk, going one direction or another trying to get to class.

Bendy and Boris stepped off the bus and stared with jaws open. They had never seen so many people before. They got a few odd looks for the packs and travel clothes, but not enough to worry them.

“Where do we go to find him? This place is huge!” Boris asked as his eyes skimmed the large bell tower next to the round center plaza.

“How about that building?” Bendy pointed to a short building in the center plaza with a round dome on top of it. It seemed stately and important to Bendy. Boris shrugged and without further comment the two boys walked onto the grand Yen University.

Bendy and Boris stuck close together as they made their way across the walkways and beautiful gardens that sprung up between the campus’ loud and cartoonish buildings. Ducks played in a small pool while young students studied under the canopy of twisted and gentle trees. Bendy watched the cute girls and tall athletes and worried guys. Most seemed energetic and focused.

He vaguely wondered what it would be like to be one of them. His biggest worry would be some sorta test or project. The classes he would take would be mechanics, science and maybe a dance class! He could enjoy all those dames and style to impress them. He would be stressed about a stern professor instead of a stern cop. He would be excited about, maybe, scoring a date the coming weekend instead of some cash for dinner. Though, he would probably still be starving. He would be reading text books looking for answers on his assignments instead of newspapers worried about what the media was saying about them. He could play and go out with friends, laugh and not worry about which side street they would sleeping in that night. He would be living on campus with roommates, possibly friends, instead of....

Bendy glanced at the bright and excited look on Boris’ face. His muzzle pulled up in a childlike grin that revealed his gleaming fangs. His tail wagged so excitedly as his eyes went from the flowers to the students to the long rectangular building with a sloping roof to the arches over another walk way.

Bendy wouldn’t change his life if he could. He would never leave his little brother.

Bendy pulled his thoughts away from those fantasies of a normal life as they pulled open the heavy oak door and walked into a polished lobby.

“Golly, Bendy I don’t know what’s fancier. This place or that casino,” Boris whispered to him. Bendy looked up to the glass dome three stores up that cast patterned shadows of stained glass across the floor. Swirls of magic, creatures and symbols danced across the floor from it.

Bendy whistled. “No kidding, bro. If we keep it up with these snazzy places, we’re gonna get spoiled.”

The room was huge and circular. There was staircases on either side that led up to the other floors. He could see tables next to the railing of the dome space on the floors that overlooked them. There were more study spaces off to either side, near large windows. A hallway across the room that led to a long hall. A lot of noise came from that direction and it smelled like meat was cooking and sweets. Possibly it was a cafeteria or indoor food pavilion.

Bendy noticed that they were getting more stares than outside. Did they really stick out that much?
“There’s a desk over there?” Boris pointed out. Bendy spotted it. It looked like an information desk on the other side of the big round room next to the hallway.

“Alright. Then let’s get this over with,” Bendy said. Bendy put his hands in his pockets and walked into the light of the dome with Boris close behind him. Bendy froze the moment he stepped in the patterned light. His eyes widened with shock. He looked down then up. What was this feeling?

“Bendy?” Boris put a hand on his shoulder. “Are you okay?”

“Fine,” he said. “That’s just…wow.”

The shadows that were always around pulled back, completely retreating. Bendy felt a strange buzzing of…something. It was warm and gentle and even though he knew that his Talent was somehow cut from his reach, he wasn’t scared or alarmed, but calm. The energy or whatever it was soothed and reassured like a parent’s embrace. He didn’t need his power to be safe. Bendy blinked, completely befuddled by these feelings and this energy.

“What?” Boris was looking around. He looked down then up. “You mean the mural and the stain glass?

“Uh?” Bendy looked down again to see that Boris was right. There was a mural of tiles under them that crossed with the light of the glass above them, changing the symbols and having the creatures dancing around mural landscapes. “Wow.”

“Yes, it’s like the two work together to create a whole picture.” Boris commented.

“But don’t you feel it Boris?” Bendy asked.

“Feel what?” The wolf looked up to Bendy with curiosity in his dark eyes.

“The, uh, energy? Light?” Bendy made a weak hand motion around them. “Maybe a humming or buzzing?”

Boris looked around again and shook his head. “I can feel the warmth from the sunlight, but that’s about it.”

“Huh,” Bendy grunted. He shook his head and continued walking. The whatever stayed as a pleasant hum across his skin and in the back of his mind. Even when he left the circle of light the feeling lingered in his bones. He couldn’t shake it and he didn’t want to. He felt nice.

As they approached the desk the administrator - that’s what they were called right? – was grinning at him and his brother. She was a cute tall dame, dressed snazzy, but professional, in an overcoat and a knee length skirt. Her hair was light and in a curly bob that framed her oval face nicely. Her wide and bright eyes gleamed at them. She couldn’t be much older than Bendy, maybe she was also a student. Bendy also noticed a beauty mark in the corner of her mouth.

“Hello! I see you noticed the Runes of Peace. It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” she asked gleefully.

Bendy cleared his throat and rested an arm on the desk between them. “Uh yeah. Listen doll, what exactly was—.”

“That feeling of peace and power?” she cut in with a smile.

“Yeah that,” Bendy asked. The peace shifted and started to feel more unnerved and alarmed.
“That.” She pointed back to the light. “Is one of the original runes that Yen Sid himself placed when he established the school. There are several throughout the campus. All of them are meant for the peace and protection of the students and staff. I’ve been studying them for my grad project and—.”

“What are runes? What did Bendy feel? Why didn’t I feel anything?” Boris suddenly cut in with excitement.

Instead of getting irritated at being cut off, the girl seemed to only grow more enthusiastic with the questions. She leaned over the desk more, nearly brushing Bendy’s arm as she focused on Boris. “Well, you see the Runes are old magic from nature and are meant to focus energy to their center like gravity pulls water downhill. Runes work strongest in attraction and repulsion. In this case Master Sid wanted to attract peace, calm, and focus for the students and repel dark thoughts, anger, and fear. Now, the reason he—.” She gestured to Bendy and gave him a wink. Bendy smirked. “Was able to feel the energy of the Runes is most likely because his Talent or nature is tied in with some form of energy manipulation.”

The boys shared a baffled glance, eyes wide with shock, before turning back to the girl. She laughed at their reaction. “Those inclined to magic feel it a lot and those with more physical, or what not, Talents or natures don’t.”

“Magic?” Bendy asked. The girl shrugged.

“Yeah, but don’t be fooled. There is method and work put to it. It’s like science.” She straightened and pointed a finger up like she would have to stop the boys from arguing with her.

“I’m guessing you do magic?” Bendy asked.

She grinned. “Yep! I hope to get as good as Master Sid with Runes someday.” Shock crossed her face. “Oh my, I never introduced myself to you gents. I’m Holly May.”

“Boris.” He smiled at her.

“And I’m Bendy, gorgeous.” He returned her wink and she smiled at them both.

“Sorry, I went off on you like that. I’ve been studying them for years and I can’t get enough of ‘em!” she prattled.

“No. It’s nice to see someone so passionate. I find them interesting too,” Bendy admitted with a grin. He felt Boris kick him lightly.

“We are actually here looking for someone,” Boris cut in.

“Oh?” She raised a thin brow.

“Yes, he’s a doctor here. Maybe a professor?” Boris said.

“There shouldn’t be a problem then. Who can I help you find?” Holly said with her bright smile.

“Doctor Ryan Oddswell,” Bendy said. Her smiled dropped off her face like Bendy had thrown a glass of ice water at her.

She looked between the two of them with slight concern and alarm in her large eyes. “I’m sorry gents, but Doctor Oddswell hasn’t been at this University in almost a year. He was dismissed after the incident he had.”
“What incident?” Bendy asked, seriousness reflecting in his tone.

Holly shifted uncomfortably on her feet. “Officially, he had a nervous break, but...” She looked around and leaned forward to whisper to the boys. “I heard he was performing experiments on volunteers and students. I heard he killed someone.”

Chapter End Notes

Opps! Oddswell did what?!  
Hehe.  
I hope my crappy internet will let me tell you next week. 
Thanks, all of you wonderful readers that have commented and given art (Do you want to share that? I would love to put that on tumblr. It's up to you. I love it either way!) and kudos and bookmarked, and well, you know who you are. You guys are the best and make me happy. I hope you have a great week.  
The rest is up to you, Mercowe!  
TAP out. :)}
“He what!” Bendy barked.

“Shh!” Holly waved her hands back and forth. She looked around, worried. Bendy glanced over his shoulder. Some students had stopped studying to glance at them curiously. Holly waved and smiled at the students, waiting to speak until they looked away. “Keep your voice down! We aren’t supposed to talk about this stuff,” she hissed quietly.

“Why not?” Boris asked, confused.

“It a huge scandal, and there’s no proof. Most think it’s just a hot shot rumor and don’t want to tarnish the University’s name. They’ll get mad if they hear us talking about it,” Holly explained.

“But you don’t think so,” Bendy said. “Otherwise, why would you tell us?”

Holly looked down at him. She narrowed her eyes in a calculating stare. “No, I don’t. I think it’s either true or the school is coverin’ something big. Either way his dismissal was fishy.”

“What do you know about Dr. Oddswell?” Boris asked with a serious glint in his eye.

Holly glanced at him and then looked down at the table with a sigh. “Sadly, not much. I was in one of his classes, but it was when I started out here. He was a brilliant teacher, but a bit…well, you’d just have to meet him.” She waved a hand like she was dismissing a thought. “Even if he came off as a bit of a mad scientist, I couldn’t really imagine him having a nervous breakdown.”

“What about the experimenting on people part?” Bendy asked.

She looked up from her musings. “Oh, yeah, I can see him doing that.” She gave him straight eye connect. There wasn’t even a hint of a joke coming from her. “Absolutely.” She nodded.
Eh. Bendy wasn’t so sure of this anymore.

“Wh-,” Boris swallowed. “What about the ‘killed someone’ bit?”

She shrugged. “Like I said, there wasn’t any proof of that.”

Bendy and Boris shared an uncomfortable glance. Had they made a mistake following Wilson’s instructions? He could feel Holly watching them, but he focused on Boris. Should they keep going? That was the question the brothers had, that Boris wanted him to answer. The wolf’s dark eyes were worried, but determined.

“Would you know where we can find him?” Bendy asked, turning back to her. They had already been through so much. It was like the warehouse all over again. They had to go to the end of this, otherwise everything else would have been for nothing.

“Sorry.” Holly grimaced. “He just disappeared after that.” Bendy and Boris shared another look.

“Can I ask why you two want to find him?”

“We have a message for him,” Bendy said quickly.

Holly raised a slim eyebrow. “What are you? Some kind of glorified mailmen?”

Bendy groaned and dropped his head in his hands. “Why does everyone think that?” Boris was chuckling next to him. Holly blinked, but shrugged it off.

“Fine, don’t tell me. Look.” She stepped back to a separate room and opened a filing cabinet drawer. “I can’t help you find where he is now,” she said through the open door. “But I can give you the address of where he used to stay when he worked here.” She pulled out a file and opened it. She flipped through a few pages before grabbing a notecard and a pen to write. She snapped the file shut after that and returned it. Holly looked around at the studying students, before returning to the desk and handing the card to Bendy. “And if anyone asks, you never got it from me.”

Bendy glanced at the neat address written in cursive, before looking back at Holly. He grinned. “Thanks, sweets. You’ve been a huge help.” Holly seemed a bit taken aback by his genuine gratitude.

“Yeah, thank you!” Boris added, just as brightly. Holly gave them a soft smile and a light blush danced across her cheeks.

“It isn’t the big of a deal,” she said.

“Oh no, don’t sell yourself short. You’ve been a huge help! I’ll have to take you out to pay ya back, beautiful. Let’s go, Boris!” Bendy said as his mind already jumped ahead.

“Sure thing.” Boris nodded.

“Good luck, you two!” Holly waved as they retreated. The boys waved back, before hurrying across the large room and through the ruin mural. This time when Bendy stepped into the light it was like the ancient symbols danced with his hope intensifying it. The peace grounded him and boosted his confidence until all his doubt and fears were washed away. They would find the doctor, and they would have a cure. The feeling stayed with him as he and Boris left the campus.

“Where are we goin’ bro?” Boris asked.

“Two-two-three Baker Street.” Bendy answered with a determined glint in his eyes.
Sadly, it was easier said, than done. It didn’t take long for the two to get lost in the huge city and every time they asked for directions, it seemed they were sent to a different part of town. Sometimes, it was even opposite the way they were going! They were also reluctant to ride the bus too much with their limited fund, even if it was a hefty sum now. Bendy didn’t know how long they would be here, so every penny counted and they didn’t have time to find jobs, so they couldn’t replenish what they spent. Meaning, the boys walked mostly, bumping into city folk and tripping once in a while in the unfamiliar territory.

At lunch, they stopped at a sandwich shop and were scandalized at the prices. It was more than double of what they had back home! After eating and paying the offending price, they found themselves back on the street curb, reluctant to wander randomly. They were tired from the distance they had already covered. “This would be easier if we had a map,” Boris muttered.

“Do you think there is one with every street in this huge place?” Bendy asked.

Boris shrugged. “Don’t know, but maybe we could check that shop?” Boris pointed across the street. Bendy turned to see a simple store that seemed to be offering a little of everything. The demon glanced back to the wolf and shrugged. It wasn’t like they were getting anywhere fast. They crossed the street and entered the shop. The sign read *Bimbo and Betty’s Everything Shop.*

Bendy opened the door to the sound of a little bell ringing. A woman straightened from behind a clean and simple counter. Bendy’s eyes lit up at the sight of her. She was extremely curvy with large dark eyes and equally short dark curls framing her face. Her full lips curled up in a smile. She had a tiny button nose and large hoop earrings that glinted in the store light.

“Oh! Hello, welcome. I’m Betty. Can I help you with something, gents?” she said with a high pitched and slightly reedy voice. She stepped around the counter. Bendy glanced and...wowie. Legs, legs, legs. Long, slender, light, and smooth looking legs. She had dark high heels on her dainty feet. She was also in a short as possible, sleeveless, dark dress. Bendy felt his smirk spread across his face. Before he could speak Boris stepped up. “Yes. We need a map to the city.”

She perked up at that and her smile grew a little bigger. “Of course! We have several kinds of maps.” She led them into the aisles of the store. They passed books and posters and newspapers, before coming to a section dedicated to maps and tourist locations. “We have tourist locations, restaurants, businesses, historical maps.” She listed off several more that flew over Bendy’s head as he gave a quick glance at the newspapers to make sure neither his nor his brother’s pictures were on the front. He swallowed a sigh of relief at not seeing any mention of them.

“What about a street map?” Boris asked.

“Oh, absolutely!” Betty grinned cutely.

He refocused on Betty and saw her hand Boris a map. Bendy came closer to look at the map over Boris’ shoulder….Well, under it actually, but Bendy refused to think about that. The map was surprisingly detailed, with the streets clearly labeled. It seemed a bit crowded, but not as bad as Bendy had feared.

“What do you think Bendy?” Boris asked.

“It’s better than I thought,” Bendy admitted. He looked up to Betty. “Any idea where Baker street is on this thing?”

She quirked her mouth into a little pucker for a second. “Golly. I’m not sure.” She stepped over to
them and leaned over Bendy to have a look. Bendy did his best not to blush or stare at her close proximity or what was level with his eyes. “Let’s see. It does sound familiar,” she muttered. Bendy must not have been doing a decent job, because he felt Boris step on his foot. When he glanced over to Boris, the wolf gave him a disappointed and unimpressed frown. Bendy could only smile and shrug sheepishly. Any more movement would have him bump into her. “There it is!” she suddenly said excitedly, pointing at the map and causing Bendy to jump and bump into her. “Oh!” She looked down at Bendy and then giggled. “Sorry.” She stepped back.

Bendy’s face was dark with a heavy blush, but he mumbled. “You’re fine.” Boris gave him another kick. Betty flushed lightly and giggled again.

“Sorry ma’am. Where was the street?” Boris asked, stepping around Bendy to show Betty the map again.

“Betty, please,” she said and leaned toward the map again. “And no worries.” Bendy took the moment to cool down. After she showed the wolf where they were and where Baker street was she asked, “Do you want the map?”

Boris glanced up at him. “Yes. That would be swell, gorgeous,” Bendy answered with a wink. Betty smiled and led them back to the front of the shop. “So, if you’re Betty, where’s Bimbo?” Bendy asked conversationally.

Betty sighed as she went behind the counter. Her lips turned into a pout. “He’s in jail again.” Bendy’s eyes widened, but Betty continued. “My pooki has trouble with authority and can be a bit mischievous. I warned ‘im I wasn’t gonna bail him out next time. He’ll be there until Friday.”

Boris and Bendy shared a shocked look. “Pooki, huh?” Bendy asked.

Betty sighed and smiled. “Yeah. He might be trouble, but he’s my trouble.” Bendy bit back his disappointment. “What about you boys? Where are you from?”

“Oh!” Boris startled a little. “Sorry, I’m Boris and this is my older brother, Bendy. We’re from a small town out west.”

“The Far West?” Betty asked with an interested glint in her eyes. Bendy narrowed his eyes, thoughtfully. It sounded like a title. Boris also looked confused with his ears twitching downward.

“I don’t think so, toots,” Bendy said. She pouted a little, but nodded.

“Will that be all boys?” she asked.

“Yes, ma-Betty,” Boris caught himself. Betty gave him a warm smile for using her name. Betty rung it up and Bendy paid.

She waved as they left. “Come again. I’d love to see you fellas.” The two waved back and headed out to the streets.

With the map, the boys easily made their way to Baker street. After another hour or so, they found the street. The buildings became older and closer together. The pavement was replaced with cobblestones, and small trees lined the road. The houses, windows and pointed roofs all seemed thin and tall. The area was more empty and quiet than the other places the boys had wandered so far. Clouds started to move over the sun, bringing a mix of shadow and light.

“Hey, bro,” Bendy said. “Do you think we can trust this Oddswell guy, if we find him?” Boris tilted his head a little and frowned. Bendy shrugged.
“Well, what else can we do, Bendy?” Boris asked. Bendy sighed. Yeah, that was true. It wasn’t like they had any other choice here. He really hoped the murder rumor was about as true as his wanted poster claims.

It wasn’t long before the brothers found two-two-three Baker Street. There was barely any space between the house and its neighbors. It was dark and the curtains were pulled shut. Bendy and Boris looked up at the three-story building. It seemed a touch more decrepit than the other nice English-styled homes. Spider webs clung to the lamps mounted on either side of the entrance arch. The stairs up were covered in dust and leaves. The paint on the wooden door was peeling and its hinges seemed rusted. The boys shared a concerned look.

“Do you think anyone still lives here?” Boris asked.

Bendy frowned. “If they do, they are horrible at housekeeping.”

Bendy stepped up and grabbed the door knocker. He lifted it and the metal shrieked as it moved. He cringed as he forced it down twice, before stepping back. The knock sounded like it echoed throughout the room beyond. Boris tilted his head and Bendy raised a brow. They waited a few moments before Bendy repeated the action. Boris folded his ears at the protesting metal. They waited again with not a peep coming from the other side of the door.

“I think it’s abandoned, bro,” Bendy said. Boris’ ear fell and his eyes widened in sorrow.

“What do we do now Bendy?” Boris asked. Bendy thought for a moment, bringing a hand up to his chin and putting his other arm across his torso. There were a couple of different things they could do, but the fastest idea that came to mind was, of course, illegal.

“Well, we could try and find out where he moved, but any government building will have security that might have our posters. I wouldn’t put it past those pork brains to send them all the way out here. We could just go home,” Bendy suggested. Boris winced at the thought and curled his lips a little in denial of the very idea. “Or we could break in and see if he left any clues. The place still has curtains, so there might be other things the doc left behind, even if it has been a year.” He shrugged and dropped his hands.

“Getting in would be the fastest,” Boris said, looking at the door and coming to the same thought as Bendy. “It’s bad, but we’re already wanted for murder, so...” He shrugged lightly. He lifted a hand to feel the hinges. Bendy felt a small sad tug at Boris’ comment, but quickly shook it off. Bendy backed out of the archway entranced and looked to the tall windows. They were above his head and had a small cement ledge, probably for windowsill flowerbeds. Bendy glanced up and down the street to make sure it was empty, before grabbing the ledge and pulling himself up. He balanced precariously on the toes of his boots as he checked the latch. It was an old screw latch that wouldn’t be too difficult to jimmy if it wasn’t rusted shut. “Bendy! What are you doing?” Boris’ voice was right behind him and it startled the demon. He lost his balance and teetered backwards, his arms swinging out as he tried to correct himself.

Bendy squeaked as he fell and felt two arms catch him, before they both landed with a “oof!” Bendy looked back to see Boris smiling at him, even though he was knocked on his rear. “Oops. Sorry, Bendy, didn’t mean to scare ya.” Bendy scowled at him without any true feelings behind it. “Did you find a way in?”

“Yeah, if we have a knife thin enough.” Bendy stood up and dusted himself off. He offered Boris a hand to pull him up. “Give me a boost so I don’t have to balance on my toes,” Bendy told Boris as he began digging through his pack for a small knife. He found the one they used to for small branches and pulled it out. Boris helped Bendy up onto his shoulders. Bendy carefully stood up and
Boris held his ankles tightly to help balance him. Gently, Bendy wiggled the knife in the tiny gap between the large panels of glass. It just barely fit and Bendy had to force it a little. He caught the edge of the latch and carefully pushed it to the side. The latch wiggled around and moved a bit. Good, it wasn’t tight or rusted. Bendy took about two minutes to get the latch to turn the whole way and have the window unlocked. Bendy jumped down and put the knife back as Boris pushed the window open part way. Boris pushed Bendy up and he climbed in silently.

Bendy looked around and was shocked to see the room. Instead of being near empty and covered in dust, cobwebs, and dirt, it was clean. The furniture was rich and large and expensive looking. There were cases of bookshelves full of so many books and papers and knickknacks that Bendy didn’t have time to look at all of them closely. A heavy desk was covered in papers, a graphs and a clock. The rug under his boots was thick and beautifully woven. An open doorway seemed to attach to the hall of the entrance and there was a narrow staircase opposite the front door.

“Is it clear?” Boris asked.

“Yeah,” Bendy muttered, bewildered. He leaned out and helped pull Boris in. Boris leaned too far forward and toppled over on top of Bendy with a crash. “Ow.”

“Sorry.” Boris whined and sat up, rubbing his head in pain.

“My goodness! What do think you’re doing!” a rich female voice demanded. Bendy looked up to see another tall beauty. What was with this city and gorgeous women? She had large, light, almond shaped eyes. Her light hair was piled up on her head tastefully behind a nurse’s cap. She was shapely, with long legs coming from a white nurse’s skirt. Her white button blouse complimented her figure.

“A-a-a-uh!” Boris scrambled to find something to say.

“We need to see Dr. Oddswell,” Bendy said quickly and got up. “It’s an emergency and we didn’t know where else to go.”

She narrowed her eyes at him. “So, you decide to break in instead? If I don’t answer the door, I don’t want to see you. Most decent people know that!”

Bendy winced. “Sorry. We’re desperate and we’ve come a long way to see ‘im. If he isn’t here we’ll, uh, we’ll try somewhere else.”

She huffed. “What if he doesn’t want to see you? Ever think of that? Or that he moved out and I have been living here for a year, dealing with you rude reporters and obsessive students. Maybe he moved away to get away from people like you!” So did she know him then? Was he here or somewhere else?

“We’re not reporters or students,” Boris said stepping next to Bendy. “We’re serious.”

The woman rolled her eyes. “Like I haven’t heard that one before. You’ll have to do better than that.” She turned to walk away from them.

“We know his friend Wilson!” Boris said quickly. The woman paused and looked back at them. A spark of interest, huh? Bendy took note that her dismissal stopped there. He noticed she also hadn’t threaten to call the cops. He narrowed his eyes as he wondered why that was. They had just broken in after all. Strange.

“What did he look like?” She asked, turning back to them, but still taking a step away from them toward the staircase. She was stiffer now, for some reason, and she crossed her arms over her chest.
It was like the owl’s name was a flag to her. Bendy couldn’t place if it was a good one or a bad one.

“Uh, ruffled, owl, big eyes. His clothes made him look like he was a street bum,” Bendy said.
“Talked to himself as much as he talked to us. Real jumpy fellow.” The woman blinked in surprise
and glared at them. It seemed something clicked in her head.

“Who are you?” she demanded, her voice dropping a little to sound threatening.

“The name’s Bendy, gorgeous.” Bendy winked and she ignored it. Whelp, that didn’t lighten the
mood at all.

“Boris and you are?”

“The owner of the house you’ve broken into,” she said, curtly. Boris’ shoulders hunched and his ears
dropped. “Where did you come from?” Bendy’s eyes hardened a bit. He wasn’t gonna play twenty
questions with a chick that wasn’t answering.

“Sillyvision in the west. We were told the schmuck of a doctor, Oddswell, could help us, but clearly
we were wrong. Sorry for breaking into your house. We’ll be going.” Bendy put a gloved hand on
Boris’ arm. “C’mon bro, let’s not waste any more time here.”

Boris’ eyes widened into a look of panic. “B-but Bendy we need a cur—.”

“Boris!” Bendy cut him off. “She ain’t interested in helpin’, so we’ll go somewhere else.” He tugged
on the wolf’s arm and headed to the front door.

He heard a heavy sigh behind him. “Wait,” she called out in a flat tone. “If it’s ink illness, you better
come with me.”

The brothers froze and looked back at her with wide eyes. She raised a curious brow at their gob
smacked expressions. A tiny smirk came to her mouth. “What? That’s why you two young men,
who didn’t try to attack me after carefully breaking into the old doctor’s former address, are here,
 isn’t it? Honestly, who apologizes after climbing in through a window?” she chuckled. Bendy felt his
eye twitch. Had this dame been messing with them ever since she figured out they weren’t there to
attack her or steal anything? What the cuss? “You know, most patients that are that desperate leave a
note in the slot or sit on the steps until I show up to see if there are new patients.” Bendy and Boris
both turned back to the door to see the mail slot.

Boris blushed and looked back to the woman. “W-we weren’t sure if anyone still lived here.” She
snorted at them.

“Sing your excuses to someone who cares. I guess I’ll take you two to the ‘clinic’ to be checked
out.” She used her fingers and sarcasm when she said ‘clinic’, causing Bendy and Boris to share
concerned and confused looks. Bendy eventually shrugged. It wasn’t like it was the craziest thing
they had done in the past month. “Follow me.” She waved an impatient finger as she turned and
headed down the hall. Bendy noticed there was a thin hall beside the stairs, the nurse walked down
the hall and toward the back of the building. Bendy and Boris cautiously followed her.

“I wasn’t sure what to make of two street urchins demanding to see the coot, but it’s been a really
long time since I heard that beakbrain’s name,” she muttered to herself. She sighed heavily. Bendy
glanced at the painting and a fancy table with an empty vase sitting on it. Further down there was an
opening to what seemed like a kind of sitting room looking out to a small backyard. Off to the side in
another room was a spacious kitchen with clean counters and pots hanging from hooks on the wall.
“Anyway, where’s old beak breath now? Did he give you another letter for Oddswell?”
Bendy blinked and refocused on the woman. “Now hold up, doll. I think we should at least get your name before sayin’ anythin’ about Wilson.”

She glanced back at him with an annoyed frown. “Red H. R. Hood,” she said and looked away from him. She opened the back door and held it for Boris and Bendy.

The boys shared a glanced and moved. Bendy kept an eye on the woman. “Are you a nurse?”

“An assistant, but I do have proper training, if that’s what you’re asking,” she said shutting the door and locking it. She turned back around and frowned at him. “Did you think I dress like this for fun?”

Following that train of thought, Bendy blushed. “Uh, ah, no! That’s not—.”

She snorted and walked to the fence. Boris gave Bendy the unamused stare with a raised brow that he had become too accustomed to today. Bendy grumbled, “Yeah, yeah. Don’t say it, just keep that muzzle shut.” Boris smirked and to Bendy that spoke volumes more then anything else. He growled and followed the wolf to the open fence gate. There was an old car parked in back. A ’20 Ford Sedan that was black and had a layer of dirt on its sides. Red climbed in the driver seat and she motioned for the boys to get in. Bendy took shotgun and Boris jumped in back. Red started the car.

Bang!

Bendy and Boris winced at the loud backfire. “Now about the owl,” the assistant said as she pulled out of the back alley and onto the street.

“He sent us to you after we ran into him in our hometown,” Boris said.

“Did he give you a letter or message?” she sounded almost bored.

“No. He said it was too dangerous or something like that,” Bendy said, leaning back in the seat comfortably. He put his hands behind his head and watched the city streets slide by. Red hummed.

“So Red, what is Dr. Oddswell like?” Bendy asked.

“Miss Hood,” she corrected. “And he’s a prick to work for. The hours are terrible and if he drops one more beaker or asks me to get one more book from the top shelf, I think I’ll ring his scaly throat,” she growled, her eye alight with frustration.

The brothers raised their eyebrows in surprise. “Oh?” Boris asked, uncertain.

“I can’t blame him for his bad mood, but he really should just get a hobby.” She rolled her eyes. “Besides his obsessions, that is.”

“What about the illness? Are there a lot of patients?” Bendy asked.

“Since the time Wilson left, there have been eighteen cases of ink illness that we know of. Only twelve have reached Oddswell,” she stated flatly.

“And the ones that didn’t?” Boris asked nervously.

“Puddled in their hospital beds and homes,” she said easily. “Confused the whole staff and horrified the families. Two hospitals were going to investigate further but....” She shrugged. “They never seemed to get around to it.” Boris gulped and sunk back into his seat.

“How do you know that, doll?” Bendy asked. Red shot him a quick glare before turning back to the road.
“ Mostly, Wilson would send updates or a paper would have a small article and then I would have to go to the star fallen place and ask questions. Wasn’t hard with gossiping nurses or patients.” She shrugged.

“A-and the twelve that did get to Oddswell?” Boris stuttered.

The assistant gave him a glance before answering. “Out of the twelve that originally came to Oddswell, six are still alive.”

“What about a cure?” Boris asked eagerly.

The woman sighed. “No such luck, yet.” The wolf deflated and sat back. Bendy felt his chest tighten with dread. No cure. Cuss. “Now don’t look like that, you mooks.” Red was glaring at the boys. “He can still help you and he has been working for a year to find a cure. His reputation is in the toilet and he has been discredited by nearly every medical and educational board he has gone to. He did all that to help you sorry saps that woke up coughing one day. Get it? I can rip the prick to bits, but I don’t want to hear a peep out of either of you when it comes to the bug-eyed workaholic. Capiche?”

“Uh, yes?” Boris said, staring at her, confused.

“Good. I’m sick and tired of people talking dirty. ‘You’re not working hard enough. It doesn’t exist. You’re wasting your time. You don’t even care!’ Bah and foowie!” Red fell into muttering curses to herself. Bendy and Boris sat silently. Boris gave Bendy a questioning look and gestured toward the woman. Bendy could only shrug and shake his head. Boris threw a thumb over his shoulder, suggesting they scram, and Boris shook his head. Bendy tilted his head toward the assistant and raised a brow in disbelief. Boris threw his hands up in a hopeless movement before pointing at the ground in a ‘stay here’ gesture. Bendy raised both his brows and half-lidded in eyes, seriously doubting Boris’ stubbornness.

“You fellas don’t need to throw hand signs around. I’m not nuts, just angry.” She sighed again and rubbed her neck. “You caught me on a bad day. I just got to the house after fighting with a patient’s family. It’s…tense right now. I’m usually better mannered than this. After working at this job for a year I’ve seen stars know too much.”

“Why are you working for him?” Bendy decided to ask.

“I lost my job at the hospital for fighting with a coworker. I was tight on money and couldn’t afford to move, so when I heard this big-wig professor was looking for an assistant, I applied on a whim. Next thing I know the world is crashing down around us and no one will listen. I could have quit and just walked, but after meeting the first patient…” Red looked at the boys with softer eyes, before looking at the road again. “Knowing what I know…walking away wouldn’t have sat well with me.” She shrugged. The English style homes gave way to thick woods and a slight incline.

The rest of the ride was in silence. Bendy wasn’t sure what to think. They got this far, but with no cure how long would they be here? Bendy wasn’t just gonna lay on a cot and wait for the end. He had always been a man of action. They continued to climb until they came to the top of a hill. A large building sat on the edge of peak. It was tall, large, and had a dome roof at the center of it. There was a huge telescope sticking out of it.

Bendy blinked. “An observatory?”

“The doc bought the rundown thing way before any of this happened. He needed a private space to do his work after the school dismissed him. No one knows what goes on here except us and the closest family to the patient,” Red said. She parked the car. It sputtered before she turned it off.
“Ya know,” Boris said while climbing out. “We could fix this up for you.” He patted the car. “It’ll only get worse if you leave it as is.”

Red huffed. “It’s the only car he or I have to get around. We can’t wait a couple days for you to play with it.”

Bendy scoffed. “It would only take us half an hour at most.”

The assistant raised a pencil thin brow. “Handy boys that want to work. What an odd thought.” She turned around and started walking into the building. “We’ll worry about that after you have your checkups.” She paused at the door. “And don’t stare or ask about his tongue. He can get self-conscious about it. He’ll pretend it doesn’t bother him, but it does, so just don’t.” And with that last word of advice the assistant opened the door. It protested loudly as she entered the dimly lit hallway. The boys followed and winced as she forced the door shut again. The hall looked like it hadn’t seen a broom or mop in a decade, the linoleum floor was covered in dust and discarded trash. The grey walls were bare and dull. One of the florescent lights flickered occasionally. Red walked on, unperturbed.

“We only focused on cleaning up the rooms we would need, so the rest of the place is as Dr. Oddswell bought it,” Red explained. Bendy took a deep breath of the dusty and stagnant air before following. He put his hands in his pockets and kept a sharp eye out. They turned a few corners before coming to another door. This time when Red opened it, the light brightened. The hall was clean. It seemed to be night and day. The boys continued until Red held open a door to a room. Bendy peeked in to see it was just like the crow doctor’s room.

She went to the desk on the side of the room. “First, I’ll give you a normal checkup and then get the doctor, if he isn’t too busy.”

“I’ve already done this,” Bendy said annoyed.


“How about you first, then.” Red pointed to Boris. Boris blinked and pointed to himself in surprise.

“Me? But I’m not even sick,” he said.

“You’ve been with him the whole time?” She indicated Bendy with a finger, but stayed focused on Boris.

“Yeah.”

“Are you boys related?”

“I everything but blood,” Bendy stated flatly.

She nodded. “Then I will be checking you too, pup. Now hop on the table.” She pulled on some gloves.

“Yes, Miss Hood,” Boris answered. Bendy sighed and rolled his eyes. Boris did as he was told and his examination only took a few minutes. Then he and Bendy switched places. The whole time Red was asking health and history questions. The boys answered as best they could.

“So, how long have you been having symptoms of ink illness?” she asked.
“About three weeks now,” Bendy said.

“Could you list them for me?” she asked. Bendy swallowed and told her everything that he had been through. She nodded her head and wrote on a clipboard. She remained cool and professional.

“And how often do you get the attacks?” she asked, pulling off her gloves and picking up the clipboard again.

“Well, they disappeared for a week, but got worse when they came back,” Bendy said. She noted something again. “But other than that, it’s been pretty much daily.”

She paused and looked up at him. “Daily?” She sounded surprised. Bendy nodded. Her brow furrowed, but she focused on what she was writing again. “When was the last one?”

“Really early this morning,” Boris cut in. “It’s been the worst one so far.”

She nodded again, and, with a last scribble of her pen, she opened the door. “Wait here and I will go get the doctor.” She was gone in an instant.

The boys sat in silence for a long moment.

“This wasn’t what I expected,” Bendy said. Boris hummed in agreement.

“What do you think they’ll do?” Boris asked. Bendy shrugged. After everything, he knew this was supposed to be a big moment, but he just couldn’t bring himself to really care. There was no cure and who knew how long it would take for one to be made. He wasn’t holding his breath. Boris on the other hand seemed to be vibrating with nervous energy. He shifted often and tapped his fingers in changing beats. He kept glancing at the door expectantly. He seemed lost somewhere between fear and excitement.

“Hey Boris. What should we write to Sasha? I tried last night, but nothing was coming to me.” Bendy tried to distract the wolf. Boris’ ears perked in his direction before he turned his head to face the demon.

“We could tell her how ya found three new girlfriends in one city.” Boris smirked.

Bendy scowled. “Now, hold up a second there. Holly is a babe, but Betty has a man and that,” he pointed to the door Red went through, “could drive me up a wall in an hour…especially if she treated me the way she does the doctor.”

“Think she likes him?” Boris tilted his head.

“D’know, but she seems to at least care in some fashion.” Bendy shrugged.

“So, then one new girlfriend. Got it.” Boris grinned. “I’m sure Sasha will love it.”

Bendy blinked and then blushed. “That not what—.”

The door opened and in walked a tall, thin lizard in a white lab coat. He had huge bug eyes and a long mouth that seemed to be pulled in a semi-permanent smirk. Small round glasses sat near the end of his scaly snot. He adjusted them with a strange flat and round finger. He looked at the boys, then the clipboard, and then the boys. “Welcome boys. My assistant informs me you have a bit of a problem.” Boris opened his mouth to answer, but the lizard kept talking. “But of course you do. Wilson wouldn’t send you if there wasn’t a need to. I’m Dr. Ryan Oddswell, at your service. How is my old friend doing? Did he leave you with a message or letter, per chance?” The doctor nodded to
them. He had a smooth accent that Bendy couldn’t place, but he sounded well educated.

“I’m sorry sir.” Boris’ ears dropped with his apology. “Mr. Wilson passed away.”

The lizard blinked his huge eyes. His tongue flicked out to the side of his head so quickly that Bendy almost missed it, before it disappeared again. Bendy fought hard not to show any reaction at all. He looked down at his gloves instead. “Ah. Faked his death again, I see. Bet all that found was a feather again. By jove! If I didn’t know any better, I would think he was part seal with how slippery he can be.” The doctor shook his head and set the clipboard down on the table and tapped it with a pen.

“No, doc,” Bendy said. He looked back up at the lizard. “He’s gone. I was there. I saw it.” The lizard froze. He put his hands on the table and bowed his head. Bendy and Boris shared a worried glance. They heard Oddswell release a heavy sigh.

“So, it finally caught up to him, eh? Bloody damn, Wilson! I warned you,” he muttered and shook his head. Oddswell straightened up and tugged on his white coat. “Right then.” He turned around and stepped up to Bendy on the examination table. “We seem to have a lot to talk about,” he said with what sounded like excitement. “And you are my subject.” He pointed at Bendy with the pen nearly touching his nose with it. Red opened the door at that moment and stepped inside.

“S-subject?” Bendy asked. The doctor’s sudden mood swing confused him.

“Doctor Oddswell, I’ve told you a hundred times you can’t call your patients subjects.” Red sounded exasperated. “That was part of the huge fight I had to deal with this morning!”

“Pish-posh!” the doctor claimed. “If they don’t like it, they can try and find another doctor that has even the tiniest inkling on how to help them. See if they fare any better. I don’t have time for those ridiculous details.” Again his tongue flickered out and in again, but Bendy didn’t see where it went, if anywhere.

Red sighed. “But if you improved your bedside manners even a little then—.”

“Now, Miss Hood. You do an excellent job with the sub-patients, but I need to focus on saving their lives. With my old friend gone, our most promising lead to understanding the origins to all this is lost. It seems history can’t help us with a cure after all,” the doctor said.

Red’s face went from irritated to shock, drop in shock, then pale dread. Her eyes widened and her mouth parted a bit in horror. “Oh. Oddswell, I’m so—.”

The doctor made a shooing motion with his hand. “Like I said, Hood. No time. We have to continue as we were. Now, we can’t expect an answer from the outside, it’ll have to be us.” Red’s shoulder dropped.

“Well, not completely,” Bendy said, reaching into his pocket. “We met this doctor in Warnerburg that had a look at me. He was amazed by what the lab came up with. We told him about you and he gave us this.” Bendy pulled out the letter and another scrap of paper fell out of his pocket and onto the floor. “His name’s Dr. Boo. He’s a small crow and he seemed really interested in helping.”

The lizard scoffed. “What self-respecting doctor would write to me? I’m infamous by now in all the medical field as a crackpot.” He almost sounded equally proud and bitter by the fact. Still, he extended his scaly and large fingered hand to take the letter.

“The same self-respecting doctor that would do a checkup for a few homeless folks without expecting payment,” Bendy answered. He saw Boris out of the corner of his eye, pick up the scrap of paper he had dropped and look at it. Oddswell gave Bendy a curious and calculated look at his
answer, before opening the letter. Boris was turning the paper he had this way and that. The doctor hummed before passing the letter to Red.

“Think you can manage that?” he asked her.

“Of course. What do you think you pay me for?” she said, looking over it.

The doctor chuckled. “I thought it was to deal with whining subjects and their relations.” She scowled at him before turning to go. Boris tugged on Bendy.

“Bro, what is this?” Brois handed him the page and Bendy looked at it. It was written with weird symbols and had several drawings of machinery on it. Bendy couldn't figure out which way to hold it for it to be right side up.

“Oh, I don’t really know,” he said.

“Where did you get it?” Boris tilted his head with one ear perked. “It came out of your pocket.”

Bendy stared at the paper, trying to remember.

Suddenly the doctor was right in front of him and grabbing his wrist. “Where did you get this?” he demanded in a cool tone.

“I-I don’t really remember,” Bendy stammered. He tried to pull his hand free, but the loose grip of the doctor didn’t move. It wasn’t like it was sticky, but he couldn’t slip out of his hold like he normally could.

“I know those ancient symbols. Did Wilson give you this?” he asked, piercing Bendy with his stare.

The memory of the owl pushing something into his hand flashed through Bendy’s mind. It seemed like an eternity ago. “Y-yes. When he was—he wanted me to take it. Something was really important about it.” He felt the doctor’s grip tense around his wrist before peeling away. It felt weird, like the flat scales had suction-cupped to his limb.

“May I see it?” Even though he asked, Bendy knew that the doctor wouldn’t accept any answer but yes. Bendy silently offered the old page with its strange writing. The doctor turned it around and looked at both sides. Without looking up he said, “He gave you this when he was dying, yes? His dying wish.” Bendy nodded though he didn’t think the doctor cared if he did or not. His tongue flicked out and Bendy was sure it touched his eye before disappearing again, but it was so fast again he wasn’t sure. “It needs to be translated. He wouldn’t do something so risky unless he knew it was important.”

He made a beckoning motion for the boys as he headed to the door. “Come, you two. We have a lot to do and little time. I want every detail and to get you some medication before your next attack.” He didn’t look up from the paper. The boys rushed to grab their things and follow the quickly retreating form of the lizard.

“Well, seems my lizard doctor knows what to do at least,” Bendy muttered to Boris as they caught up.

“I’m a gecko, young subject,” he said. “And of course, I know. I’m a doctor after all.”
And with that the first arch of this tale is over! On to the next phase.
So what happened to the author?
Writer's block hit me like a brick.
I went to a Comic Con with Mercowe, my boyfriend, and another close friend and doing all that helped with the block (THANK THE STARS!).
I came back on Monday and it was a full day drive! DX
Then, I got a bad cold from my trip (still worth it). Still, I was determined to finish my chapter when I found out the next Bendy chapter was coming out today. It had to happen, dangit!
And then, there was school work which started this mess in the first place. XP
So, there you have it. That's the little list of my busy life that got in the way of my favorite hobby. Sorry! I hope none of you died while waiting. Next chapter will have the Cupbros since another special something is coming out soon, if ya know whadda I mean. ;3
I don't know what me schedule is gonna be like, but I will TRY for Mondays, guys.
And again, my bad. Thank you all for being so patient.
Until next time!
TAP out!
Chapter Summary

Bendy and Boris are heading in the right direction. The Cupbros are also headed in the right direction. Who is closer?

Chapter Notes

Hello, lovelies~ I am so happy to see you and post on the right day!
School is trying to kill me (and they are making headway in that goal), but who cares because Cuphead came out! It is so much fun! Holy mercow! (ha) I love this game. I'm no good at it, but I love it anyway. I had so much fun that most of this chapter is all to the Cupbros. Have fun!
Oh and Mercowe, sorry, dear. I am just too impatient. Imma post it unedited, so if anyone wants to yell about the horrible writing it's one hundred percent me~!

Cuphead was startled awake with the loud whistle of the train. He jumped and opened his eyes, looking around quickly. Mugs had his face close to the window as they began to slow down. He chuckled and glanced at Cups before looking back out at the cityscape.

“Did that scare you, bro?” Mugs asked.

“Shut it,” Cups retorted. “It’s about time we got here.”

Mugs chuckled again. “What are you talking about? You slept nearly the whole time.”

“Trains are boring.” Cuphead shrugged. Mugs rolled his eyes, but didn’t lose his smile.

“It won’t be easy to find them in this city,” Mugs said. “It’s huge.”

“Bet it’ll be easier than you think,” Cups scoffed.

“How much?” Mugs challenged.

Cups smirked. “Let’s say twenty bucks if we find them in three days.”

“Two days and the other pays for the winner’s dinner. Winner’s choice,” Mugs said.

“Deal.” The brothers shook on it and Cup chuckled. This was gonna be cake.

The next day Bendy’s head was spinning. The doctor had showed them his huge library that held vast amounts of research and books. It was at least three stores tall and circular in shape. The doctor
scaled the walls easily on all fours like…well, like a lizard. He climbed to the top shelves on the far left of the group. Bendy spotted a couple of imposing ladders that were fastened to the walls by attached wheels, so they could be moved back and forth. He had gulped at the thought of climbing to the top. Dr. Oddswell had moved quickly, darting from one shelf to another, collecting book after book.

He gathered a good-sized stack and had shown them the study room full of desks and comfortable chairs and couches. Dr. Oddswell left the books there and had taken them to the rooms of the other ‘subjects’ to be introduced or at least the three that were staying at the ‘client’ for the time being.

There was a little boy, about ten years old, named Steven the Squirrel. He was happy to see other people and for them to be closer to him in age, but he was tired when they visited and asked to play with them later.

There was a sixty something year old gopher named Ginger, but she said most called her Grandma Gopher. She was gentle, kind, and funny. She had jokes ready for the doctor that caused everyone, but the lizard, to laugh.

The last was a nervous man in his thirties that hardly said hi to Bendy and Boris and instead focused question after question at the doctor. His name was Jerry and he didn’t want to be there, but his wife had forced him to stay when his illness had gotten worse.

Red slipped away from Jerry and Dr. Oddswell with the boys to show them to a large room with a couple of beds.

After the assistant had him and Boris settled in a shared room she explained a bottle of medication she gave to Bendy. It wasn’t meant as a cure, but it would help with the pain of an attack. The doctor meant to start on the books and translation, but had become busy. Red had invited the boys to instead read the books. She explained that they were history and research that Wilson had left Oddswell. The doctor believed that he may be able to translate the language with Wilson’s research. Red explained that he didn’t have time and asked if they wanted to help since they brought him the page in the first place. The two had quickly agreed and that was where Bendy was at the moment.

His head was spinning with the complex grammar of the ancient culture. They had a mixed language of symbols and letters. The grammar rules were completely different and Bendy was struggling to make heads or tails of it. Boris was fairing a bit better, reading the history portions rather than the grammar.

“How long do you think this is gonna take?” Boris asked, turning another page.

Bendy flipped through the book in his hand, seeing how much more complicated it got further in and glanced at the still untouched pile the doctor had left them. “At this rate, I might have the first sentence figured out this time next year,” Bendy said.

“Har, har, funny.” Boris rolled his eyes.

“Then, you make heads or tails of this! It’s nothing like English!” Bendy scowled. “I’m a mechanic, not a researcher.”

“I think they have a name for people that study old languages Bendy,” Boris said, looking up from his book.


“How about that history?” Bendy asked.
“They figured out a plumbing system using gravity and pressure weights to push it uphill,” Boris stated.

“How is that helpful at all?” Bendy asked, a little annoyed.

“No idea,” Boris said, bored.

“Yeah, how ‘bout we take a break from studyin’ and work on that car?” Bendy suggested.

Boris’ ears perked at that and he nodded. “Sounds swell ta me.”

Cuphead sighed through his nose as he looked over at the smirking rat. “I really don’t have the time for this, Mortimer. Have ya heard about these two or not?” Cup glared at the thin rat as he adjusted his hat. He really hated working with this guy, but beggars can’t be choosers. The three were sitting in an unremarkable café in a poor side of town. The rat and Mugs were taking their time with cocoa, to Cups annoyance.

“What’s the matter, Teacup? The boss put you on a time limit again? It ain’t midnight, I hope.” The rat gave him a mean smirk before taking a drink. “I don’t see you two in town for months and this is the hello I get? Some pals you turned out to be,” Mortimer said.

Cup groaned silently to himself. “We’ll owe you one, you idiot. You know we’re good on our favors.”

Mortimer nodded sagely. “True. You boys don’t stop ’til ya got the job done, that’s fer sure. Problem being I’m not sure I need your talented work in my life at this time.”

Cups nearly shot him right there. The guy was fishing for a different offer, and Cuphead didn’t have the time or patience to barter with the rat. Instead he growled, “Then keep us in your pocket ’til ya do need us!”

Mortimer blinked and looked rather impressed by Cups anger. He clicked his tongue and shook his head. “Pal, let me give ya some advice. When someone’s not interested in what chur sellin’, offer something else. Don’t cram it down their throat. Besides, I like my offers to be a bit more…tangible than a promise.” He sipped his warm drink before turning to Mugs. “What about you, scarf? You got anythin’ to offer?”

Mugs blinked and looked up, surprised to be dragged into the conversation. He smiled and shrugged. “Nope.”

Mortimer sighed. “What a shame.”

“Look rat—.”

“Mouse,” Mortimer corrected him with a small frown.

Cuphead’s finger twitched, but he was able to hold back. “Mouse,” he said, calmer. “These guys have already slipped us twice. We don’t have time for this cat and mouse game. We’re sure they’re in the city, but that’s it. Help us out and we’ll do you a favor. Doesn’t matter what it is.”

Mortimer reached up and tugged one of his whiskers thoughtfully. “Anything I need done?”

Cup shrugged. “Sure.” Couldn’t do anything worse than what he and Mugs had already done. Mortimer gave him a challenging smile. Jackpot. He was interested in the offer.

“Anythin’ to offer?”
“Robbery?”
“No problem.”
“Intimidation?”
“Does that look difficult for me?”
“Kidnapping?”
“Cakewalk.”
Mortimer turned his head and smiled. “What about making someone disappear, permanent like?”

Cuphead snorted. “What do you think we do all day?”

Mortimer raised an eyebrow. “Well, that depends on who you’re asking. You boys are starting to get yourselves names in the underworlds of the cities.”

Cuphead rolled his eyes. “Don’t care. Do you know or don’t you?”

Mortimer smiled brightly. “Just as you boys are good at what you do, I am good at what I do.” The rat pulled out a couple of papers. It was the wanted posters of the demon and the wolf. “The paper that is about to be delivered today with this morning’s coffee will have a headline about a ruckus the little demon and wolf caused on a train. They were also spotted are the Yen University, and I’m sure that when this paper gets around the city with their wanted posters attached, there will be plenty of students calling in sightings of the two.”

“Did they stick around the school?” Cup asked.

The rat shrugged. “If they did, the cops will be on them before the day is out.”

“That wouldn’t be a problem,” Mugs stated before finishing his drink.

“I wouldn’t imagine it would be for you two.” Mortimer winked. “But I’ll keep my ear out for you fellas.”

Cuphead didn’t respond, just stood up to leave.

“Thanks,” Mugman said and followed his brother.

“Hey, Teacup, you need to loosen up! Find yerself some legs to chase. Have some fun! It’s Toon Town after all. Ha-cha-cha!” Mortimer laughed as the boys walked away. Cuphead growled, but didn’t look back at the rat. He really hated that guy, but he had a great web of information. And now they owed the schmuck a favor, Cup inwardly sneered. That wasn’t a debt he was eager to getting around to paying.

The two made their way to the fancy school and through the gardens to the main building. In there was a picture on the floor made by tiles and light. Cups glanced up to see that the dome was where the other half of the image was coming from. Mugs whistled. “Boy, this place sure is fancy,” he said. Cup silently agreed. The two took a step forward to get through when both of them froze half way into the light. Any part of Cuphead that touched the light of the image felt cold and hollow. It was a terrible void-like feeling of falling into himself. Cup yanked back and pulled his brother with him. Mugman gasped and looked around, shaken. “W-what is that?” he stammered.

Cup glared at the symbols and images. “No cussing idea,” he growled. The pair walked around the
mural to the desk where a slim girl stood watching them, carefully. “Hey, lady, what is this that thing?” Cup threw a thumb back at the mural.

She gazed at him for a long moment, with calculating eyes. “It’s an ancient Rune for light and protection. Master Yen Sid made it when he started the University, sir.”

“Protection against what?” Mugs asked, still looking unnerved.

The girl looked between the two carefully. “Negativity, darkness, danger. Things like that.” Her gaze was piercing when she made eye contact with Cuphead. He narrowed his eyes and she looked down. He didn’t like that look. That wasn’t why they were here.

He pulled out the wanted posters and showed them to the girl. “Have you seen these two around?”

The girl’s eyes widened for a split second before she returned to the guarded mask she wore. “Not sure,” she said. “I see a lot of students coming and going.” Cuphead wasn’t fooled.

“You sure? These two are dangerous. They have already put a lot of good people at risk, even killed someone. We don’t want people like that around this school now do we?” Cups said.

She narrowed her eyes as she stared at him. Her body was rigid and her face paled a bit. Her eyes seemed accusatory. “No,” she said slowly. “We certainly don’t.” A heavy silence stretched between them.

Mugs smiled. “There are a lot of people here. Are they all protected by that carving thing?”

The girl blinked and looked at Mugs. “Mostly, yes. It’s not a perfect protection. People are still people, after all and the peace or joy is temporary, but the clarity can help students and staff figure out their problems from a calm prospective. Master Sid didn’t want to take away the world’s problems, but help us learn to solve them for ourselves.”

Mugs tilted his head. The girl glanced up at his straw before focusing on his eyes again. “Weird,” he said. “I didn’t feel like that at all.”

“How did you feel?” she leaned forward, a glint of curiosity in her eyes.

“Like I was falling? And really cold,” he said, glancing back with a nervous look. The girl raised her brow.

“Uh,” she muttered.

“Uh what?” Cup muttered.

“Nothing,” she said quickly and straightened up. Cups glared at her, but didn’t say anything.

“How do you feel?” she leaned forward, a hint of curiosity in her eyes.

“Like I was falling? And really cold,” he said, glancing back with a nervous look. The girl raised her brow.

“Uh,” she muttered.

“Uh what?” Cup muttered.

“Nothing,” she said quickly and straightened up. Cups glared at her, but didn’t say anything.

“Do you know what that means?” Mugs turned back to her. “Is it saying I’m a bad person?” His eyes were wide and teary. His mouth turned down in a small frown. He tugged his scarf up to his round nose. Cuphead rolled his eyes and nearly answered, but the girl spoke first.

“Well…it could be a couple of things. Weight you’re carrying around, ill intentions you have toward others, things you’ve done that you regret and so on,” she said, looking at Mugs. He hunched his shoulders, seeming upset at the thought. Cup clenched his fist in his jacket pocket. He sneered, but saw a change in the girl’s face. Her guard dropped and she looked sorry for his brother. “Sorry,” she muttered. “It doesn’t mean you’re a bad person and even if you think you are, everyone can change for the better.” She smiled. “If you try, I’m sure the day will come when you can step into the light.”
Mugs glanced up at her and away. “Okay,” he mumbled into the scarf that hid half his face. Cups watched his brother for a second before focusing on the girl again.

“How does that thing know stuff like that?” He couldn’t help but ask.

She turned to him and though she was still distant, she didn’t look as accusing. “A list of things. Talents, magic, morals, and some even say the state of the soul. It’s hard to say what it deems as bad since no one really thinks of themselves as evil.”

Cuphead nodded before turning back to Mugs. The girl wasn’t going to help them and hanging around any longer would only be a waste of time. “C’mon Mugs. Let’s keep looking.”

Mugs grinned and followed. He stopped and turned to the girl. “Thanks anyway miss.”

“Holly.” She said with that same smile.

“Thanks, Miss Holly. I hope the rest of your day is good,” Mugs said and waved. Cuphead glanced back to see her wave. The boys walked around the circle of light again before leaving the building.

“She was nice,” Mugs said.

“Yeah and she has, at least, seen those two numbskulls. If we don’t get a good lead on them we’ll have to visit her again and ask more…persuasively,” Cups said as they walked off the campus. Mugs pouted a little, but didn’t say anything against Cups’ decision.

“We could just keep asking around. Mortimer isn’t our only informant guy here,” Mugs said.

“We don’t have enough dough for that and a place to stay for the coming week. That, and I already hate being indebted to that sewer rat,” Cups replied. “That and we don’t want to draw a lot of attention on us. If Mortimer was right, then our infamy will be against us instead of in our favor in this city.”

“We always wanted to be famous.” Mugs smiled.

“Yeah, unless it gets us killed,” Cups muttered.

Mugs scoffed. “We’ll be fine ‘cause we’ll keep our heads down like you said.”

Cup nodded. “We’ll have to be careful when picking a hotel too.”

“We could just go home and not spend the cash,” Mugs muttered.

Cup glared at him. Mugs glanced at him before looking away. “No,” Cups said with finality.

The two walked in silence for a while. It didn’t take them long to find a cop hang out and slip in close enough to overhear them. Cuphead glanced up at the doughnut shop sign and rolled his eyes. It was straight forward after that. The cops gossiped about this or that. Simple scams, a shootout last week, domestic and sound problems, and a robbery that actually perked Cups’ interest. If he had time he would love to find the thieves and lighten their load a bit for himself and his brother. It was a bit after a story about the security for some show that the real prize hit. They mentioned that a demon and wolf had caused problems on a train before it got into the city and had been spotted at the school. Cup had to fight the urge to look over at the ring of officers. Annoyingly, the cops’ information was riddled with opinions, jokes, and guesses and it was taking forever for the cup brothers to get anything useful. Mugman started to fiddle with his scarf in boredom. The targets sounded like they had been seen all over the city. Cups sighed in disappointment. This wasn’t getting them anywhere.
Just as he stood to leave, one man spoke up.

“This will be the second murderer on that campus.”

“You talkin’ about the professor that was ranting about a plague ‘r something?” another asked.

“I was there,” a third said. “He was very angry with the dismissal of the school.”

“And the ranting and crazy conspiracies?” the second spoke up.

“Those are true. He kept saying that ink was going to spread or something like that,” the third said.

The first chuckled. “Ink?”

“Yeah, swore that someone became a puddle right in front of him,” the third said grimly.

“Golly,” the first said. “They’ll let anyone teach.”

“Oddball was his name, right?” the second said.

“Oddswell,” the third corrected.

“I think Oddball works better for him. Did they ever arrest him?”

“Nah, he disappeared,” the third officer said.

“Were they going to arrest him?” the second asked.

“See, that’s the odd part. The mayor’s office was really pushing for it, but there wasn’t any evidence for a conviction so we did the whole seventy-two hours, then he was gone,” the third said.

“That’s nuts,” the first said. “Why was the mayor in on it?”

“Dunno. The guess is that he was twisted up with the University somehow. Friends? Enemies? Who knows,” the third said, uncaringly. “I think it was a bunch of useless drama.”

“Now, we’re after some killer kids,” the first pointed out. “It’s only getting worse.”

“Did you hear about the detectives that are on their case?” the second asked with glee.

“No.”

“It’s Featherworth and Ringtail.”

“Why? I thought these two were country bums,” the third asked in surprise.

“Something about that owl archeologist,” the second explained.

“Was he also working for the University?” the first asked.

“I believe so,” the second said.

“Think he knew Oddswell?” the third asked.

“It’s a lot of odd coincidences with that school, uh?” the first said. Cuphead and Mugman smiled at each other. Bingo. They made a beeline for the exit and with a quick stop by Mortimer’s apartment they had an address. The rat was not happy to see the two on his doorstep and Cup was glad to
bother him. Cup chatted and lingered just to frustrate the rat for a while, before heading out again.

“You ready to pay up on that bet, bro?” Cups chuckled as they walked.

“Yeah, right! I wouldn’t go counting your chickens quite yet, Cups,” Mugs said. “This is a long shot.”

“Well, I am the better shot outta the two of us.” Cups smirked.

Mugs puffed out his cheeks in frustration.

“No need to boil over a simple fact, bro,” Cups chuckled again.

“We’ll see who’s laughing tomorrow, you leaky cup,” Mugs muttered into his scarf.

“Now you’re name callin’? If anyone is acting leaky it’s you,” Cups said.

“Nu-uh!” Mugs tried to frown, but Cup saw his lips twitching.


It wasn’t long before the two made their way down Baker Street to an old and dusty house. The two tried the door and looked around the yard when no one answered.

“You really think there is anyone still living in this place?” Mugs asked, quirking an eyebrow.

Cup shrugged. “Doesn’t matter. We just gotta figure out if those two have been here or not.”

“Oh,” Mug said, crossing his eyes and sticking out his tongue. Cup laughed at the unexpected expression before turning back to the building. He walked back to the door and looked at it closer before going to one of the windows.

“Hey bro, give me a knee up.” Mugs kneeled and on one leg and had the other positioned for Cups to step up. He did and looked at the old flip latch. He took a moment to gaze at it before stepping down. “Let’s check the other one,” he said and went to the other side. The cup brothers repeated the process and Cups grinned when he saw the latch. There was scrapped paint on the wood. Someone had picked the latch open from the outside. “We got a clue,” Cup said. “They probably broke in.”

“Which means we’re going to break in?” Mugs guessed as Cups stepped down.

“You got it,” Cup said. The door was easy to open after fifteen minutes of fiddling with the locks. The inside of the house proved to be surprisingly clean and used. It was a bit messy, with papers and knick-knacks, animal skulls, random lab stuff, and awards. Glancing at them, Cup didn’t find anything useful. The second floor had a large study, a library and a bedroom. There were pictures around. Mugs pulled one out to show Cups. “He looks familiar.”

Cups spotted the younger version of the owl in a clean suit with several other individuals dressed similarly. He scoffed and tossed it aside. “We’re in the right place, then.” The third floor was bedrooms, and a sitting room. Neither of the brothers could find any more evidence that their targets were here. There wasn’t even a hint that they had looked through things. They went back to the first floor and Cups collapsed on a comfy chair across from the kitchen. Mugs looked through the kitchen to find a snack. “Now what?” Mugs asked around an apple.

“We wait for someone to show up and go from there,” Cup said and pulled out his cigs and a lighter.

“You probably shouldn’t do that in here, bro,” Mugs said. Cups glared, but stood up to take his
smoke in the backyard. It wouldn’t take them long to find the schmuks now. The sooner the better. Their boss wasn’t patient and they still had a laundry list of other things to do. They still had their original mission and now there was this doc that sounded like he knew too much. It was only gonna be a matter of time before the boss put this guy on their list too. Cuphead sighed and lit up. He inhaled deeply and let it out as the sun started to sink away.

Cups really wondered if he and his brother ever would be free of their debt. Would they really be okay after all this? He really didn’t know. All they could do was keep going and look out for each other. They were the only ones that mattered and no one else would care. So, he didn’t care about anyone else either. It was basic survival and he planned for him and Mugs to come out on top at the end.

Chapter End Notes

Close! They are so close! The Cup brothers are on their tails!

... I'm just so happy to post on time. I can't stop smiling. I hope you can be just as happy. Thanks to all of you understanding readers and your awesome patience. You make your author oh-so-happy. :3 Have a great week and happy October!
Cars and Newspapers

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Everyone has things to do: some innocent and some not so innocent, but a job is a job, right?

Chapter Notes

Hello, lovelies~
It's so good to be writing normally again.
And by that, I mean I am so glad I had one normal week before everything hits the fan again and my schedule is destroyed once more! :3
Next week I might not get a chance to post until Tuesday or Wednesday. I have a long trip this coming week, but I will do the best I can. Oh and I updated my tags so I can be happy with them. So yeah, that's a thing.
Still life in beautiful right now. Enjoy the chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“What do you mean, they’re in Toon Town!” Ringtail roared into the phone. Joan’s head snapped up. “You’re sure of that?” Ringtail demanded. “No, sir.” Joan strained to hear the other side of the conversation. “No, of course not, sir,” she growled. “We’ll be there by tomorrow morning.” She slammed the phone on the receiver and rubbed her eyes with a frustrated groan.

“So, how’s the office?” Joan asked in a mockingly light and cheery tone.

“Bendy and Boris are in Toon Town,” Rachel said, refusing to acknowledge Joan’s joking tone.

“I figured as much,” the crow said.

“Let’s go get our stuff and head out.” Ringtail swung her tail in impatience as she started grabbing papers off her borrowed desk.

“What about the case here? We still don’t have all the facts straight, especially those from the Warners,” Featherworth said, not standing up or moving from her spot.

“We can leave all that mess to the local authorities. They seem to be competent enough. Besides, our job is to catch them and they have wandered onto our home turf. They won’t stand a chance!” Rachel exclaimed with an excited glint in her eyes.

“But what about the street performers we haven’t found yet? What about the organized criminal activates we have just started unraveling? What about the other members that we are tracking?” Joan asked, watching her partner’s ear twitch along with her eye. “If we leave, we run the risk of all this going cold.”
“But if we don’t move, we could lose those two,” Rachel shot back. “You’re the one that’s sure they are the target of devious individuals. If it’s the mob, then we won’t lose our trail, just go at it in a different direction.”

“But this is important to our case too. If we don’t get to the bottom of all this, then we will have no case to present and they all walk anyway,” Joan argued.

“You said they’re innocent!” Ringtail said.

“But we have to prove it!” Joan shouted back.

Both women glared at each other for a silent moment before Rachel smirked. “Why are you arguing anyway? You know you’re going to go anyway.”

“I just want both of us to be aware of our position at all times. There is too much going on for us to be careless,” Joan said, standing up.

“Of course we won’t!” Rachel waved a dismissive hand. “But you can imagine what the boys back home are saying about us right now?”

Joan frowned at the thought. “If they’re smart, they’re keeping their traps shut.”

“But you know, they’re not,” Rachel said with that same condescending smirk. Joan had to bite back a growl at the continued thought. She and her partner had fought so hard for their positions and every scrap of respect. It would be just like the macho office and news outlets to jump on the smallest mistake and upend years of perfect case work and crime fighting. Sure, the chief wouldn’t be swayed. He had worked with Joan and Rachel too long to have any question of their character or results. There were the mayor and the commissioner, though and they worked in politics. Rumors, money, and public opinions were the focus of their circle, it seemed. She could see her reputation and resources slipping between her feathered fingers as easily as water.

“Pack your bags,” the crow said. “We’re going home.” Rachel cheered and hopped in the air, before focusing on her desk once again.

“I mean,” she said with hidden glee. “I’m glad we can agree.”

It didn’t take the pair long to get out of Warnerburg. The police station understood the situation and would send any information they gathered on the lab bust, the Warners, the street performers seen with the two suspects, and so on to the detectives. Joan was still amazed by what a huge mess the two young men could throw together before disappearing. She and Rachel were now driving down the winding road toward a home they hadn’t seen in months. It wasn’t as fast as the train, but they had to bring Featherworth’s car back.

“Can you believe the last few weeks?” Ringtail suddenly asked.

Joan glanced over at her. The raccoon was gazing out of the window.

“Hardly,” Joan chuckled.

“We found real talent for trouble this time.” Ringtail smiled and rested her head on her hand.

“You mean they’re like us then?” Featherworth asked.

“I am starting to think they could be better than us,” Ringtail said.
Joan’s feathery brows raised. “Now, that is impressive,” Rachel snorted. Both women chuckled.

“Who do you think will have the crazier luck?” Joan asked with a smile.

“Definitely them.” Rachel smirked. “They drove right by us! Hell, I think I even heard one of them say hello and wave!” They laughed again.

“That is one of the closest misses we have ever had,” Joan agreed. “They were just as surprised to see us as we were to see them.”

“No kidding. They were absolutely gob smacked.” Rachel grinned. “It was too bad they got away.”

Joan shrugged. “We’ll get them next time.”

“Yeah, we will! They are running around our backyard. There is no way they’ll get away from us again.” Rachel grinned her fanged smile.

“So, want to hear how they got to Toon Town?” Ringtail asked.

Joan gave Rachel a deadpan look. “They were on the train when a gentleman recognized them,” Rachel began to explain. Joan was again amazed at the boys abilities to simply disappear. They chatted back and forth, enjoying their trip as the day went by. Both women were excited to be going home at last.

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Cuphead was getting tired of waiting. They had spent the night in the doctor’s home, waiting for someone to appear. They had slept in shifts so no one could sneak up on them. Cups had found the doctor’s neighbor to be insufferable. The man would agree with his loud maid or landlady or whoever she was, then he would play his violin. It wouldn’t be so bad…if he didn’t do it at three in the morning. Cups had half a mind to bang on the wall and demand some peace and quiet. Of course, he didn’t, since this wasn’t his place and he technically was never here, but still! The nerve of some schmucks! Because of that guy, he and Mugs had less than a good night’s sleep, which only made him more irritable and Mugs more easily distracted.

Why hadn’t anyone shown up by now? It was already late morning. With how dust free the inside was and how well stocked the kitchen was Cups couldn’t imagine the regular occupant of the place to be gone long. To pass the time, Mugs started looking closer at knick-knacks and trophies. He had to give comments occasionally and with Cuphead’s mood the way it was, he could only be seen as annoying.

“Wow. He got an award for a biology study in the jungles,” Mugs said. “He also discovered a new species of dinosaur with some other guy.” Cup felt his eye twitch. “He also discovered a new element in chemistry.” Mugs paused. “What do they mean by element? Like fire or something? New dirt?” Mug scratched the rim of his head before shrugging and moving on. If no one showed up by noon he would have to go on a walk. He was going stir crazy in here! “Hey, Cup, think this guy was a mad scientist?” Cup only grunted in reply. “’Cause it looks like he did a lot of crazy things in and out of labs. Like the movies, kinda labs.”

Cup swallowed a groaned and knew Mugs would just keep going if he didn’t say anything. “Who knows, Mugs. The cops said he might be one.”

“But that was because he was messing with that ink stuff,” Mugs said.

“Maybe he was experimenting on it?” Cup shrugged on the comfortable couch he was lounging on. He threw a leg over the arm of the couch and leaned back a bit more to get comfy.
Mugman’s brows knit together in a disturbed glance, before turning back to the shelves. “Wouldn’t that just make it worse?” he asked.

Cup blinked lazily and stared at the back of his brother. “Dunno. Maybe. He could have been looking for a cure too. Doesn’t matter.”

After Mugs was done with the awards and trophies he moved on to the newspaper clippings and the books. Cup knew he must have been really bored if he was going for the reading stuff.

“ Weird,” Mugman said. He was looking at a newspaper clipping that was on the wall and a couple that were on a desk.

“What?” Cup grumbled. He should take a nap.

“The ones on the walls are like the trophies and such. They talked about the accomplishments this doctor did,” Mugs said pointing to the walls.

“So?” Cup muttered, feeling his annoyance beginning to spike. He was definitely in need of a nap.

“The ones on the desks are about what happened at the school. Ya’ know, when he was fired or something,” Mugs said, leaning over the table. Cuphead raised a brow and sat up. Maybe the clippings had a hint of how much the doctor knew. If they did, then Cups could figure out if he needed to bump this doc off or not. If he was just a run of the mill doctor that had noticed the ink illness, then Cups had nothing to worry about, but this guy possibly had already met their targets and he may have been friends with that old feather brain. There was a good chance he knew too much. Still…there was one upside about that beak breath. He had known to keep his cards close and not speak a word. He saved a lot of lives and a lot of work for the Cupbros doing that. There was a chance this fella didn’t know anything either. Cups would have to report him to the boss anyway, but Cups didn’t want to contact the boss any sooner than he had to. He’d rather be sure first, before making more work to himself and his bro by calling the boss early with only half an idea about another possible problem.

There was another problem. Cups didn’t want to get up. He didn’t want to look through tiny clippings for obscure clues. It was annoying! He huffed. Couldn’t someone just show up and give him all the answers?

“C’mon Cups, let’s see if there’s anything useful!” Mugs said brightly. Cuphead groaned and forced himself up.

Red watched the two young men crawl out from under her car. The boys had been true to their word and had fixed up her junker in about half an hour. Their arms and faces were covered in filth and now Red understood why the little demon was always wear goggles on his head and why the wolf had a bandanna. He was wiping as much of the filth off as he could with it.

“Well, thanks you two, but aren’t you supposed to be decoding that page?” Red pointed out. She watched both boys droop, like she had just popped their balloon or something. She rolled her eyes. She didn’t have time for this nonsense. She had a lot of running around to do and babying these two wasn’t on her list of chores.

“Yeah, we’ll get to that, toots. We just wanted a short break from books and jumped on getting your car touched up,” the little demon said. It was amazing, the younger one was a wolf, but the demon had the attitude. She huffed and climbed into her car.

“Just don’t overdo it. I don’t need more work,” she said. She was irritated, but it wasn’t their fault
they reminded her of her ex. “Get inside and have some breakfast, you idiots have been going all night. Did you even go to bed?”

“We were too anxious to sleep long, so we decided to study.” Boris scratched the back of his head.

Red growled at their stupidity. “Just get inside and eat.”

She drove off in a cloud of dust. She did notice that the hunk of junk was running smoother. It annoyed her that they were right, that they did a good job, that he—no, no, they. They were not Avery. It wasn’t their fault that one of them was a wolf and the other was a ridiculous flirt. It wasn’t their fault that she had gotten into a fight with him a week ago, and she had dumped him. It wasn’t their fault he left the next day, because work wouldn’t let him weasel out of it and stick around, so he had a chance to work it out with her. Stupid wolf.

She huffed to herself and shook her head. She was only going to work herself up again, and after her less than ideal meeting with the boys she really didn’t want to be in a sour mood when she got back. She would thank them properly with a treat of some kind. Something to prove she did have a heart somewhere amongst all the sarcasm and bitterness.

Of course she did! She stuck around working with Ryan Oddswell, for heaven’s sake! She had a star-fallen heart of gold. She genuinely cared for the patients under their charge and for the doctor, despite his less than charitable attitude. It was because of this care that she was worried. Worried the doctor wasn’t allowing himself time to mourn the loss of his close friend or the reality that they didn’t have the resources to develop a cure for the illness. They needed a fully stocked lab, specialists in the sciences that Oddswell wasn’t strong in, more pain medication and supplies for the patients that had to stay, and more staff. The doctor and herself couldn’t keep going around the clock like they had been. She couldn’t keep going on two hours of sleep.

Red sighed. Something would have to change soon. She feared the doctor would work himself into the ground and then the people that were relying on them would be up a creek without a paddle.

She picked up the groceries she needed and even found a jar of fresh lemon flies that the doctor liked so much. She was able to get the order of pain meds for the new kid filled with little argument from Frops, the old grumpy frog. She dropped off the envelope to the crow doctor at the post office. She went through her lists carefully and quickly as usual and, last of all, she stopped by the old Baker house. It was technically Oddswell’s, but he had sold it to her when he lost his job at the college. It was the place all the journalists and students and harassers came to yell at him or ‘ask’ him intrusive and demeaning questions, but the doctor asked she stop by once a day. It was the only place any possible patients knew to go to find him.

She turned off the car and hopped out to open the back gate. It was rare, but she would usually find a letter begging for help and a way to contact them. Then, Red would have to track them down. There had been that teenage girl that had sat on the front step all day, and Red had been suspicious that she had slept on that door step all night when she found her. She had been all rumpled up and had a stick in her hair. Poor thing didn’t last a month.

Red shivered and felt goosebumps rise on her arms. The summer days were ending and the leaves were changing. She would have to start wearing a coat. The observatory was terribly drafty. She made a mental note to pick up extra blankets and quilts before heading back. She opened the back door and looked around cautiously. It wasn’t that she was paranoid, but it was true that the boys’ intrusion yesterday had shocked her. She had never walked in to find strangers in the front room. She didn’t see anything strange and headed to the front of the house to check for a letter…or another break in. She had just passed the staircase when a gloved hand covered her mouth and an arm wrapped around her, pinning her arms to her sides. She tried to force herself away, tried to kick the
person behind her, but to no avail.

“No need to struggle, doll,” a male’s voice said in her ear. “We just have some questions for ya and then we’ll be on our way.” She tried to turn her head, but the grip on her head wouldn’t allow it. “No need for any of that,” he said. “Now, I’m gonna ask a question. I’ll move my hand for you to answer. You do anything but answer and you’ll be in for a bad day,” he explained calmly. “And if you see me, I won’t be allowed to let you go, understand?”

Red’s mind raced. Who was this man? Was he the one that killed Wilson? The demon boy hadn’t told them what had happened exactly. Was this one of the people that targeted anyone who tried to uncover information about ink illness? How could she escape? She was sure that after he got what he wanted, he would kill her. She couldn’t allow that. The doctor needed her help. The patients needed her. She hadn’t gotten a chance to thank the boys for her car. She hadn’t gotten the chance to apologize to Avery and tell him she loved him. She couldn’t die here.

“Answer me, doll,” the man said. She swallowed and nodded her head. “Good.” A cloth came over her eyes, suddenly blocking her view. “Now, tell me, have you seen a little demon and a wolf around? They took something they shouldn’t have, and I need it back.”

Bendy and Boris went down the long, dirty hallway to the clean side of the observatory. They stopped by their room to clean up, before headed to the cafeteria. There, the group of patients and the doctor himself were sitting at a long table that had a scatter of plates and food on its surface. The room fell quiet at their entrance. Bendy blinked, but continued to the table to take a seat.

“Good morning,” Boris said, trying to break the tension. The kid was staring at them with huge eyes and his bushy tail flicked nervously. The old gopher was watching the boys, sadly, like they had lied about stealing a cookie. Jerry looked like he was ready to jump out of his skin. Only the doctor seemed completely indifferent.

“Good morning, young man,” Dr. Oddswell replied. “You two are late for breakfast.”

“Sorry, we were tuning up Red’s car,” Bendy explained, running a curious eye around the table. “Is there something on my face, fellas? What’s with the staring?” Steven squeaked and ducked his head. He stared at his plate instead.

“Ah, that.” Dr. Oddswell grabbed a piece of toast and spread jam over it. “They were just looking at the newspaper. The headline is very interesting.”

Jerry went pale. “Doc! What are you doing! They could snap!” He slammed his hands on the table top, startling everyone. Bendy narrowed his eyes. Boris’ ears fell, and Steven looked like he was ready to cry.

“Quiet! I want to hear it from the horse’s mouth.” Grandma Gopher scowled at Jerry.

“Are you mad?” Jerry demanded.

“Only mad at you, sonny!” she growled. “There are two sides to every coin.”

“Please,” the doctor said, raising a hand for silence. “I can't say I’m not really surprised. Similar happenings surrounded my dear friend, Wilson. My own name is under slander. I think the boys have a right to explain and defend themselves.”

Bendy and Boris shared a nervous, wide-eyed glance. What in the world was going on? Bendy cleared his throat.
Jerry ignored them. “I’m not stay in the same building as a pair of murderers!” Jerry said and stood. Before he could get away Grandma Gopher tripped him with her cane. Bendy blinked in surprise. Wow, Granny had some moves.

“Hush up, boy and sit down! You’ll never learn anything if you run away,” she said, shaking her head. The man scowled, but went back to his seat nursing his bruised arm. The room again was silent. Bendy was ready to bolt at the first sign of trouble.

“So, what about this paper?” Bendy asked nervously. It had to be those stupid wanted posters again.

Dr. Oddswell tossed the paper to land in between the boys. The pair looked down to the article.

*The B-Bros Cause Train Trouble! Wanted Murderers in Toon Town?*

Bendy gulped and Boris gasped. The two quickly read the article. It went over the events in Sillyvision briefly, before describing their car escape and possible involvement in a theft ring. It then jumped to explain what happened in their train escape and the ‘brave’ gentleman’s account of riding with them. There were speculations of them being seen around the college and what they were doing in the city. The article also mentioned the detectives and their track record.

“Oh boy,” Bendy muttered.

“Golly, we’ve certainly got a name, uh Bendy?” Boris asked, a little in awe. The article had certainly built them up to sound more impressive than Bendy thought they should be. The train was just a tug on a cord, and the Warnerburg fiasco was dumb luck and quick reflexes.

“This is ridiculous,” Bendy muttered.

“So, it’s all a bunch of gobbledygook?” Grandma Gopher asked, hopefully. Bendy flinched. He had forgotten the others were here listening to them.

“Ah.” Boris scratched the back of his neck nervously. “Kinda?” That didn’t seem to calm any of the other patients.

Dr. Oddswell, still calm and unfazed, asked. “How about you start at the beginning and explain it to us?”

Boris nodded. He and Bendy took turns explaining everything. Bendy felt relieved, in a way. It was the first time they had laid out everything in one go, without holding anything back. He grabbed food and ate as they explained all their misadventures before finally arriving at the doctor’s sanctuary. He watched the amazement cross before the three other patient’s faces. Dr. Oddswell simply stared at them with a curious gleam in his eyes.

“So, wait a second.” Jerry raised a hand, like he was in a class, after the boys finished talking. “Are you saying those maniacs that shot at you are still out there? They’re hunting you down right now?”

Bendy shrugged and ate the last slice of bacon. “I guess?”

Again, Jerry seemed upset. “But, then they’ll come here!” Grandma Gopher raised her cane and thwacked him on the head. “Ow!”

“That’s enough outta you! These children have been through enough. They don’t need you harping on them too,” she claimed.

“Are you going to let her do that?” Jerry demanded of the doctor.
“I would appreciate if you didn’t damage my subject. We only have so many supplies.” Oddswell turned to the elderly woman, sounding completely insincere.

“Apologies doctor,” she answered with a small smile.

Jerry scowled. “I don’t have to put up with this treatment. What kind of clinic would ever allow all this madness? I’m going to my room.” The man marched off in a huff.

As soon as he was gone, Steven sighed. “There he goes pouting again.” Bendy and Boris burst into laughter at the serious look on the child’s face. The squirrel looked at them in confusion. “What? What did I do?” he asked in his high-pitched voice. When they didn't answer, because of their laughter, he turned to the other adults in the room. Granny only chuckled and shrugged. The doctor was getting up and leaving, while muttering to himself.

“Is it always like this?” Boris asked.

“Most days. You have to keep yourselves entertained somehow,” Grandma Gopher said.

“Yeah! Can we play today?” Steven asked, excited and looking to the boys.

“You sure you want to play with a couple of criminals?” Bendy raised a brow and smiled, amused at his excitement.

The kid shook his head. “You’re not criminals or bad guys! You’re adventurers! I think that’s really grand!”

Bendy stared with wide eyes as a blush climbed up his face. Him? An adventurer? Like Felix? Him? His mind went back to the unfinished book sitting in his room. Could he be like that? Well, what was so different from escaping traps and escaping bad guys…and the cops? No, he was wanted and Felix was seen as a hero. But…still, this kid called him grand.

Boris’ chuckle pulled him back to reality. The squirrel was giving him an odd look, and the gopher looked amused. “Are you okay?” Steven asked. "You look weird.”

Boris answered. “He’s just really pleased you called him an adventurer. He’s fine.”

The flush on Bendy’s face deepened. “A-anyway, I don’t know if we can play. We’re trying to translate an old language. Maybe after that.”

Steven pouted, but didn’t argue.

“Ah, the doctor mentioned that. Have you made any headway?” Grandma Gopher asked.

Bendy sighed.

Boris shook his head. “Not yet. It’s really complex.” The gopher nodded slowly, not looking surprised.

“I’m sure you’ll get it. I would offer my help, but my eyes aren’t what they used to be. I can’t read small words anymore, no matter what glasses are given to me.” She chuckled and shrugged.

“Can I help?” Steven stood up in his chair with an excited gleam in his eyes.

“Sure, but I should warn ya, it’s really boring,” Bendy said. Steven frowned and seemed to think about that.
“Well, I’ll help a little then,” the boy said, jumping off the stair and onto the floor.

Bendy and Boris smiled and got up. “Okay, let’s break that language,” Boris said. The three headed back to the study room they had been using.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Red. She just can't get a break.
Thank you all for the reading, kudos, bookmarks, comments, fanart, and simply being awesome and being you. Mercowe, thanks for always going through these very rough drafts and catching mistakes.
Also, has anyone played Cuphead? It's hard, but I don't get frustrated. It's too much fun for some reason. It's also giving me some great ideas for the story. Hehehehe.
Anyway, have a great week!
TAP out!
Adding Up

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

The boys have a warm, safe place to stay. They are surrounded by people that care and have a way to help them. Finally, all the stress is over and the adventure is done...right?

Chapter Notes

I'm so not sorry this is late! I had a wonderful time, and it was really busy, and I wanted to make sure this chapter worked out right, and!
It didn’t!
XD Hahaha!
These characters have taken the steering wheel from me, but at least we are headed the way I planned. It just didn't end the way I planned it, and...well, you'll see!
Also! TwinFeather has been really cool, sending me art, and I finally got one on the tumblr for this story. You should go check it out! I'll try to get more of those beauties put up. You can also go bug me over there if you wish. XP

https://www.tumblr.com/blog/theinkymystery

Otherwise you have all been amazing! I never thought so many of you readers would bother reading this little project of mine. Thank you so much! I am deeply honored.
Anyway, enough of my rambling. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Red breathed deeply, trying to stay as calm as she could in the situation. She needed to think. She had to keep her nerve. This man was after Bendy and Boris. The man spoke into her ear. “Now, I’m gonna move my hand.”

She felt the glove move, and she had to fight back the urge to scream. She took another shaky deep breath. If she lied and said she hadn’t seen them, she would be useless. She had to remain useful or it wouldn’t end well for her. “I-I’ve seen them. They were here,” she said with a unsteady small voice.

“She was lying!” the other ordered, angrily. Red couldn’t help but flinch at the harsh voice so close to her ear. The man pushed her forward. She stumbled, but caught herself before she could fall. She mentally went through the steps. They were going left and into the front small study. “Take a seat,” the man ordered. She was guided to sit down where he let her go. She twitched, wanting to grab the blindfold and rip it off, but his threat had her stay still. “Arms on the armrests, doll.” She obeyed, moving slowly. She kept her body tense. She felt some cloth wrap around one wrist, then the other. Hands grabbed her shins and made her jump and yelp in surprise. “Shh, remember what I said about
making noise.” The man’s voice came from behind her, which meant he wasn’t the one holding her legs. Fear caused her heart to race and adrenaline to course through her. A cloth wrapped around one of her ankles, securing it to the leg of the chair. The hands did the same to the other leg.

“Comfy?” he asked. Red pursed her lips. Luckily, it didn’t seem the man expected an answer. “So, you said they were here. They broke in through the window.” Surprise and confusion increased the terror. He sounded so sure. How did he know? Had he been watching them? “You or whoever that met them didn’t report them to the police, obviously.” How did he know all this? Red began to tremble. “Where are they now?”

What was she supposed to say? She couldn’t tell him-them. If this was how they were treating her, she didn’t want them anywhere near her patients. She couldn’t allow it.

…but then what was she supposed to do! She couldn’t run, she couldn’t see, she could scream, but they could do unspeakable things to her before anyone could get to them. That’s if anyone was around to hear her shriek in the first place.

_Calm down, Red. I know you can do this. You’re the most stubborn, hardworking, classy gal I’ve ever met. If you can’t make it happen, no one can._

The memory slowed her breathing. She could do this. She could protect her patients and get out of this. She just had to think.

“Th-they wanted to see the doctor. He isn’t here anymore, so I told them to get out,” Red stuttered.

The man hummed thoughtfully. “Do you know where the doctor is?”

Red took another calming breath. She couldn’t stop the trembling. “I don’t know. He was a crackpot.” She heard someone else chuckle on the other side of the room before there was a thump and the voice fell silent, abruptly.

The room was silent for a long moment. Sweat started to cool on Red’s neck and forehead. Near silent footsteps went from her left and stopped right in front of her. “Wrong answer, doll. I don’t believe you.” Dread made ice run in her veins. “See, if that were true, why are all his trophies and research junk around?” Cuss! What was he going to do to her? “Wanna try again?” Panic flooded her mind, making it go blank. She had to say something! What should she say! The longer she waited, the less believable it would be! Think of something!

No! No! No, nonononono! “He left it! I haven’t had time to throw it out!” she said quickly.

“Strike two!” The voice was in her face. She flinched back and grasped the armrests with a white-knuckled grip. “You’re starting to push your luck, doll!” Something slammed right next to her head, making the chair vibrate and her whimper. “Where are the boys and that doctor!” he demanded. Red cowered into her seat. “And think carefully. This is your last straw.”

What was she going to do?

How could she get through this alive?

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Xedo Tiptail was not happy. If he had known what this story was going to entail, he would have left his brother home and never, he meant _never_, knocked on the Warner Studio water tower. It was on his top ten most regrettable actions.

“So, how long until we get there?” Yakko asked for the hundredth time as he leaned over the seat
again.

“We will get there when we get there,” Xedo said in a brittle tone. Yakko shrugged and sat back, allowing the fox journalist to breath and focus on the road. He had thought with his brother’s problem and the line of work he was in, he had become a master of patience. He was sadly mistaken. The Warner siblings were on a whole other level of irritation.

After the fox had interviewed every person he could find that was involved with any action of the strange pair, he had tracked down the duo’s companions in their break-in. It seemed the police hadn’t arrested the two street performers that had gotten tangled in the mess known as Bendy and Boris, but they had been taken in for questioning. The two performers had seemed unaware of the crimes the Bendy and Boris had committed and were even unaware that they had been breaking into a huge hidden warehouse of stolen goods. They were just helping someone get their stolen bag back, they both claimed. Xedo had been suspicious of them when he was able to finally meet them. They knew more than they let on. He had been sure. The little fox had pushed that the boys were framed and were good people. The bear in the asylum had claimed the opposite, as did the guard to the studio, when he discovered he had been tricked by the demon. Bendy was apparently terrifying to the two large and (at least in Xedo's opinion) intimidating individuals.

Then, he had gone to the three infamous Warners. They seemed to be heavily involved, but upon meeting them, he realized he wouldn’t be able to get any useful information. That was problem number one. Problem number two was what the three rascals had done when they discovered, by the slip of Wiston's tongue, that he was doing research on the demon and wolf. The girl, Dot, demanded to come along to learn more about her ‘mailman’, since they ‘couldn’t peek around anymore’. Whatever that meant.

There had been multiple times Xedo had believed they had lost the three, only to have them pop out at the most unusual times and places, including his own suitcase. Wiston had thought them entertaining…until the little brother, Wakko, had eaten a hidden matchbook he had. The fox brothers had tried to shake them, to no avail, and so the three Warners had followed them to the start of it all, the small town of Sillyvision.

To say he received a warm welcome was an overstatement. The locals seemed weary of strangers. Later, he discovered why from a helpful police officer pig, Officer Snoutfer. He explained what had happened weeks ago and the reason for the wanted posters. Xedo had been shocked to discover that a fire, murder, and theft of any Bendy case related evidence from the police station had all happened in such a short period. Even more shocking, several of the events happened with the ace detectives of Toon Town in the area! He learned of the mysterious owl Wilson Wiseton. The name had tugged at his memory, but he couldn’t quite place it. The pig’s opinion of the boys had also been interesting. He’s said they were ‘troublemakers for sure and stuck their noses where they shouldn’t, but not cold-blooded evil.’ It was from him that he learned of the boys’ former employment and of their time at the bar. He couldn’t find their boss from the mechanic shop, but he did enjoy his time at the bar.

It’s there he had met the owner, an open-minded woman named Sasha Swingskirt. She had a sharp wit and was quick to correct any statement she believed to be false. She was warm until she learned of his occupation. She nearly had them thrown out after that. It had been some quick words begging for the truth that stopped her. She had harshly demanded why he was there, why he was asking about the two. She had been shocked as he reiterated what happened in Warnerburg. She was angry…but not him nor his brother. She had raved of ‘those stupid, idiotic, reckless, fools’, but once she regained herself she explained all that she could.

Xedo was surprised to learn that the town’s cold shoulder wasn’t simply because he was an outsider, but also because he was a fox. Apparently, his kind and others had gotten a bad reputation due to
former acts of others. Foxes, weasels, wolves, demons, bats, and so on, all had mistrust handed to
them when visiting. It was only after getting to know individual people did these uneasy feelings
ebb. Xedo had found it frustrating as it got in the way of his work.

He had learned more about the town and the boys childhoods, which had disgusted him in no short
term. The failure of the system for the two when they were children was appalling. Sasha had
finished with, ‘those boys have been through enough. If you seek the truth, then do them a service
and clear their name. Seems they can’t do it themselves!’ It had all been exhausting after that with
staying on top of keeping a close eye on his brother and then wrangling the Warners (an impossible
feat he had come to learn) from destroying the town. Yet, somehow the small town had survived
their visit (even though the police had to get involved twice with the three strange siblings) and they
were now heading back to his home city. He was most anxious to return. Upon all the things he
learned, it seemed this Wilson had originated from Toon Town, which explained why the detectives
had entered Sillyvision in the first place. Not only that, but when he had called the office to let them
know he had promising leads, he discovered that his very topics of research where already hiding in
the city!

Frustration burned him for not being involved in the article of the train incident. He would bet his tail
that Jeremy had embellished the piece to the point of falsehood…again!

“Hey buddy, are we there yet?” Yakko asked.

“Have we stopped?” Xedo asked.

“Uuuuuuh, no?” Yakko shrugged.

“Then we’re not there yet,” he snapped.

“I’m hungry,” Wakko complained.

“You already ate everything we brought with us.” Wiston scowled at the backseat. His patience with
the Warners was long spent. “When are you all going to go home and leave us alone, anyway?”

“When we feel like it,” Dot said. “I miss my honey, so I’m going to visit him. He’ll be so excited to
see me!” she gushed.

“Besides, we still didn’t finish with that orphanage lady, so we’ll have to swing by Sillytown again,”
Yakko pointed out.

“I think it’s called Sillyvision Yakko,” Wakko pointed out.

“Really?” Yakko sounded surprised and put his hand on his chin thoughtfully. “Nah! That doesn’t
sound right. My vision’s twenty-twenty.”

Xedo sighed. He had already kicked them out of the car twice. They just kept reappearing in his
backseat.

“Xedo, can I please just light myself up. I can’t stand this anymore!” Wiston threw his claws in the
air while his eye twitched.

“Now, now little brother. We are almost home,” Xedo said as calmly as he could. There was a beat
of silence. "What do you have that could be used for an ignition?"

Wiston looked over, alarmed, before shaking his head and chuckling. "Nothing at all. Absolutely
nothing!"
Xedo narrowed his eyes.

“Do you think we’ll be in trouble for releasing the ultimate evil on Toon Town?” The young fox quickly changed topics.

“Stars, I hope not.” Xedo sighed again. He and Wiston had tried everything. Everything! Xedo even gave the fox permission to use his pyro-inclined experience, but to no avail. They were stuck with the bane of Warnerburg. He hoped things would go smoother in Toon Town, yet the very thought brought a feeling of trepidation.

Either way, he had gained some valuable knowledge and with it he would help these boys become famous or infamous. It was entirely up to them and their actions. He was going to make sure that the facts were straight and the playing field, level. No more rumors and half-truths.

It was his job to show the truth, no matter what anyone else had to say.

“Hey Mr. Journalist Guy are we—,” Wakko started to ask.

“You’ll know when we get there!”

“I,” Bendy paused and stared at the sentence in amazement. “I think we got it!”

“Really!” Boris leaned over his side of the table to see Bendy’s work.

It had taken them a long time and a lot more reading, but Bendy believed they had finally gotten the first paragraph translated. The kid had given up after forty-five minutes, but would come visit them throughout the day. Grandma Gopher had stopped by twice to offer them a snack and then to tell them it was lunch time. The doctor had even stopped by to apologize that he hadn’t had time to help and ask Bendy to step away for moment, so the doctor could get a few blood samples.

It had been a rather calm day. Bendy had felt good for once. He wasn’t looking over their shoulder constantly, and he wasn’t worried about where they were going to sleep that night. It was nice to just read a book and write a few notes.

Of course, reality had to crash in and ruin that feeling in the form of one of his…ink attacks. At least that’s what Steven had cried out when he walked in to see Bendy starting to cough. The doctor had appeared in an instant and quickly took Bendy to his room, Boris right behind him. It hadn’t been as bad as last time and the pills the doctor gave him seemed to help dampen the burning pain in his chest. It had only lasted a few minutes and after a little time to rest, Bendy wanted to get back to studying. He felt terrible ruining the easy-going mood the observatory housed since they got there. Steven looked at him with pity now, Boris tried to pretend he was okay but Bendy could see his anxiety, and the doctor seemed to get strangely excited, before disappearing again.

Bendy looked at the clock now and blinked. It was a quarter ‘til six. Almost dinner time according to Granny. The day had sure zipped by.

“But what does that mean?” Boris asked. Bendy shook his head and looked back at the paragraph he had written out.

*With the application of the doll, differing sizes, ages, and families will no longer matter. The treatment will be applicable to all living beings. One will have to beware the singular use of the doll. The connection it can have with the form it takes is as real as the doll being an extension of the individual. To use the doll as a singular function is to give it a physical part of the individual where the doll will imprint and change shape to reflect the one it has part of. It is as simple as a drop of*
blood, a hair, or claw and so forth. With the doll in the form of the individual, one can enact their will over the imprinted individual. Pain and damage to the doll will give the same pain and damage to the imprinted. Yet, fixing the doll will also fix the imprinted, as long as the individual is alive. There is a limit, and it will only fix physical damage, not illness. This is not the intended use. In application with the machine, the doll will change to the form of the individual without the use of the part of the individual. Thus, the danger of an effective full imprint is diminished. The doll will remove the problem with application to the treatment. The individual’s body will accept the treatment no matter the species of the individual.

“Stars if I know, bro. I just translated it to the best of my ability.” Bendy shrugged.

“It talks about treatment and a machine.” Boris curled up his nose in confusion. “But why is this all about a doll? It’s weird.”

Bendy shrugged again and leaned his chair back with a sigh. He wasn’t even sure if he had gotten it right. He had gone over it again and again, but ‘doll’ is what it came out as. “We can run it past the doc to make sure it turned out okay.”

“Yeah, we should do that,” Boris said, grabbing the paper, Bendy’s translation and the couple of keys and notes they’d made. “Let’s do that right—,”

“Dinner time!” Grandma Gopher came into the study. The boys lit up and followed the elderly woman back to the cafeteria.

“Will the doctor be there?” Boris asked.

“I don’t let him skip out like he used to. Once in a while, when it gets really busy here, we’ll bring his dinner to him, but today has been rather tame,” Granny said.

“How does it get busy?” Bendy asked. The gopher sighed heavily and adjusted her glasses with her free hand as her other one swung her cane forward in rhythm with her steps.

“Oh, there are several things. Experiments and delicate samples in the lab, multiple attacks at once with us, family drama is his least favorite and the scaly skin thinks it’s a huge waste of time.” She chuckled. “Or a new patient comes in.” She looked to Bendy and smiled warmly. Bendy returned the smile.

“Red takes on a lot of the day to day events. I help where I can. Which reminds me, have either of you seen the young spit fire? She hasn’t come to see me once today,” Grandma Gopher grumbled.

The boys shared a look. “She left in her car to do some chores this morning. Does it take all day?” Boris asked.

Granny shook her head. “Not usually. Most times she’s back around lunch. Maybe she went to visit a friend. Heaven knows, she needs the support.”

Bendy raised a brow. “Why’s that?”

Grandma Gopher shook her head. “I am sorry. I shouldn’t have said that. It was a private matter, shared in confidence. I can’t tell you lads.”

Bendy frowned, which caused the woman to laugh. “Curiosity is good! Especially in a young strapping man like yourself. You can learn a lot that way, just don’t let it get you into trouble.”

“Too late,” Boris muttered, which had the gopher howling in laughter again.
The three came out to the cafeteria. Doctor Oddswell and Steven were already seated. Steven waved happily at the approaching group.

“Did you get anything?” He bounced excitedly in his chair.

“We think we got a paragraph figured out. We wanted to run it by the doc to be sure,” Bendy said.

“You brought work to the table?” Grandma Gopher turned a disappointed frown on the boys like a chastising parent.

“Uh, yes?” Boris said, blinking in confusion. Gesturing to all the papers in his hands. The gopher clicked her tongue against the roof of her mouth.

“How are you feeling?” Dr. Oddswell addressed Bendy.

“Eh? Oh, better. Those pills really helped.” The demon said. The gecko nodded with a glint in his eye.

“Oh no.” Grandma Gopher struck her cane on the floor loudly. “You know the rules, doctor. No work at the table. The boys get a pass because they’re new, but not you.” She looked at him sternly.

The gecko chuckled and his tongue did its flicker thing that Bendy was finding easier to ignore the more time he spent around the doctor.

“I was simply checking on how he’s feeling,” Oddswell defended. “Even the furthest of acquaintances are allowed that much.” Granny snorted at him, but Bendy could see the smile.

“Well, enough of it. Sit down and eat!” The boys did as was told. “And if you know where that girl of yours is doc, I suggest you call her in.” Bendy looked at the delicious spread. Steaks, potatoes, mixed vegetables, gravy, apples, bananas, nuts, and some kinda stir-fry. His mouth watered at the mix of cooked foods and spices. He made note to avoid the bowl of flies that sat near the doctor.

Dr. Oddswell turned his head to the side. “I don’t. I’ve been looking for her all day. None of you subjects would possibly know where my assistant disappeared to, do you?” His large round eyes swept the table.

“Is she with Mr. Jerry? He isn’t here,” Steven suggested in his high-pitched voice after the silence became too for the child. The doctor shook his head.

“That’s what I want her help with. He had a rather trying attack earlier today and is having difficulty getting up and going again,” the doctor explained.

Steven stabbed his fork into the potatoes with a frown. “Bet he’s just pouting in bed that it hurts, and he wants the nurse to fed him.” Bendy and Boris turned to stare at the squirrel with surprised eyes. “Again,” he added sullenly before noticing them watching.

“Shush,” the doctor said without any real intent behind it. It was the boys staring with open mouths that had Steven blush and focus intently on his plate.

“What? It’s true,” he muttered.

The guy had guts, Bendy had to admit. He couldn’t imagine trying that with Red…Okay, maybe he could, but he wouldn’t! Probably.

“But isn’t he married?” Boris asked in confusion.
Grandma Gopher rolled her eyes behind her thick glasses. “Yes, he is,” she muttered to herself, even though the boys could easily hear. “The dirty scoundrel.”

Steven looked up to ask a question, but Dr. Oddswell spoke first, changing the subject. “There was something you boys wanted to show me? Since you have a pass, you can share.”

Boris took a second to organize the pages before passing them to Dr. Oddswell. The gecko rifled through them quickly. He flipped back and forth a couple times as his large eyes widened. A grin spread across his face and his tongue flicked twice before he exclaimed, “By Jove! Wilson, you cod, you did it!” which caused everyone to jump at the sudden shout. The doctor cackled as he looked over Bendy’s translation again, seeming to read it carefully.

Boris and Bendy shared a questioning look, both with wide eyes. The brothers shrugged before Bendy asked, “Did what exactly?”

The gecko’s head snapped up and focused on Bendy, before he blinked and the grin returned. “Why, he found the answer he was looking for!” Bendy blinked and shook his head. That was…good…right?

“Sorry doc, that’s too vague,” Bendy said.

The doc stopped and really focused on the two. He stared at them with a searching gaze. “I thought he told you everything,” Dr. Oddswell said slowly.

“Well,” Boris shifted in his chair and his ear twitched, “He was pretty cryptic and mysterious.”

“Cryptic?” Bendy glanced a Boris. “I couldn’t understand what that bird was prattling about half the time.”

The doctor blinked. “I see.” He straightened up and adjusted his coat with a tug. He put the pages on the table, but kept a hand…paw? Claw? Bendy wasn’t really sure with reptiles, but he kept one on the papers like he feared they’d disappear or blow away if he didn’t. “Well, in that case I better explain.” His tongue flickered, Bendy thought, nervously. “My friend Wilson had a theory he got from the ancient people that knew of this illness. He claims he found a passage that mentioned a machine that could cure the illness.”

Silence filled the room as everyone’s attention was affixed on the tall gecko. The doctor rolled his large eyes around the room before continuing. “Now, the idea that an ancient, extinct people had built something like a machine would have been groundbreaking in and of itself. Wilson was star-bent on learning all he could about those people and their inventions.”

“Did they have name or title? It’s weird to call them ‘ancient people’,” Bendy muttered with a frown.

“You see. They didn’t really refer to themselves as anything, but Wilson nicknamed them the Micco people.” Dr. Oddswell gave Bendy an annoyed look for interrupting him. “As I was saying, Wilson was obsessed. He was able to find several items that referred to this machine. He told me they used it for some sort of medicinal practice. He perked my interested, and afterward I was one of the first people he talked to about his little projects.” The doctor’s eyes gazed off into memories as nostalgia overcame him. “He was so excited. He thought he found the next big break that would change history books. It was around that time that he and his team were receiving pressure to shut down their research on and off site. The University became involved. There were threats, legal and illegal activity…. The doctor trailed off as a small frown came to his face.

The room was tense. Steven glanced around at everyone and leaned further on his chair. Bendy
found himself doing the same.

“Wilson confided in me his fear. He was suspicious and thought someone or some group was trying
to cover up the evidence of the Micco people. He wasn’t sure how far they would go to stop his
team. It seemed the law was in their favor, though, and we had taken comfort in that.” Dr. Oddswell
sighed and slouched a little in his chair. “We were such naïve fools to think the law would stop such
people. Next thing I knew, I heard about the murderer of the research team. At first, I feared the
worst, but then the papers and the police demanded any sightings of Wilson.”

Dr. Oddswell chuckled darkly. “Those blundering idiots actually believed my companion would be
able to do something so fiendish! Preposterous! It was a week or so later that I received a letter from
him that explained that he was framed, and they were after him. Wilson promised to visit as soon as
he thought it safe, to explain everything, and begged me not to tell anyone.” He shrugged. “So, I
waited. It was a month or so later that he appeared with a pair, my first two subjects on the plague
that Wilson promised would come. He told me his discovery of the ink illness and the horror it rained
down on the Micco people and how it was returning. He feared that was the very thing the people
that were after him wanted.” The doctor rubbed his eyes and stared at the table when he lowered his
hand.

“He told me if anyone could figure out a way to stop the epidemic before it could begin, it would be
me. He had confidence in my abilities and my resources. I was an arrogant fool to think so myself. It
wasn’t long before we lost both subjects to the illness,” he said, quietly. “Wilson found more and the
struggle continued. As I worked to save lives, I found my resources slipping from me one by one. I
didn’t understand what was happening in the thick of it, but Wilson did. He could see the frustration,
the walls building up and closing in. He knew we were being targeted, somehow. He knew someone
was trying to stop us, me, from getting closer to a cure.” The doctor sighed. “The fool decided he
would find a cure. He thought the machine was the answer. He just had to find it and figure it out.
He was so confident.” Dr. Oddswell chuckled sadly. “Oh, Wilson, my old owl friend, ever the
optimist. He always said he’d fight to the end. He wanted to save the world from this illness, and he
died trying.”

Heavy silence filled the room. Boris and Bendy stared at the doctor, then at each other with huge
eyes.

“He died?” Steven asked in a small voice. “How?” His eyes widened. “He didn’t catch it, did he?”

The doctor opened his mouth, but a voice from the far side of the room, by the doors, spoke first.
“Simple kid.” Bendy turned his head around so fast, his goggles nearly fell off. Boris gasped at the
pair of familiar individuals at the door. “He stuck his beak where it didn’t belong, and he paid for it.
See, guys like us come to collect when ya mess up, kid.” The gunman…finger-gun-man…Cup…
man? grinned as his finger glowed blue and his eyes flashed red. His companion, right beside him,
also aimed a glowing finger at the table. “And guess what? Today the bill is due.”

Chapter End Notes

I didn't mean to leave it there! It's the only spot I could stop for a while. It was the only
way!
AND those horrors are back! Back to wreak havoc on my story!
At least they can't mess with my notes with the loss of Wakko's Talent...I think.
I hope.
Oh, stars, I hope.
Anyway! Look forward to Monday! Happy reading and thanks for everything!
TAP out!
Bendy only had a second to react. Boris lunged and grabbed Steven. Bendy grabbed the edge of table and flipped it up. Blasts hit the wood as plates and food crashed to the floor. Boris dove behind the table with Dr. Oddswell and Grandma Gopher ducking down on Bendy’s other side.

Dr. Oddswell barked as his back hit the turned table. “What the bloody—,”

“Come out! Come out!” the Cup man called mockingly. Bendy looked around the room for a weapon or escape. The table was in the middle of the mostly empty cafeteria. There were three exits, one blocked by their attackers, one to the kitchen and a dead end, and the one on the other side of the room that led to the that attached to their rooms. There wasn’t anything within reach.

“Yeah, no reason to hide!” the second Cup man said. Bendy attempted to peek over the edge of their wooden defense and nearly had his nose singed off for his efforts. He dropped back down with gasps from the group around him.

“Bendy! Are you okay?” Boris asked, leaning toward him. Bendy blinked and rubbed his eyes. The bright light from the blue blast was temporarily blinding him.

“Yeah, I’m okay. Just give me a moment,” Bendy muttered.

“Why are they doing this?” Steven whimpered.

“What do you goons want!” Bendy demanded angrily. He squinted and tried to get his vision to clear as the two attackers laughed.

“For you to stand up!” the Cup man answered.

“Who are you people?” Boris asked.
“Oh, I’m Mugman,” the second cup man said.

“Mugs!” the first shouted.

“What? We’ve caught them now, so it doesn’t matter, right?” Mugman said, confused.

The first groaned. “No. We don’t want people to know our name on the job.”

“Why not, Cup?” Mugs asked.

“Mugs!”

“Ops.” He chuckled nervously. “Sorry, bro.”

As they argued, Bendy turned to the doctor and gopher. “Boris and I will keep them distracted while you guys run for the door,” he whispered.

“But what about you boys?” Grandma Gopher asked. “Just cause I’m old, doesn’t mean I can’t give ‘em a good wallop!”

“Steven needs you.” Bendy pointed to the trembling squirrel, clinging to Boris. The old gopher looked stricken for a moment, before nodding. Blasts started again, the table groaning with every impact.

Dr. Oddswell put a scaly hand on Bendy’s shoulder. “If you can slip away, meet me in the library,” he said. Bendy nodded. Boris handed Steven over to Granny and looked at Bendy.

Bendy reached for his Talent, hesitantly. He remembered what happened last time, but the shadows here were tamer. Boris grabbed one of the chairs and nodded to the demon. Bendy took a deep breath. They would jump out on the left, while the rest went right toward the doors.

Bendy rolled out from behind the table. Bright blue blasts followed him. To his surprise, the one with the long scarf was right in front of him. He had been sneaking up on the table.

“Hiya!” he said cheerfully. Bendy figured he was Mugman. He lunged to grab Bendy, but Boris threw the chair and forced Mugman to jump back. Bendy spotted Cup by the entrance, with a villainous grin. There were standing shelves behind him. Cup, aimed his finger gun, not at him or Boris, but at the other side. Bendy didn’t have to look to know he was aiming for the doc and others. Silently praying it worked, Bendy used his Talent on the shelves. The shadows withered and then lashed on the shelves. It took a moment for furniture to shake, then tip forward. Cup looked up to see them crashing toward him and only had a moment to roll out of the way.

Bendy gasped at the effort. Why was that so draining? He didn’t have time to think about it.

“Cups!” Mugman shouted and then growled, lunging to strike Bendy. Bendy jumped back, panting. He hit the charred table and nearly slipped on a metal platter.

“Bendy!” Boris was next to him.

“I’m alright! Let’s go!” Bendy grabbed the platter, dodging another punch from Mugman. The two bolted for the doors the others had gotten through. Bendy glanced over to see Cup aiming at them with anger in his eyes. Bendy lifted the platter and was nearly knocked off his feet with the force of the blast. Boris nearly stopped to check him. “Go, go, go!” Bendy shouted.

“What’s the matter, short stick? Can’t take a hit?” Cups sneered.
“Who are you calling short, shot glass!” Bendy shouted. Cups blinked in surprise. The next shot was aimed at Boris, and Bendy jumped in front of him with his makeshift shield. Mugs was right on their heels. The blast knocked Bendy into Boris and the two flailed, to regain their balance. He heard Cups laughing, but focused on the door. Bendy felt another blast fly right past their heads. Boris grabbed him and lunged forward.

In a heartbeat they were at the doors. Bendy turned and chucked the platter at Mugs like a frisbee. Mugs looked shocked a moment before the platter collided with his stomach and pushed him back. Boris grabbed a broom and Bendy jumped as a blast hit where his feet had just been. The boys slammed the doors shut and Boris jammed the broom handle through the door handles to keep them shut. A second later the doors shook with a loud BANG! Bendy heard loud shouting and cursing on the other side.

They looked at each other, panting and sweating. Boris grinned and Bendy couldn’t help but smile too. They escaped! “Your hair is scorched,” Boris said.

“Whatever,” Bendy panted. “Let’s get to the library.” Another loud BANG echoed down the hall as the two ran for all they were worth. They made it in record time. They flew through the doors and nearly got whacked by Granny Gopher’s cane.

“Boys!” she gasped. “Don’t startle an old woman like that! I nearly gave you all I got!”

Boris chuckled. “Sorry.”

“That’s okay, honey. I’m glad you two are okay.” She smiled.

“They’re alive!” Steven cheered. He was sitting at a small study table with Jerry and Dr. Oddswell.

“Can someone explain to me what is going on?” Jerry complained. The others quickly joined them.

“Yes, yes.” Oddswell waved him off. “Boys, I have packed the books and research materials you’ll need to finish translating the page.

Bendy froze, his smile dropped in surprise. “You’re kicking us out?” he demanded, a bit angrier than he meant.

“No, but we will have to relocate and go into deeper hiding than before. We will each have to go our separate ways and meet up again. But you two,” Oddswell pointed, “aren’t coming back as soon.”

“Whadda ya mean, sir?” Boris asked with confusion pulling his brows together in a worried look.

“You two need to find this doll and any other items mentioned that are tied to the cure. It may even reveal the location of the machine,” Dr. Oddswell said. “It’s imperative that you go on this quest.”

“Wait a second!” Jerry stood up. “Why are you sending them? If it’s a cure, shouldn’t you go? Why are you handing such an important job over to a couple of kids?”

Bendy and Boris scowled at being called kids, but the doctor answered before they could voice their opinions. “I must remain to take care of my subjects and continue the battle on this side. Not only to give hope to the hopeless and answers to those that come seeking, like all of you have, but we need to get the public to take notice. We need support, so hoodlums like these can’t come crashing into my work space. I can only spread myself so thin. These two, if willing, will take up the charge Wilson left them and find the…ink machine.” Dr. Oddswell smirked at his word choice.

“But they’re kids!” Jerry protested. “And wanted criminals!”
“Hush! I have more faith in them, than I do you!” Grandma Gopher huffed and lifted her cane with a threat in her small eyes. Jerry cowered before her.

“Sh-should we take this to the police instead?” Jerry inquired in a smaller voice.

“I fear anything we relinquish to the police or any other official will disappear, like my own research at the college and many of the artifacts my old friend was researching before he was framed for murder,” Dr. Oddswell said gravely.

“But how do we find it?” Bendy asked.

“Hopefully, the page will have some instructions on the doll’s location and maybe other parts you’ll need. Find somewhere safe and finish to translation. Go from there. Send a letter to my old address when you have. If there is a direction for you to travel, simply put ‘going on vacation’, if not write ‘visiting grandma’, and I will give you the new location we have set up,” he explained quickly.

Bendy and Boris shared a look. “What do you think bro?” Boris asked.

Bendy sighed and crossed his arms. “We don’t really have a choice here. We better go get our packs and head out.”

Boris turned to do just that.

“Wait, that’s it?” Jerry asked. “W-wait! I really think we should call the police! And did you say there were hoodlums around?” Dr. Oddswell did an excellent job of ignoring him.

“They were after Bendy and Boris.” Steven answered Jerry. The kid turned to the brothers. “You fellas are going on an adventure! Can I go too?”

“Better not, champ. I need your help after all.” Grandma Gopher winked.

Jerry’s mouth was hanging open. “WHAT!”

Steven pouted, his lower lip sticking out for a moment, before he thought better of it. “Okay,” he agreed with the old gopher, who beamed at him.

The boys threw their bags together. Luckily, it didn’t take long, since they hardly unpacked. “We should have slept last night,” Bendy muttered.

“Right.” The two walked out of the room.

“Do you think those two fellas gave up?” Boris asked.

Suddenly, there was a huge boom and the building shook. Boris and Bendy’s eyes widened. “I don’t think so, bro. Run!” The two-sprinted back to the library. Jerry seemed to be panicking and demanded to know what that was. Steven was looking around everywhere, like he expected the cup men to appear out of the shadows or corners.

Oddswell approached Bendy and pushed three books and a couple of folders in his arms. “These books will help and the files have your notes and the page. I added a couple of things. You have to go. Now,” Oddswell said his tongue flickering.

“But what about all of you?” Boris asked worried.
“I’ll make sure all of my subjects will get out,” Dr. Oddswell said confidently. “I have too much work to afford to lose anyone.”

“I’m sick of these games, pipsqueak! Come out and face us like men!” Cups’ shout echoed down the hall.

Pipsqueak? Bendy felt his eye twitch. Boris grabbed him before he could do anything stupid and yanked him to the doors on the opposite side to the study room.

“Don’t make this harder on your friends than it already has been!” Cup shouted. “If ya run, I’ll just do to them what I did to that cute nurse.”

The group paused. All eyes turned to Dr. Oddswell and then the boys. The doctor’s eyes were wide with surprise. Bendy grit his teeth.

“Th-they got Miss Hood?” Steven whispered with alarm. He sounded like he was on the verge of tears.

“Those scoundrels! Fiends! The vilest of creatures! Let me give them a piece of my mind!” Grandma Gopher turned around, but Boris and Jerry grabbed her arms and stopped her. “Don’t hold me back! Let me show them some manners!” She waved her cane in the air like she was leading the charge into battle.

“Mrs. Ginger please,” the doctor whispered. He seemed to have aged ten years. His shoulders weighed down and a tightness to the muscles around his wide, reptilian eyes. He swallowed to clear his throat. “They are only trying to bait us. The last thing Miss Hood would want is us putting ourselves in danger for her. In truth there is nothing we can do. She isn’t there with them.”

No one seemed happy about that fact. Wh-what do you think they did to her?” Steven asked. The group started moving again. The squirrel looked to the doctor, then to the boys. Bendy shook his head.

“This is all your fault,” Jerry hissed to the two. “Everything was at least calm before you showed u-ow!”


Cups’ shout sounded closer as the group continued forward. “Do you want to know how she begged for her life! How she sold you and your brother out? It was almost too easy!” Bendy clenched his fist. “Or maybe I should tell you what we’ll do to that doc of yours.” Steven brushed tears off his face and tried to be as quiet as possible.

“Where? They’ll be here any time now.” Jerry muttered.

“Oh Bendy!” Suddenly the sound of sirens grew louder. The group once again paused in shock. Well, everyone except for one.

Jerry sighed in relief. “Finally!”

“Jerry!” Grandma Gopher shrieked. “You bumbling idiot! What did you do!” The old woman held her cane like a sword and pointed it at the man.

Jerry blinked in surprise. “I called the cops! What did you expect me to do?” He gestured to the boys with an arm. “They’re wanted criminals! They also led dangerous people here! Who knows what they did to Red! I wasn’t going to just sit here and let them creep about. I would never be able to
“Sleep!”

“You ratted them out!” Steven gasped.

Cups voice suddenly sounded far too close, but still unseen. “Really! You think you can hide behind those badges? Bars can’t protect you losers! We’ll find you no matter where you go.” With that, the sound of retreating footsteps disappeared.

Grandma Gopher turned to Jerry. “You snitch! You sniveling little palooka! You-.”

“That’s enough Mrs. Ginger,” Dr. Oddswell said.

“Don’t you see that once these guys are gone, we can go back to looking for an answer logically? No more running around and chasing fairytales. The doctor will find a cure and then we can all go home,” Jerry said.

Dr. Oddswell approached Jerry and calmly put a scaly claw on his shoulder. Then he clocked his other hand back and punched the man. The doctor knocked the man off his feet. Dr. Oddswell hissed and shook his hand.

“Doctor!” Boris gasped.

“It is my anticipation that will knock some sense into you, but I highly doubt it,” the gecko stated, rubbing his throbbing claw. Jerry stared at the doctor with huge eyes. “There will be no normal. They will shut this place down and arrest me, along with the boys. We will be put away, if not have an unpleasant meeting with brutes like the ones that came here.” The doctor looked at everyone, then down to Jerry. “With me gone and an unknown fate given to Miss Hood, you will have no help with your afflictions. I fear all my subjects will be overcome by the illness. There will be no one with answers, no idea how to help, no hope to find a cure since no one will look for one.”

“No,” Jerry whimpered. “No! You have to find a cure!”

“Jerry, you have doomed us all,” Dr. Oddswell said darkly.

Bendy and Boris shared an alarmed look. “Wait! We can still escape.” Boris stepped up to the doctor. “Right?”

The doctor sighed. “No, we can’t.” He blinked. A strange excited glint entering his eyes. “But you two can!”

“Uh?” Bendy said.

“With Mrs. Ginger and young Steven, we will be slow, not to mention the weakened state of Jerry after his ink attack. I can’t leave them, nor can we be sure that those brutes will keep the police busy. I will be the distraction and you two will still go out and find the machine!” Dr. Oddswell said, heading down and changing his course to a different rubbish covered hallway. They left a dazed Jerry sitting on the floor and staring at the wall. The sirens sounded like they were right outside the building.

“But what about you and everyone depending on you?” Boris asked in alarm.

“You’ll be closer to answers than I will. Wilson was sure of it, and he wasn’t wrong when I knew him,” he said. “Besides, this is a chance for me to bring this to the public. If I use your reputation and my research and my subjects’ words, there is a chance.” He sounded excited. “Yes, that’s it! There’s a chance I can open the eyes of the world to ink illness.”
“Would they listen to you?” Bendy asked, rushing to keep up. Granny and Steven fell behind.

“It’s a gamble,” he replied. He led the boys to a backroom full of old boxes and dusty supplies for the former observatory. The gecko suddenly jumped on the wall and scuttled around a pile of boxes. “Now, it should be here somewhere,” he muttered as he disappeared from sight. The boys were forced to stop. They began moving the boxes, all the time hearing the doctor push stuff around behind the pile and muttering. “It should be here somewhere. Was it in the corner or to the side next to the wall?” There was the sound of some glass breaking. “Oops. Dear me.”

“Doc, what are you looking for?” Bendy asked as he lifted a large box and put it aside. Steven and Grandma Gopher caught up.

“The door! It has to be here somewhere,” he said.

Finally, with the four working together, they were able to uncover the doctor. He was staring at the floor, moving boxes this way and that, looking for something. “There it is!” he said with satisfaction. Dr. Oddswell moved the box and kicked some old newspaper away to reveal a trapdoor. A perfect square in the floor. “It’s an old maintenance hatch that connects to the outside. There’s a lock on the inside.” The doctor tossed a key and Boris fumbled to catch it. He missed and Steven picked it up to hand it to him.

“Thanks,” Boris said and took the key with one hand as the other scratched the back of his head.

“Once you get out, find a safe location and translate. Getting out of the city would serve you best,” the gecko doctor said. “If I am successful, you should see it in the papers. If not, don’t stop. Find the ink machine!” he urged and pushed the boys toward the door. Bendy lifted the hatch and peered into the small dark space below. Cobwebs drifted lazily in the breeze from disturbing the space. Boris gulped uneasily.

Dr. Oddswell headed to the door, ushering Grandma Gopher and Steven with him. “Wait a second! Let us say bye!” Granny protested.

“You just did,” Dr. Oddswell pointed out.

“Ryan Oddswell,” Grandma Gopher said indignantly. “You will let me say goodbye to these boys properly.”

Dr. Oddswell sighed. “Be quick, we need to move away from here before a torrent of officers swarm us.”

Grandma Gopher quickly moved around the doctor and didn't hesitate to pull the boys into a tight hug. “Now, you two haven’t been with us long. Good grief, it was only a day! Anyway, you are a part of our little collection, so go out and come back to us safe okay? You two are rays of sunlight to this old gopher’s heart.”

Bendy flustered at the kindness, not used to being treated so. Boris grinned. “Okay Granny, we’ll do our best.”

“Oh, I know you will.” The Gopher pulled back, smiling.

Steven stepped up and looked up at them. “It’s not fair that you’re leaving! I wanted you fellas to be my pals.”

“Hey, who says we aren’t?” Bendy stated. “We all have to be tough now. You gotta watch out for Granny and the doc while we’re gone.”
Steven rubbed at his eyes and threw his arms around Bendy. The kid was only a few inches shorter than the demon, but he nearly knocked the two of them into the hole in the floor. “Okay,” Steven said. “But you have to come back soon!”

“Of course we will,” Boris promised. Steven moved to hug Boris. Granny left with a wave and the squirrel boy followed shortly. Dr. Oddswell paused before shutting the door.

“One last thing,” the doctor said. “Bendy, your unique Talent. I must advise you to use it as little as possible.”

Bendy furrowed his brows at the gecko. Before he could ask, Oddswell quickly explained. “I had another subject that had a Talent of such…nature. I am not sure why, but Talents tied to what used be considered magic or supernatural powers or nature don’t seem to react to the illness very well. The Talents of such subjects begin to have a kind of draining response on the body. I’ve seen subjects lose control of their Talents or even become unable to use them at all.”

Bendy’s eyes widened. “Why?”

The was a bang sound beyond the doorway. Dr. Oddswell glanced behind him, then back to Bendy. “I’m not sure.” He sounded frustrated. “It was one of the many things I have been trying to figure out. That is not important now. What I am saying, young man, is that you should exercise caution with your Talent. It’s not good for your health at this time. Now go.” With that Dr. Oddswell shut the door and the sound of his footsteps quickly disappeared.

Bendy and Boris shared a quick look before turning toward the hatch. Bendy sighed. “It can’t ever be a pleasant escape, can it?”

Boris chuckled. “If it was pleasant, everybody would do it.”

A muffled, “Police!” echoed to them from outside the room.

Bendy jumped down before he could think about what he was doing. Boris was quickly behind him and pulled the hatch shut after he was in. The small tunnel was thrown into darkness. The boys waited a breath to allow their eyes to adjust before moving forward. The tunnel was low and forced Boris to hunch over. Bendy could walk up right, but just barely. His head brushed a web-covered pipe every few feet, causing him to duck. Bendy did his best to ignore the itchy feeling of web brushing by him. He also ignored the mental image of spiders crawling all over him.

The tunnel felt like it was going on forever. The boys stayed quiet in fear that the officers, or worse Cup and Mugs, would hear them and find them. At one point, Boris tripped and banged his knee on the cement. After helping him up and checking if he was okay, the two continued. Finally, Bendy came to the end and saw the padlocked hatch above. With a bit of fumbling, the boys were able to unlock it and push the heavy door open.

They held it open a crack to check that no one was around, before pushing it up a bit more to allow Boris to pull himself up and out. He leaned down and pulled Bendy out after. The afternoon sun was quickly disappearing as dusk was upon them. The woods that surrounded them blocked most of everything from view. What felt like hours in the tunnel was probably a few minutes. The top of the observatory dome barely peeked out over the treetops. The scream of the police sirens still sounded in the distance, but that was the only noise in the woods besides the rustling of the leaves. Bendy looked to the trapdoor they had escaped from and saw it was covered in leaves and forest rubbish, making it practically invisible.

Bendy then turned to Boris. The wolf was covered in dust and cobwebs. His slip on shoes, that
barely covered any of his paws, were covered in dirt. He sneezed into his bandanna, causing dust to fly up around him. Bendy then saw the blood on his leg. In the fading light, Bendy was able to make out the bloody scarp on his knee from his fall.

“We better get that clean and bandaged,” Bendy said.

“But the cops are right over there.” Boris protested. “Let’s go first, patch me later.”

Bendy hesitated, looking for an excuse to use.

Boris rolled his eyes. “You can see in the dark, so don’t use the sunlight as an excuse! It’s not like I’ll drop dead for a banged-up knee bro.” Dangit! Boris had him figured.

Bendy shook his head with a heavy frown. He recognized when Boris was gonna be stubborn. Bendy capped his protests. “Fine! Then let’s go.” The two pasted a power box a few feet away from the trapdoor and over a small hill.

The two made their way away from the sound of the sirens, deeper into the forest. They weaved through the branches and trees. After a few minutes, the only sound they heard was of the forest and the nocturnal animals starting to stir. Bendy had them stop at a fallen log and took care of Boris’ leg.

Luckily, the cuts weren’t deep and after cleaning off the dirt and blood using a water canteen, Boris only needed a band-aid. The boys went a bit further before pulling out sleeping bags for the night. They decided against starting a fire, in fear of being spotted. Exhausted, the two collapsed in their bags. Bendy’s body felt like a brick. He was sore and his body begged for sleep, yet his mind was racing with the day’s events.

They had found their doctor, only to lose him. There wasn’t a cure, but there was more running around to maybe get a cure. There could be an ancient machine that might cure the ink illness somewhere. Once again, Bendy found himself silently cursing Wilson and the stupid vague answers the demon had to work with. They’d had only a day with the doctor and others and it had been nice. He was worried about what happened to Red. He felt guilt for what those two might have done. They were obviously after him and Boris, so she wouldn’t have dragged into this if they hadn’t shown up. He knew it wasn’t their fault, but...he just hoped Red was okay. He was so sick and tired of these things happening. He just wanted for everything to work out. Why did those guys have to show up and ruin everything? Why did that scum Jerry have to call the police? Bendy was so tired of all of this.

“Hey Bendy,” Boris asked, causing the demon to stop his train of thought. “Where are we gonna go now? The doctor is arrested, and we were all over the papers.”

“They told us to jump town,” Bendy suggested.

“Do you know any of the cities around here?” Boris asked.

Bendy bit his lip. “No,” he said slowly.

“We can’t just hop on a train,” Boris grumbled.

“Nope,” Bendy agreed with a chuckle. “And any taxi or bus driver would recognize us.”

Boris sounded frustrated. “We can’t just stay out in the woods. We don’t have enough food for that. We never repacked!”

Silence fell between the two. The demon turned and stared up at the stars between the tree branches.
Beautiful, Bendy thought. They needed to leave the city, but they didn’t really have a way to get out besides walking. They didn’t have enough food to go out far either, so just following a road to the next town wasn’t gonna work. Where could they go that was outside of the city, but not days or weeks away by walking? Suddenly an idea came to him. Bendy wasn’t happy about. There had to be another way.

“Do you think they’ll be okay?” Boris changed subjects. Bendy knew exactly who he was talking about. He sounded as tired as Bendy did.

“Yeah, I think they’ll be fine. Granny is a spitfire and Steven is a tough kid,” Bendy said.

“And Dr. Oddswell and Jerry?” Boris asked.

“Jerry can go jump in the deep end,” Bendy grumbled.

“Bendy!” Boris voice became chastising.

“He sold us out, Boris! He was gonna have us thrown in prison,” Bendy growled. He heard Boris sigh, but didn’t respond.

“The doc is smart. He’ll figure something out,” Bendy said.

Boris whispered, “And Red?”

Bendy fell silent a moment more. “I don’t know,” he finally admitted.

To ignore the guilt again, Bendy turned his mind to his idea. It was the only sure direction they had, but he really, really didn’t want to even suggest that place.

“Everything fell apart again,” Boris stated.

“Yeah, but at least we have a direction,” Bendy muttered, not believing he was going to suggest this.

“We do?”

“Yeah…Remember that casino?” Bendy cringed as he spoke.

After a pause Boris exclaimed, “That’s a great idea Bendy!”

He was afraid Boris was going to say that.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Bendy! X'D
Man, they just can't get a break! Now, there is so much up in the air. We'll get to it. In time...maybe.
Hehe.
And thank you, Twinfeather, for the art. It's over on tumblr. If any of you want to poke me with questions or any of the characters in the story, you can go over there.

https://www.tumblr.com/blog/theinkymystery

Alrighty! I don't want to give away too much for the future, and I know if I keep typing,
I will.
But I can't help giving one hint!
We see how the detectives and our journalist handle everything, along with Dr.
Oddswell's-AH! Nope! That's all I will say!
I can't believe how far this story has already come! See all you wonderful readers next
Monday!
TAP out!
Featherworth took a drink from her third cup of coffee.

"Are you ready?" Ringtail asked her. Joan looked over the report one more time. She sighed, but nodded her head. "You sure? You look haggard."

Joan frowned and shut the file. "Yes, I’m sure Ringtail." Irritation vibrated through her tone.

Rachel lifted her paws in surrender. "Okay."

Featherforth sighed. "Sorry."

"Don’t worry about it. This is the most stressful case we have ever had," Ringtail said.

"I still can’t understand how they slipped past us again," Joan said with a pained grimace.

Ringtail shrugged. "They might not have been there in the first place. Let’s do the interviews, then speculate. You drive yourself nuts doing this beforehand."
“Alright. You’re right. Let’s do this,” Joan said getting up. “They’re ready then?”

“Yeah.”

“Who are we talking to first?” Joan asked as she gathered the files she needed.

The raccoon swished her tail as she turned around and started to walk down the hall next to her taller partner. “I think the man that called us. He’s only getting more frantic, and it seems his wife showed up and is also causing drama out in the lobby. Clawhauser is dealing with her but-.”

“He doesn’t have the deepest well of patience.” Joan finished the thought.

“Exactly,” Ringtail said, flicking her fingers in a dismissal. The crow hummed.

“So, what do we have on him?” Featherworth asked.

“Jerry Verrim, age thirty-seven; height, five feet six inches (167 cm); and completely average. He claims he was the one that reported spotting of Bendy and Boris,” Ringtail said flatly. “Did you know the papers are calling them the B-Bros? It’s kinda catchy.”

“Focus.” Joan rolled her eyes. “Did he?”

“Uh? Oh, yeah. It was this flat tire,” Ringtail said. Joan raised a feathery brow, but didn’t ask for Rachel to elaborate.

“Instead, we arrested Dr. Ryan Oddswell, and there was no sign of the boys,” Featherworth said.

“Correct.” Rachel grinned.

“What a beautiful mess.” Featherworth sighed.

“You said it!” Ringtail grinned, flashing her fangs as the two stopped at a door. The raccoon pulled open the plain door and allowed the crow to enter. Inside, was the chief of police and their boss, Chief Bobby Club. He was a large bull dog that had spent years on the force. At first, he had been skeptical of the two young women that wanted to be officers. It didn’t take him long to change that skepticism. He was the one that suggested they push to be detectives. He was gruff, and seemingly harsh, to an outsider, but everyone that knew him knew he was very kind-hearted and loyal. He also had a sharp nose for justice.

“Detectives,” he grumbled.

“Hiya, Chief! How’s our witness?” Ringtail asked with a wide smile. The dog scoffed and turned back to the one-way mirror.

“He’s sweating bullets,” he stated. Joan and Rachel approached to look through the glass. “If I didn’t know better, I would think this was your guy. He acts like he robbed a bank.”

Ringtail chuckled. “Think there’s anything to him?” The round dog shrugged his wide shoulders.

“If ya stop wasting time and go in we might find out,” he said. Featherworth chuckled and turned to enter the interrogation room. Rachel was right on her heels.

Inside the room was a simple table with two chairs sitting opposite of each other. The walls were blank and one of the chairs was occupied. The lone man fidgeted under the single light that cast shadows around the dull room. Joan went to sit at the other chair as Rachel leaned against the wall and crossed her arms. The one-way window was right next to her and facing Joan’s back, so the
others could watch Jerry’s reactions.

“Oh, thank heavens, finally! I was starting to think that no one was going to come let me out.” Jerry sighed. Joan looked over to him. She pulled out the chair, causing it to scrape at the old wooden floor. He looked average. His hair was just starting to show signs of thinning. His eyes were dull, nose straight, thin lips were chapped. His hands were fidgeting on the table top, sweaty since he continued to move one or the other down to his pant leg to rub off the moisture, before returning to fiddling his fingers on the table top. His ears were a little big for his head. All in all, Jerry seemed completely unremarkable in any way physically.

“Not yet, Mr. Verrim. We have some questions for you first,” Joan said as she opened the case file on the boys.

“I-I’m not in trouble, am I? I wa-was turning in two wanted criminals!” Jerry’s eyes widened and looked between Joan and Rachel.

“That’s up to you and how honest you are with us, sir,” Joan said and pulled out two wanted posters, which she had seen way too much of the past few weeks. “You called the police to report a sighting of these two individuals?” Joan turned the posters around to show Jerry. The man leaned forward and glanced over the posters.

“Yeah, that’s them: the little demon and his wolf friend,” Jerry said. “They showed up yesterday.”

“Why?” Joan asked. “What reason did they have to come to the observatory?”

Jerry shifted again. He glanced to the left, then forward again. “The demon wanted Dr. Oddswell to look at him.”

Joan stared at him and waited for him to continue. Jerry blinked, but didn’t say anything. “Why would he need to see Dr. Oddswell?”

Jerry sighed and looked to the table. “He had ink illness.”

“Ink illness?” Joan raised a feathered eyebrow.

Jerry pursed his lips. “Yes.”

“What is ink illness?” Joan asked. She fought the urge to glance back at Rachel or the window.

Jerry seemed to grow even more nervous as sweat beaded on his forehead. “I-it’s a, uh, well, a disease.” He stopped and looked around, unsure of what to say.

“We figured,” Rachel said dryly, even boarding on sarcasm.

Jerry looked back down at the table. “It’s a, uh, deadly disease. It’s, um, look I’m not a doctor, so I can’t really explain it very well.”

“How do you know Bendy has it?” Joan asked.

“Because he came to Dr. Oddswell,” Jerry mumbled.

“Why didn’t he go to a hospital?” Featherworth asked.

“Doctors won’t do anything!” Jerry exclaimed, looking up. ”Besides, if they’re wanted they would know the hospital would call you guys.”
She acknowledged that Jerry's second statement was true and focused more on the first. “Why did you say doctors won't do anything? Wouldn’t they help?” Featherworth asked.

“Dr. Oddswell is the only one taking it seriously,” Jerry stated and crossed his arms.

Featherworth narrowed her eyes. Rachel stepped forward. “Now, how would you know that?” The raccoon walked up and put her hands on the table and leaned toward the man.

Jerry flinched. “Be-because I have it too!” This caused both women to pause. Jerry took it as a demand for more information. “I’ve been to every hospital in the city. They all said I was fine! We brought them some of the ink I coughed up later, to prove there was something wrong, and they said they would look into it, but they never called back! The labs would always lose the samples!”

“We brought the samples? Who were you with?” Featherworth asked.

“My wife and I.” He waved a hand in dismissal.

“So, then what?” Ringtail asked.

“We brought different hospitals samples and the answers were the same. Either ‘it’s just ink’ or they would lose it.” Jerry sighed. “My wife fought tooth and nail for me to stay for observation. It took a week and nothing happened! The bill was getting too high, so they released me.”

“How long ago was this?” Featherworth asked, turning her head a little.

“I got sick about six months ago. I found the doctor two months after I got sick.” Jerry sighed.

“How did you find him?” Ringtail asked.

“A friend at a bar I used to go to. I mentioned I was sick and the doctors were idiots. We tossed a conversation, and he suggested the Dr. Oddswell.” Jerry sighed. “We wrote a note to an address we tracked down, and he wrote back and wanted to meet.”

“Who’s this friend at the bar?” Ringtail asked, straightening out and putting her hands behind her back.

“Mortimer Mouse? He’s just a guy at the bar. We play cards once in a while.” Jerry shrugged. The detectives shared a glance and mentally took note of the name, before looking back at the man. “Look, am I in trouble? I just want to go home.”

The detectives shared another look, confirming that it was time to change subject.

“Mr. Verrim, are you aware that Dr. Oddswell was practicing illegally in an unlicensed clinic?” Featherworth queried.

Jerry snorted and folded his hands on the table. “Of course! Anyone with eyes could tell that place was for star gazing. Let me ask you, what else could he have done?”

“Uh?” Featherworth blinked. Both detectives were taken back by the question.

“What else could he have done? The university fired him and the medical world wouldn’t listen to his theories. No one was willing to look at his research and then it suddenly disappeared. He felt threatened, but wanted to do something. What would you have done?” Jerry said.

“Not broken the law,” Rachel said. Jerry scoffed.
“Look, I reported the fellas you wanted for murder,” Jerry said. “I did my civic duty. I’m tired-.”

“Where did Bendy and Boris go?” Ringtail cut him off.

Jerry shrugged. “Dunno.”

“Did you help them escape?” Ringtail continued.

“Why would I call you if I was going to turn around and help them escape?” Jerry demanded ad furrowed his brow.

“Were you aiding Dr. Oddswell in his illegal practice?” Featherworth asked.

“Do I look like a doctor to you?” Jerry snapped irritatedly and put a hand to his chest to indicate himself. He raised an eyebrow. He was met with heavy silence. The nervousness returned, and he dropped the hand. Featherworth and Ringtail stared at him unamused. “No, I didn’t.”

“But you didn’t turn him in,” Ringtail said.

“My life depends on him!” Jerry’s eyes widened. “I couldn’t just turn him in. He’s working to save lives.” Silence fell again. Ringtail bit her lip and shifted uncomfortably next to Featherworth.

Just then, a woman slammed the door open. Ringtail jumped and spun to face the woman. Featherworth and Jerry rose from their seats. The woman was dressed nicely in a simple knee length floral pattern. Her hair was neat and had a small curl at the end. Her figure wasn’t shapely, but it wasn’t horribly thin either. Her eyes were framed in wide square glasses, and she narrowed them in a glare. She had a bag clutched in her hand.

“Jerry!” The woman scowled.

“Martha! W-what are you doing back here?” Jerry’s eyes grew huge, and his hands came up in surprise.

“You star fallen idiot! How did you get arrested? You called the police and ended up arrested instead? What kinda cussing stupidity is that?” the woman growled, marching up to the man and completely ignoring the detectives. Ringtail stepped between the woman and Jerry.

Just then, Officer Clawhauser came in behind her. “Sorry, detectives. I looked away for a second, and she got by me.” The thin cheetah looked at the two sheepishly.

“This is just like you, Jerry! I can’t believe you got all caught up in such a mess,” the woman barked from around Ringtail.

“Ma’am. Mr. Verrim is not under arrested. We only had some questions for him,” Featherworth said, hoping to diffuse the woman’s anger. “Who are you?”

Martha finally stopped glaring at the cowering man to look at Featherworth. The woman was a little shorter than Ringtail, which put her a bit shorter than Joan’s shoulder. “I’m Martha Verrim, his wife, and if he isn’t under arrest, I demand you to let him go.”

Clawhauser stepped up. “Mrs. Verrim you can’t just-,”

“It’s okay.” Featherworth cut him off. “Mr. Verrim is free to go.” She turned to the man. “Thank you for your time.”

Jerry nodded numbly, still staring at his wife like he expected her to throw fireballs at him.
Martha huffed and turned to Rachel. “Please move,” she ordered. Rachel frowned, but stepped aside to allow Jerry to join his wife. “We have a lot to discuss,” she hissed at the hunched man.

“Yes dear,” Jerry whimpered.

“There are a lot of newsies around, and my career can’t suffer because of your bumbling.”

“Yes, dear.”

“But if they want an interview, that doesn’t mean we should turn them down.”

“Why is that Martha?”

Their voices faded as they walked out and down the hall.

“Officer Clawhauser, can you escort them out?” Rachel asked. The cheetah nodded and followed the pair away.

Ringtail sighed, and Featherworth turned to gather up the pages for the case. Rachel leaned against the table. “Well, that was useless.”

“Was it?” the crow asked. “It seems to me that we are finding a common thread.”

“The illness that never seems to add up to anything?” Rachel asked.

“Why is someone or some group working so hard to hide it?” Joan asked.

The raccoon grumbled and straightened her back to head to the door. “Meet you at the doc’s room next.”

“Sure,” Featherworth said.

When Featherworth left the room, Chief Club was waiting. “That went well,” he said sarcastically.

“Sorry, sir,” Joan said. The dog waved away her apology with a lazy paw.

“Is there any weight behind what he said?” Club asked.

Joan tilted her head to the side for a second. “About what?”

“This illness. Is Oddswell the only guy doing something about it? Does one of your wanted really have it? What is it anyway?” Club listed as he walked down the hall, further away from the offices and towards the room that held Dr. Oddswell.

“I don’t fully understand it myself sir,” Joan admitted.

“But you do understand some of it,” the chief stated pointedly. Joan’s mind went back to everything the boys had told her in Sillyvision.

“In part, sir.”

“Good,” he said and turned the knob to the observation room. “The papers are going to have a circus with this one,” he muttered to himself.

Joan waited a moment for Rachel to appear, and the two entered the room. It was the same set up as the other, but in a mirror image. Again, Featherworth took the seat.
The doctor didn’t let them start. “Did you find Ms. Hood?”

“Yes,” Joan answered. “She’s been admitted to the Greenby Hospital. She’s fine, though. A little banged up, but that’s all. She should be released from the hospital some time today, and then we will bring her here.”

“Did she say what happened?” the gecko asked anxiously.

Featherworth debated with herself whether she should answer or go on to her questions. “She claimed that at least two men caught her and tied her up. She said they forced her to give away your location, and then, they left her in your old property, tied to a chair. She also said after an hour, a mouse cut the ropes and helped her escape. Basil was his name. Do you know him?”

Dr. Oddswell shook his head. “Never heard of him. Did you catch her attackers?”

“No. She couldn’t provide any physical descriptions and-.”

“But I already informed you what to look for! How hard is it to find two men with cups as heads?” Dr. Oddswell demanded with a scowl.

“We haven’t seen anyone that fits that description yet,” Ringtail snapped.

The doctor’s large eyes turned to her and then away. The gecko sighed, like he was disappointed in them. Out of the corner of her eye, Joan saw Rachel’s tail puff up in anger.

“Were you illegally working at the observatory on volunteers?” Featherworth asked.

“Yes,” he answered with annoyance.

“Were you experimenting on your volunteers?” Featherworth asked harshly.

“Of course,” Dr. Oddswell answered without hesitation. He almost seemed to be bored, along with annoyed.

“Were you practicing unethical procedures, after telling these people at they had an incurable disease?” Featherworth continued.

“No. My subjects’ comfort and safety were my top priority. I worked meticulously, so the environment and care would be as ‘ethical’ as possible,” Dr. Oddswell snapped.

“Subjects? Not patients?” Ringtail spoke up.

“Yes. Subjects. That is my choice. Patients have a sickness that needs treatment,” Dr. Oddswell stated.

Joan’s eyes widened. “Are-are you saying that the ink illness isn’t a disease?” Ringtail looked with a shocked and angry expression toward the lizard.

Dr. Oddswell blinked and adjusted the glasses on the edge of his nose. “Yes and no.”

“Did you just lie to people so you could experiment on them! Is ink illness even real?” Ringtail demanded and marched up to the table. She leaned over it and glared at him.

“I did and did not lie to my subjects. Ink illness isn’t a disease that involves germs or infection. It’s something else. That’s why I’m researching it. We’ve never seen something like this. It’s going to change the world, and for some reason there are those that want to keep it secret,” Dr. Oddswell
explained.

“Why lie?” Featherworth asked.

“To protect them,” Dr. Oddswell stated and laced his wide fingers together.

“Protect them!” Ringtail curled her lip and sounded appalled. “Protect them from what?”

“I don’t appreciate that tone, detective. I would wish you to wait for my full explanation, before drawing up your own opinions and conclusions.” Dr. Oddswell tilted his head to give her a sharp look. His tongue flickered out of the corner of his mouth. Ringtail growled, but a motion from Featherworth had her back off. “Thank you, Detective Featherworth.”

“Why do you need to protect them?” Featherworth asked.

Dr. Oddswell sighed and his narrow shoulders seemed to drop with a heavy, invisible burden. “You see, the subjects I work with are very aware of the fact that this ink illness will kill them eventually. I have watched it time and again; the mortality rate is a hundred percent. The question is when, not if.”

“That doesn’t answer the question. Why protect them if you know they’re going to die?” Ringtail demanded with a clenched fist. She took another step back. Joan figured she was trying to not lunge forward again.

“They live longer if they have hope,” the doctor stated.

“What?” Joan furrowed her brow.

“The emotional and psychological state of the subjects affects the severity of the ink illness. I have seen depressed subjects fall to their symptoms within weeks and optimistic subjects last months, if not almost a year. I theorize that one can go years with the illness if they have the strength of character to fight it.” Dr. Oddswell smiled and raised his brows in an egotistical look.

“Strength of character?” Ringtail repeated, sounding like she didn’t believe a word of it.

“Yes. That is the best way I can put it. The more a subject loves life, fights for it, hopes to continue on; the longer they survive the pain and horror of their body slowly falling apart with each attack,” Dr. Oddswell said. “They start giving up, the ink consumes them.”

“What about other factors?” Featherworth asked, lacing her hands on top of the file she had.

“Like age? Species? Genetic history, hygiene practices, former ailments, education levels, sleeping and eating habits, mental disabilities, environment, physical activity and the like?” Dr. Oddswell listed, gazing at the detectives with a look that spoke of endless inquiry and knowledge, a hunger for answers and an understanding that seemed beyond the two women.

“None of those factors seemed to change the intensity of the pain or the length of the suffering and the survival of the subject. The only factors that seemed to really add or take away was the outlook of the subject and their talent,” the doctor said.

“Their talent?” Featherworth asked, sounding taken aback.

“Yes,” the doctor drawled, chagrined. “For some reason, certain talents seem to speed up the process. I haven’t been able to discover why, yet.”

“So, what are you saying, doc?” Ringtail demanded.
“I’m saying,” Dr. Oddswell snapped, irritated. “That a professional athlete, that has self-confidence issues, will die faster than a ninety year old grandmother, that is close emotionally to her grandchildren. It's their state of mind and heart.”

The detectives shared a confused look, both with knitted brows, before turning their gazes back to the doctor. He seemed equally pleased and annoyed. Ringtail spoke slowly. “Why are you researching ink illness?”

The doctor scoffed. “It’s really quite simple. I find it fascinating. It’s rare that such a thing comes about. A once in a lifetime mystery. I am a scientist and discovery is my bread and butter.” Ringtail curled her lip in disgust. Dr. Oddswell continued. “But, the one to start me on this journey of inquiry was my old friend Wilson Wiseton. He was the one to approach me in the pursuit of aid. He gave me my first subjects.” The doctor sighed heavily. “That was when I noticed the oddities of the illness symptoms, the random pattern of infection, the horror the subjects went through.”

Ringtail and Featherworth shared another glance. “So, you researched it. What does that mean? What experiments have you been preforming on people?”

“In the university, I collected samples and had them tested in the labs. I attempted several chemicals, drugs, and treatments. I tried to find anything similar to ink illness that could give me a good comparison, but that was a dead end.” The gecko shook his head. “But that’s science. Trial and error until you get it right. Now, I am trying to find the connection to talents and the the spread pattern and pain management. Especially the pain management.”

A thought came to Joan. Something from Sillyvision. Something Bendy had told her. “Do you believe that this illness could become a plague?”

“Could?” Dr. Oddswell straightened with a look of surprise crossing his face. “My dear detective, it already is. Considering how difficult it is to find out about me and my research on ink illness, and the number of visiting subjects I have; I assume the actual number of true suffers is rising alarmingly fast. It’s already wide spread as well.”

“What do you mean?” Ringtail asked nervously.

“The number of subjects I am working with is increasing at an alarming rate. Thirteen living now, and three of them are from far off places that Wilson sent my way,” Dr. Oddswell stated and leaned forward a bit.

Featherworth narrowed her eyes. “One of these was Bendy, wasn’t it?”

The doctor nodded. “Yes, the young demon that was framed for Wilson’s murder.”

“Framed?” Ringtail raised a brow.

“Of course. He had been hunted for a very long time. He was sure it was only a matter of time before those with dark intentions finally caught up to him and did to him what they did to his research team. I'm certain it wasn't the young man,” Dr. Oddswell stated.

“So, you believe that Wiseton, Bendy and Boris are all innocent?” Joan inquired, opening the file and turning the posters and some notes toward Oddswell.

Dr. Oddswell looked over the notes as he answered. “Of course. Anyone that meets them would be able to tell off the bat that they were all good people. Wilson was extremely selfless and the boys also have good character. The two that showed up to attack us only strengthen these opinions. Besides they only have so long.”
Joan blinked. “What do you mean?”

Dr. Oddswell sighed and put down the paper he had in his hand. “Bendy’s illness attacks happen almost daily. That is the most I have ever heard for a single individual. Other subjects suffer attacks a couple times a month and at worst a couple a week. He should only have a few weeks to live, but he has already survived a month in such a state. Quite honestly, I am completely floored by him. There is a certain spark to them...,” the doctor trailed off thoughtfully. The detectives stared at the doctor wide-eyed and silent.

The doctor straightened his coat and refocused on the women. “Look, detectives. I am fully aware of you and the pursuit you had of my old friend. You had been part of the problem, instead of the solution. I don’t hold you, nor any government or office of authority in high regards at this time. I suggest that if you want to become part of the solution, you clear those boys’ names up quick and help me get the public aware of the danger we are all in. I can’t help much, but I can do more than let those who are suffering wither away in hospital beds and homes without answers and hope.”

“You want us to help you?” Ringtail asked in surprise.

“Help the boys first,” Dr. Oddswell practically commanded. Featherworth could feel Ringtail tense. “They are the priority.”

“Why?” Joan asked curiously. “Shouldn’t informing the public come first?”

“Those two took over the mission Wilson had been on. They are out to find the cure for this terrible plague, before it can really become rampant.”

“How?” Ringtail shook her head in amazement. “They’re not doctors. I would think you would find the answer before them.”

“No, this isn’t the first time the world has faced this. Wilson discovered the best chance we’ve got, from a people long before us. If the boys can pull this off, they very well may end up saving the world.” Dr. Oddswell smirked with an odd glint in his eyes. “So, what do you say detective? Want to help save the world?”

Chapter End Notes

Hahaha! I love Oddswell! He's the best!
So, there we go. The detectives just keep falling further and further into the inky mess. I had fun typing up this chapter. Way too much fun.
I hoped you liked it and that you have a good rest of your week.
Art is still over on the tumblr if you are interested.

https://www.tumblr.com/blog/theinkymystery

Now then...
Will they accept Dr. Oddswell suggestions? Where did the Cupbros disappear to? And when will the Warners terrorize the (not so) peaceful city of Toon Town?
Tune in next week on Bendy and Boris in the Inky Mystery to find out!
Until then TAP out.
Chapter Summary

Xedo's home. It's time to get to work.

Chapter Notes

Hiya, lovelies!
Oh, my stars! You are amazing! I have had such a wonderful week thanks to all your comments, kudos, bookmarks, and art. Thank you! Thank you! I am such a happy ghost! I can't even explain to you how happy you've made me this week.
AAAAAAAHHHHH! I never, ever thought there would be so many of you reading this!
Okay, so onto things that aren't me gushing about you readers.
First off. Dot has started showing up in the comments. Hehe. I don't know if I should be entertained or alarmed. I choose the first. ^^
Second off. I want to share some music. Just cause I can and Pheonixfeather liked it.
And lastly, holy cow, this thing was long! I think it's the longest chapter I've ever written.
Okay, I'm done. Enjoy the reading.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Cz3k5rtD4A
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eco4z98nIQY
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUw-vMjzuPM
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYL0OnGFEcQ

And have fun.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Xedo was exhausted. It had been the longest drive of his life and not because of how long it took. He now understood the reports that the Warners had sent several individuals to the insane asylum. He almost wanted to check into a room himself when the buildings of his home city appeared.

Now, he was back at the office. The usual rush of activity was comforting to the fox. Journalists and editors zoomed around, organizing the next articles to be printed. The smell of coffee, ink, and paper was a calming balm to Xedo’s frayed nerves. Wiston was back home at the moment, and the Warners most likely were with him, since they hadn’t shown up here. He dreaded what he was going to go home to, but the much-needed break was welcomed, so he choose not to think of it.

“Hey! Tiptail! Welcome back!” Xedo looked up and fought back a sneer. Standing in front of his
desk was Jeremy Fairfax. He was a young man, handsome and cocky. He was also Xedo’s undeclared rival, at least according to Jeremy. He was the kind of man to charm his way into friendships and inner circles, just to turn around and use those friends and groups as stepping stones in his ambitions. He had a gleaming smile, heavy light-shaded hair that looked like silk and a good build. His strong jaw made him appear to be a modern prince charming.

The two journalists had opposite opinions, when it came to their careers. Xedo believed that they were to report the truth: the facts that were needed to inform the public so they could be aware of their surroundings and develop their own knowledge and opinions. In this regard, the people could act as they saw fit, with a clear unbiased understanding of the truth.

Jeremy believed in sales. He wanted to catch peoples’ eye and have them eat up the news. He wanted them to always be coming back for more. He dramatized the news and worked to make it interesting.

Their boss, Robert Sykes, loved their work. Xedo’s articles built trust and loyal readers. Jeremy’s articles sold quickly and also built loyalty with the public. With them together, the Toon Town Times was one of the fastest and most popular papers in the area. Many of their articles even went as far as national, selling their articles to other papers to use. Mr. Sykes had a very successful business indeed.

Xedo didn’t mind success, it was the falsehoods that Jeremy and others like him were able to get away with that left a bitter taste in his mouth. The world of news could easily build or break people. It strongly influenced public opinion and Xedo didn’t believe in swaying people one way or the other. He took into consideration that responsibility, and he was insulted when others did not.

“Fairfax,” Xedo acknowledged neutrally. Still, Xedo believed he was above such petty competition. What he did was too important for him to get tied up in some ridiculous race for the next big story.

The man chuckled at the fox’s cold shoulder. “Seems we are both working on the same story.” Xedo twitched his ear in annoyance. He didn’t want to talk to this man.

“Oh?” he said, looking down to his notes and the article Jeremy had written on the train incident that involved the two boys Xedo was following.

“Yep! The bees’ knees that has this town buzzing. I’m talkin’ about the B-bros,” Jeremy said with a bright smile.

Xedo closed his eyes for a second, so he wouldn’t roll them. “Who came up with that name? They sound like a musical number.”

“It’s catchy, right?” Jeremy said. “They didn’t have a last name and they had the same first initial, everyone in the office thought it was clever, so we ran with it. It flows a lot nicer than ‘Bendy and Boris’ too.”

Xedo just gave a light nod as he organized his notes and thoughts. He didn’t need to give their full biography, but he did need to touch a bit on their past. It made them more real and understandable to the readers. There were still large parts of the narrative missing. Many back in Sillyvision wouldn’t have been surprised if Bendy had murdered someone (except those closest to him it seemed), but none could place Bendy at the scene of the crime until after the owl was hit. There had been the idea he had tampered with the car and had accomplices, but no one could identify anyone for sure. There might have been two or three, but no clear details. It was a confusing case to say the least. And why was Boris included in this if he wasn’t anywhere around at the time?

The arson, at least, made more sense. Revenge against a former employer was a common enough
occurrence. The problem was the demon’s reaction at finding the place burning. He had panicked, nearly thrown himself into the flames, and when he was stopped, it seemed he would have attacked anyone around him. That wasn’t the reaction of someone who had planned the attack. If it was an act, it deserved an Oscar. When Xedo did some digging around the employer though, things got fishy again. The man had taken the insurance money and ran. He abandoned the building and entire business. Xedo was meaning to investigate Pete more. If he showed a history of this sort of thing, Xedo would expect insurance fraud. Again, another thing wrongly pinned to the demon and wolf, if it was true.

Then, there were the break-ins at the police station and the boys’ apartment. Did they run off with the journal, and were just trying to cover their tracks? No one in Warnerburg had mentioned seeing them with a journal. Was that why they went through all of that stuff in Warnerburg, just to get a stolen bag back? What was so important about the owl’s book?


“Sorry. I have a lot on my mind,” Xedo said.

“Well grand, ‘cause that was what I was asking about,” Jeremy stated. “If you’re this distracted you must have found some good stuff back in their homestead.”

“Yeah,” Xedo said slowly. He didn’t like the look in the other man’s eyes. “Ya know the office has been guessing. I think some of them even have a pool going. You can help us break it!” Xedo felt his muzzle twitch. He wanted to hiss that the boys weren’t some betting horses. Once again, he was able to hold himself in check. Jeremy didn’t seem to notice Xedo’s anger, nor his silence. He just kept talking. “See, some fellas think they’re young recruits for the mob. That the owl was a test and they are being sent around the nation to take out the competition. Others think they’re from a troubled family life, and they’ve gone rouge. The janitor thinks they’re escaped experiments, and Phil says they’re spies.” Jeremy threw a thumb toward Phil’s desk in the far corner. He was usually writing up the sports column, and he enjoyed his work. It was not secret though, that Phil enjoyed his conspiracy theories. Not to the point of being paranoid, more like a side hobby that he would talk about occasionally. Xedo fisted his paw. He was done wasting time here. “Now I think it’s a lot simpler than that. See, with the demon’s repeated lead in these criminal acts, he has something to prove. Those two obviously--.”

“Look, Fairfax. I am busy,” Xedo cut him off. "I need to get going to see what I can learn about that nurse and the doctor that got involved with them,” Xedo said, pulling his stuff into folders and his bag.

“See! That’s what I mean! These boys are the talk right now! I came to warn ya that you can’t get in with the nurse or doctor. The cops got Oddswell under lock and key and the hospital isn’t allowing anyone near the nurse,” Jeremy said with a shrug.

“So, we have no leads,” Xedo concluded with a sigh.

“Didn’t say that!” Jeremy tapped the side of his nose with a smug smile. “See, I was able to find some goods.” Xedo tiredly cocked his head to the side. One of his ears turned forward in interest. Jeremy continued. “They were spotted at the school. I chatted to the office kids. Found a cute little miss that had talked to the boys! It took a while, she didn’t crack to my questions, but I was able to piece together that she was the one that gave them the doctor’s address.” Jeremy grinned like he won a prize. “And get this pal! They broke in the same day.”

“Broke in?” Xedo blinked in surprised.
“Yes! Slipped in through a window. They didn’t come back out,” Jeremy said.

“Who saw that?” Xedo asked.

“A reliable source.” Jeremy smirked. The muscles around Xedo’s eyes tightened. This was his game. The man was goading Xedo to go, to try and do better, to fail so Jeremy looked better. He wanted the fox to be as underhanded as him. He wanted the fox to twist facts.

“Fairfax, what’s your opinion of those two?” Xedo asked.

Jeremy shrugged. “Who cares? They’re selling, so my opinion is as long as they keep doing crazy things, I like them.”

Xedo sighed. “Then what are you going to write?”

“That they hunted down this doctor and broke into his place.” Jeremy winked. “You’ll have to read my article to find out the rest.” Xedo clenched his jaw. He suddenly stood and startled the other journalist. “Hey, where you going, pal?” Jeremy moved back at the sudden action, even though Xedo was a head shorter than him.

“To do my own investigating.” He turned to walk away, but paused. “And they were starving orphans.”

Jeremy turned his head. “Uh?”

Xedo looked over his shoulder. “They were starving orphans that taught themselves how to survive and get decent work. They exposed a bad cop and only stole food when they didn’t seem to have any other option.” Xedo’s words were ice and his expression blank. “Stick that in your pool.” With that the fox turned on his heel and walked out of the busy offices. He paused outside the building and thought.

He had a couple of ideas. The challenge in Jeremy’s eyes came back to him, and Xedo narrowed his eyes. If he wanted to push the fox to do something crazy, then fine. Xedo would do something crazy, but to pull this off he would need to recruit a little help.

“So, you want us to do what again?” Wakko asked as he shoved another hand full of chips in his mouth.

Xedo sighed. “Help me get into the hospital. I need to talk to the nurse that was working with Dr. Ryan Oddswell.”

“And he’s the guy that Bendy wanted to see?” Yakko guessed with a hand on his chin.

“Yes,” Xedo said. From the corner of his eye he watched Wiston go get a drink and come back. The younger fox looked exhausted from being with the Warners all day. Xedo was lucky that it seemed they took opposing sides on each other’s destructive natures. The Warners enjoyed frustrating Wiston by putting out his fires, and Wiston got revenge by (somehow) stopping their pranks. Mostly. Xedo feared when they realized they could work together.

“Because he’s the expert on Bendy’s sickness?” Dot asked.

“Sickness?” Xedo asked.

The three shared a surprised look. “You didn’t know?” Yakko asked with wide black eyes.
Xedo turned his head and knit his brows. “No. No one has said anything about Bendy being sick. What is it?”

The Warners shared another look. Each had worry in their eyes.

“Should we tell him?” Wakko asked.

“Uuuuuuuuuuuh, I don’t know. Our pal is a pretty private person.” Yakko scratched his cheek.

Dot sighed. “Emphasize on pretty.” Little hearts floating up from around her head. Dot’s brothers rolled their eyes.

“Even if you don’t talk about it, I’ll have to ask the nurse. If he’s sick with something that needs a specialist, then some of their desperate actions may be excusable,” Xedo said. “It would explain a lot, actually.”

The Warners blinked as the fox mused to himself. “Then, I definitely will need to understand what this sickness is and what Oddswell is about.”

He looked back up at the three siblings. “Please, tell me everything you know.”

“Hey there, bub.” Yakko suddenly raised up a hand to stop him. “Bendy is our pal! We ain’t gonna sell him out to the papers. You can go make your paycheck at someone else’s expense.”

“Yeah!” the other two chimed in.

Xedo sighed. “We’ve already been over this! I want to understand where they are coming from. I need to report the truth and have my facts straight. If they are trying to find a doctor for Bendy, then them running from capture at the train is put in a different light, correct?”

The Warners deflated from their contentious positions. “Oh, yeah,” Wakko said.

“So, will you help me?” Xedo asked again.

“Help you with what again?” Yakko asked.

Xedo smacked his paw to his forehead.

“They’ve been doing this all day, bro,” Wiston warned him from the kitchen table with his drink in his paw.

“Fantastic,” Xedo muttered and prepared himself.

“What seems to be the trouble young man?” The gentle deer doctor asked.

Wakko shifted uncomfortably on the paper covered patient table. “Well, ya see doc, I haven’t been able to use my talent for two weeks now and I have a cold.” Wakko coughed into his fist horrendously loud and very obnoxiously. Xedo grimaced in the corner of the room behind the doctor. If he over did it like this the whole time, they would be kicked out for sure.

The fox journalist, Wiston, and the other two Warners stood and watched as the doctor worked. The doctor tilted his head, angling his antlers slightly as he used a light to look down the boy’s throat. The doctor hummed to himself. “It doesn’t seem to be irritated. What is your talent?” Wakko shifted again, causing the paper to crinkle loudly.
“Well, my talent lets me see around the story and the fourth wall. We love giving TAP a hard time. Since things went sideways, I forgot what’s ahead and can’t see it,” Wakko explained.

The doctor blinked. “The story?”

“It’s hard to explain,” Yakko piped up. “We, uuuuuuuuh, could have shown you, but,”

“With it all but gone, you’ll just have to trust us.” Dot smiled sweetly.

The doctor turned to look at them, then up at Xedo like he expected further explanation from him. The fox shrugged. “Sadly, they’re right.” He wasn’t going to try and understand them either, let alone explain such things to others. There wasn’t enough money in the world to change his mind either.

“And they have been in your care for a week?” the doctor asked.

“Yes, they came on a road trip with my brother and me. He was already having difficulties,” Xedo said. At least that much was true. He may not have understood what the Warner boy’s talent was, but he had been able to figure out it wasn’t working.

The deer nodded, causing his antlers to sway with the motion. “I haven’t heard of a case like this. No traumatic experience, no reason to stop using it, no psychological block. Your talent isn’t physically demanding, is it?”

Wakko’s wandering eyes snapped back to the deer. He shook his head vigorously.

“We were wondering if he should stay for observation?” Xedo suggested lightly. The deer looked back at him again with a skeptical look. “It’s only been getting worse.”

The doctor sighed and nodded. “There’s not much for home treatment here. We’ll check him in for overnight observation.”

“And we’ll stay with him,” Dot said.

The deer frowned. “There are rules on visiting hours.” Dot’s smile dropped.

“But we’re always together,” she said with her lower lip trembling.

“You saying we can’t stay with our brother?” Yakko asked as he put a comforting hand on Dot’s shoulder. Her eyes started to water and she sniffled.

“I’m sorry. I can’t change the rules.”

“But he’s our brother!” Dot exclaimed.

The doctor gave Xedo a wide-eyed glance. The saying, deer-in-the-headlights, came to the fox’s mind, but he quickly dismissed the adage. The fox shrugged and let the three work on the poor deer. It wasn’t long before the Warners had a room and secured a night for all of them. Xedo and Wiston wouldn’t be staying. After several promises, oaths, and warnings, the Warners didn’t seem like they would cause the medical staff problems for their stay. Hopefully.

“You stay with them while I do this,” Xedo told Wiston.

"Please take me with you! I’ll even tell you where I hide all my matches and fire starters!” Wiston begged.
Xedo shook his head. “Someone has to stay.” Wiston moaned and plopped into a nearby uncomfortable seat. He pouted and refused to look to the other fox.

With everything settled, the fox slipped out and headed to the room that held Ms. Red Hot Riding Hood.

His mind raced with the information he had and that he lacked. She was a former employee of this very hospital. She had gotten in trouble with some patients after a...handsy experience. Instead of apologizing to the inappropriate patients, she'd snapped and quit. She bought the house of Dr. Oddswell and apparently became his private assistant.

He passed a nurses’ station.

“Excuse me sir?” Xedo looked up to see a petite bird waving at him. She was the nurse assigned to Wakko.

“Ah, yes Ms. Feathertin?” He snapped into focus.

She smiled. “You can call me Dovil. Is there anything I can help you with?”

“No. That’s okay. I’m just heading to the cafeteria,” Xedo explained pleasantly.

Dovil nodded. “If you or any of the children need anything, let me know.”

“Thank you, ma’am.” Xedo inclined his head slightly and turned again.

The hospital was a bit of a maze, it would be easy to get lost. Luckily, Xedo’s talent involved tracking and direction, so he weaved his way through easily. Finally, he came to the closed door and with a light tap entered.

“Ms. Hood?” He opened the door to find a surprised looking woman. She looked a bit worse for wear. Her head had a bandage wrapped around it. She had a square bandage over her left eye. There were bandages around her wrists and a cast, it seemed, on her ankle. She was propped up into a sitting position with pillows, and her casted foot was elevated. An IV dripped from her arm.

“You’re not the doctor. Are you new? I haven’t seen you before,” she said, straightening up as much as she could in her position.

“No, ma’am. My name is Xedo Tiptail I’m-.”

“Ah! A reporter. Well,” she opened a book from her bedside table, “you can leave.”

Xedo paused. He looked to the door, then shut it and stepped further into the room. He noted that the woman tensed, even though her eye stayed fixed on her book. “I work for the Toon Town Times.”

“I know, and I have nothing to say to you. Leave before I call for help and have you thrown out,” she threatened with a sneer and glared at him.

“I’m sorry, Ms. Hood, but I have some important questions that only you can help me with,” he said, taking another step forward. She opened her mouth, but Xedo talked over her. If he could get her to listen maybe she would open up. “Dr. Oddswell is in jail, and I can’t reach him. I have no one else to help me understand why Bendy and Boris came to Toon Town to see him.” A hard glint entered her eyes at their names. Again, Xedo didn’t give her the chance to speak. “I believe there is more going on here than what everyone has bought. Those two don’t act like killers on the run. I’ve done the research, I went to their hometown, and I dug for what I could. Some things aren’t adding up. If they
are innocent, I want to know. I am here for the truth, Ms. Hood. Nothing more or less,” he said. He squared his shoulders and put his hands behind his back.

Ms. Hood glared daggers at him with her one eye. Xedo feared that he wasn’t going to get anywhere here. Suddenly, she sighed and seemed to deflate. “I don’t believe you. I haven’t met a single journalist that hasn’t twisted their stories yet.”

“Not true.” Xedo couldn’t help his smirk. “I’m here.”

“Where were you a year ago?” the woman suddenly asked.

Xedo blinked at the sudden question. “A year? Ah, um, I was still back home. I hadn’t moved here yet.”

Ms. Hood put away her book and stared at him for a long moment. Xedo kept eye contact unflinchingly. She narrowed her eye, then rolled it. “Fine, pull up a chair, fox. This isn’t going to be short,” she said after she found whatever it was she was looking for in him. Xedo almost couldn’t believe he was so luckily.

“Thank you, Ms. Hood,” Xedo said as he went to pull an uncomfortable chair from the wall. Why were they always uncomfortable? A mystery for another day.

“Don’t. It’s the doctor that wants to get the truth out there. We haven’t had a journalist succeed yet.” The woman lifted her chin. Xedo paused in his task, his ear raised and he tilted his head at the woman.

“What do you mean by that?” Xedo asked.

She shrugged gently, then winced. She didn’t lose the somewhat menacing smirk on her face. “I’m not sure, Mr. Tiptail. It seems whenever there is one of you that are willing to listen and write about what I’m about to tell you, they either disappear or never write the article.” She raised the hand that didn’t have an IV to wave in a ‘what-can-you-do’ fashion. Xedo narrowed his eyes and his tail twitched. He went back to positioning his chair and took a seat. “I hope you have better luck.”

Xedo turned this thought in his head. It seemed to line up with the paranoia that had been circling Sillyvision, that there were more people involved than the brothers and Wilson. How big was this? Wasn’t Bendy just sick?

“So, what questions do you have for me, Mista News Reporter Man?” Ms. Hood said in a mockingly excited tone.

Xedo didn’t react. He reached into his coat pocket and withdrew his notebook and a pen. “Why did the boys come to Oddswell?”

“Bendy has ink illness and Oddswell is the only man in the world that seems to be doing anything about it,” Ms. Hood said.

Ink illness? The fox had never heard of such a thing. “What is ink illness?”

“A deadly sickness that acts very unnaturally. It causes the patients pain, fever, fatigue, coughing fits, and ink attacks.” Xedo opened his mouth to ask, but Ms. Hood continued. “An ink attack is when the patient starts coughing up an ink-like substance and begins melting.”

Xedo’s eyes widened in horror. Ms. Hood nodded in understanding. “It’s a terribly painful experience and horrifying to watch. When the attack stops and the patient returns to normal, their
bodies even seem to reabsorb some of the ink they had been melting into. Eventually, their luck runs out, and they just become a puddle,” she stated coldly. Even so, she stared at the bed sheets with a haunted look. It affected her more than she let on.

Xedo swallowed. He hadn’t expected this. “Why hasn’t anyone talked about this before? Why is Dr. Oddswell the only one doing anything, as you claim?”

She dropped her head back on the pillow and closed her eye. “That is a good question. It seems there are people out there that want this thing to spread and to keep it in the dark.” Xedo’s jaw nearly dropped.

“Why!” he couldn’t help gasping.

“That’s been my question since I found out about all this. Dr. Oddswell and Wilson had been sure it was because there was a way to stop it. Though, neither of them could ever give a reason why someone would want this to spread.” The woman seemed to age before him. Her shoulders seemed weighed down and her face was pale. She opened her eye and stared over to the fox. This time her gaze was gentle and sorrowful.

“Wilson Wiseton? The archaeologist and researcher that was working for Yen University?” Xedo asked.

Hood nodded. “That’s the one. He and Odds were old pals. He’s the one that discovered the illness and brought the first cases of it to the doc to research.”

“*He* discovered it?” Xedo’s ear twitched. Shouldn’t it have been the doctor?

Hood nodded slowly. “See, this is one of the things I could never figure out. I never got to meet the bird, so I only knew him through stories and letters that he would send the doc. This isn’t the first time this illness has existed. I guess some ancient race that doesn’t exist anymore, dealt with it. Wilson figured out from some old relics that there was this machine that created a cure for the illness. He was on some ridiculous mission to find it and fix it.” She sighed. “Both of us thought he was going to get himself killed. Now look what happened.” She threw her free arm up to herself as proof.

“But I don’t understand. Why can’t Oddswell figure out a cure?” Xedo asked. His pen was flying across the paper, he wasn’t even looking at his hand or the fast marks of his pen.

“It’s not like a virus or bacteria we have ever seen. We have no way of combating it. It’s even easy to miss in blood work unless you know what you’re looking for,” Hood said sounding tired and rehearsed.

“But I don’t understand. Why can’t Oddswell figure out a cure?” Xedo asked. His pen was flying across the paper, he wasn’t even looking at his hand or the fast marks of his pen.

“‘Ink like. It’s the closest thing that the doc had to compare it to,” Hood said.

“How many times have you explained this illness to others?” he asked.

“Many dozens. I don’t keep count.” She waved a dismissive hand. “And before you ask, yes, it was always those that were sick or their families.”

“How many cases of this has Dr. Oddswell worked on?” Xedo asked with a serious frown.

“In total?” Hood tilted her head to get a better look at the serious fox. She got a thoughtful look on her face. “Today he has had one hundred and sixteen patients.”
Xedo’s furry brow shot up in surprise. He hadn’t expected that. How could so many people be sick and no one notice? Hood had a knowing smirk on her face, like she had read his mind. “Those are only the ones that have been able to find Oddswell. The doctor believes there could be thousands.”

Xedo’s pen stopped. He stared at her in silence. “Thousands,” he breathed.

Red Hood nodded. “The time it takes symptoms to appear varies from person to person, so does the intensity of their suffering and the longevity of their lives while suffering. All inconsistent.”

“How does it spread?” Xedo leaned forward. Hood shrugged and winced again. “You don’t know? There must be something. Can it be quarantined?”

Hood snorted in a rather unfeminine fashion. “We have gotten cases from people that didn’t have any contact with other known carriers. There isn’t a shared source. And the disease will reject people.”

“What?” Xedo’s lips pulled back in surprise. “Reject people?”

Hood nearly shrugged, but stopped herself. “That’s why doc and I are fine. We aren’t carriers. The ink just doesn’t mix. That’s why most of the doctor’s patients are free to go home. Only the severe cases stayed at the clinic, and that’s so they could get help when they have their attacks.”

The woman saw the question in his eyes. “There were three patients before Bendy showed up. The attacks are a consistent as to their severity. Maybe twice a month? A few times a week at worst?”

“Is his illness severe?”

Hood turned her head and made a so-so motion with her hand. “We were alarmed by how often he had attacks, but he isn’t the worst case when it comes to the ink. His pain level though, is another issue. In ways his case is the worst we’ve ever seen, but in other ways he’s only showing the beginning indicators.”

Xedo looked down at his notes. This was earth shaking news. Hood continued. “The doctor was worried and intrigued.”

“Why?”

“Bendy has an attack almost daily,” Hood whispered. Xedo nearly dropped his pen. “By the doc’s calculations, he should have died weeks ago, but he hasn’t. That’s one of the things that so frustrating.” Ms. Hood balled her fists and wiped at her eye. She turned away from the journalist for a moment. Xedo took the time to sort through the information. There were a few things he had to follow up. He didn’t have much time. He had to be fast.

“Is this why you were attacked? Because of your work with the doctor?” Xedo asked.

“No,” she hissed. Her watery eye lit with a fire. “No. They wanted Bendy and Boris. At first I thought they were after Oddswell mainly, but he sounded like more of a side prize. I have a guess why.”

Xedo waited with baited breath. Hood looked over at him and then lifted her chin. “I don’t think I should tell you, though.”

Xedo deflated. He checked the time in the room. He wanted to know, but time was against him. “Alright then.” He decided to relent. “The rumors about Dr. Ryan Oddswell’s experiments at the University, they were connected to this illness?”
“Yes. They were some of his first patients. He had a lot more resources there,” Hood said slowly.

Xedo nodded. “Didn’t he show anyone his research?”

“Of course, but it wasn’t as extensive as our knowledge now. By the time he came to realize how truly dire this was, he had lost credibility.”

“But what about others?”

“They ended up a lot like those journalists that wanted to write about the illness. Silenced or gone.” Hood sighed.

“And the police?” Xedo demanded.

Hood shook her head. “Someone or something is stopping any investigation.”

Xedo blinked. This was questionable at a conspiracy level. Something fishy was up. People at the school, the police station, newspapers has been silenced. How big was this invisible enemy? It didn’t add up. Ms. Hood mistook his quiet and thoughtful stare.

“If you decide to do something, don’t expect any help from anyone. This life is hell,” she said.

Xedo looked up to her one gentle eye. She smiled sorrowfully. “Why do you do it then?”

She huffed. “It’s the first time I’ve ever felt like I’ve made a big difference for someone else. Many of the patients come in scared, confused, lost, and in pain. I’m used to that kind of hopelessness, so I can relate. The doc needs help too. I guess you could say I’m a glutton for punishment.” She looked down at her sheets again and smiled. It was the first real smile Xedo had seen the whole visit. Xedo grit his fangs.

He stood so suddenly, he startled the woman. “Then consider one more as your ally.” He put the paw that held his pen to his chest. “I’ll do everything in my power to get this story out, or give up the rights to my tail. Ms. Hood I need to leave now, but I have one last question for you.”

She looked up at him in a tired, but gentle gaze. “Is it alright for me to use the information you have shared with me today? Do I need to go find Bendy to get his permission? I know medical records are sensitive-.“

Hood burst into giggles. She wrapped her arms around her chest. “Ow! Don’t make me laugh!” She gasped and snorted. Tears pricked her good eye. “It hurts!” Xedo startled and tripped on the chair as he stepped back with her reaction. He hadn’t expected that.

“Ms. Hood are you okay?” he asked as he straightened himself out. She got her laughing under control and turned a smirk on Xedo.

She ignored his question completely. “You are the first fella to ever ask! What a woot! Ya’ know, this was the one thing the doc and I argued about the most. I think of the infected as patients with all the privacy laws intact. Dr. Oddswell claims otherwise, and his excuses will never be the same one twice. I know the real reason.” She grinned. “If they are considered subject volunteers to an experiment, the laws on publishing the research are a lot less strict. Odds has them sign a contract stating that our findings can go out to the public openly. Bendy is the only one I mentioned by name. If it clears his name, though, I don’t think he would mind.” She pointed out. “This was supposed to be brought to the public. It’s what Odds wants, so do what you can do.” Xedo blinked. Hood leaned back into her pillows, looking amused and exhausted.
“He’s a bit eccentric, isn’t he?” Xedo stated more then asked. Hood chuckled. The fox moved the chair back. “Thank you for the information, Ms. Hood. I will do my best. I hope you get well soon.” Xedo gave her a small bow of his head.

She snorted. “The sooner I’m better, the sooner I’ll be in jail with the doc.” Xedo didn’t have a response to that. “Hope your paper works.” She waved without any energy.

Suddenly, the door opened. “Alright Red, I’m here with your-who the cuss are you!” An angry looking bunny nurse glared daggers at the fox. Xedo had jumped at her entrance and now his ears folded to his skull.

“Shut up, Fanny. You’re giving me a headache,” Hood grumbled. “And leave him alone. He’s my new friend.”

The bunny straightened up and sneered. Her long black ears were folded back behind her nurse’s cap. She was curvy and beautiful in a somewhat dark way. “You aren’t supposed to have any guests! I had those cop guards shooed away because I thought this wouldn’t be a problem. Cussing idiot.” The bunny marched into the room.


“I’d like to see you try, Red.” Fanny smirked. Her glare was back when she looked up to the fox. “And you-.”

Hood reached out and lifted her hand in a stopping motion. “Please, Fanny. You never saw him.” Fanny narrowed her eyes at the fox, then at Red. “Please. It’s so important.” The wounded woman looked up to her pleadingly. “If our old friendship had ever meant anything to you. Please.” The rabbit woman thinned her lips and took a deep breath.

She looked upon the woman. “You really want me in that star fallen jail with you,” she muttered. She turned her sharp eyes on Xedo. “Get out, before I change my mind.”

Xedo was at the door before either woman could blink. He quickly made his way down the hall to collect his brother. This story suddenly got much bigger than a pair of boys running across the country. The biggest story of his career, of the decade, hell, even of the century! But at what cost? Xedo grimly planned his next move as he briskly walked down the clean, cold halls of the hospital.

Chapter End Notes

"TAAAAP!"
Holy sugar and ice tea! You're back...hehe...hi.
"That's right, you specter!" Dot jabbed a finger at the ghost. "What the heck was that? You had us practically just wave as we went by! You edited us out mostly!"
Sorry! This thing was already so long, I couldn't have you three-hy, where's Wakko?
"Where do you think, kid?" Yakko popped up on the ghost's other side. "You did this to him. Do you know how much guessing it takes to find this place without him? We're lucky we didn't end up in another story!"
Sorry! It wasn't me!
"YES, IT WAS! You took away my brother's Talent!" Dot accused. "Now, he's in the hospital because of you!"
It was the plot!
"We read the plot," Yakko argued.
"Do you remember the plot?
The ghost was met with silence.
Well, there you go.
"We're going to have our revenge~," Yakko sang.
I know. -_-.
Anyway, this chapter was supposed to be a two-parter, half to Xedo and half to the Cupbros, but as you can see it just kept going. So, the Cupbros get their own chapter next. ^^
"Can we mess with them again? They need to learn a lesson about staying put when others are busy," Dot stated.
Eeeeeeesh, not this next chapter.
"Then, I guess we'll just mess with you." Yakko smiled.
T-T
TAP out.
"Hehehe. Don't think you can run away!" Dot said.
A Cup Half Empty

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

The Cup brothers let them get away. Now they have to tell the boss...

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello!
It's so good to see ya again!
Good news! I got the author's notes to myself again!
Bad news!
The Warners have taken over the comments section and kicked me out. I guess they're angrier then I had thought about Wakko's Talent. So, all of you that comment, please bear with them for a few chapters. I'm sure they'll stop when they want back in the story or get bored.
Besides all of that, we have Cups and Mugs! This was really fun to type, so I hope you enjoy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Cuphead groaned into the counter top again.

“Ah, c’mon Cup. It won’t be that bad.” Mugs tried to cheer him up. The two were sitting in a shady bar that the boys frequented when they were in the city. They were sitting up at the bar counter next to each other. No one else was near them, but they weren’t the only ones there. Card tables and booths held other costumers and regulars. The lay out was simple and promised dark corners to share hidden conversations and questionable deals. The elder brother wouldn’t be surprised to find some of the schmucks in suits here were of the bigger mobs from the city’s underworld. He guessed one of the most shocking things here was that he and Mugs weren’t even the youngest ones here. Even the bartender was some young ram that could have been goin’ to that university in town.

Cups turned his head to glare at Mugs. One of his eyes was covered by his hair foam.

“Not bad? Mugs, he nearly killed us last time! He almost got you! That was when we had some good news to report. We didn’t even know we had screwed up!” He lifted his head and leaned toward his brother. “This time, we got nothin’ to report worth reportin’, idiot! We lost them again, they met that doc, they still have that star fallen journal page, and this time we got no lead! No idea where they headed. Hell, they could be reading it! The cops have the doc, and he saw our faces! It’s only a matter of time before they start lookin’ for us. We’re screwed, moron!” Cups grabbed his shirt and shook him.

Mugs grabbed Cups’ fists to stop him. “But we did get the journal from the police in Sillyvision. We fixed that mistake! A-and he’s fixed stuff like this for us before! He can make it so no one finds us!”
“We weren’t on his bad side then!” Cups growled.

“B-but we’re his best! We’ll be able to catch the doctor. Besides, it’s only a matter of time before Bendy and Boris show up again.” Mugs tried to calm Cups down.

Cups let go of Mugs with a small shove. “Idiot. It'll be too late by then. We’re not getting out of this scot-free.” The elder stood up and stuffed his hands in his jacket pockets. “Let’s get this over with. We’ve already procrastinated this for a week.”

Mugs swung his arms to catch himself from falling off his chair. After he saved himself, he stood and spun to catch up to Cups. The two headed to the door that led to the basement. The barkeeper didn’t even glance their way as the cup brothers walked in. Cup and Mugs walked down the creaky wooden stairs and into the storage area of the bar. Boxes, crates, stored wine and alcohol were scattered about in an organized mess. The room was cold with brick walls and worn wood floorboards like upstairs. The lights were dimmed by age, but not terrible. A few cobwebs were tucked away in corners, but otherwise the place was clean enough. The two silently made their way to the back wall and checked that they were alone.

Cup sighed. Mugs leaned forward a bit on his toes and fell back to his heels. “It’ll be okay, bro. Maybe he’ll just leave us a wall message. He did that a couple of times when we were chasing the owl. Remember that?” Cup snorted, then lifted his hand. He traced the symbols he had long since memorized onto the brick wall. The boxes and barrels rattled lightly when Cup finished. Glass clinked together and the little amount of dust in the room was stirred up. Energy crackled around the boys and the wall. The symbols glowed into existence, a blazing red, before a hole in the floor opened up. Cup and Mugs took a few steps back and Cup narrowed his eyes. They were getting a visit, not that Cup was surprised. He truly did expect the worst. He was ready to fight his way out of the basement. Though he didn’t believe he could win a fight against the boss, he thought maybe he had a chance to escape.

To both the brothers’ surprise, it wasn’t their boss that appeared before them. Instead, a tall man in a three-piece suit twisted up out of the seemingly bottomless hole before it closed. He grinned, his lips stretched underneath his pencil thin mustache. He adjusted his bowtie and took a small bow like he just preformed a magic trick. “Hello, boys!” His deep, smooth voice greeted as he straightened again. Cup grimaced as he gazed up at the man. He really hated the boss’ right hand man. He had such an ego and enjoyed stepping on anyone he saw as lower then himself. And that was most people. The man tilted his stupid, square head and Cup felt his bitterness toward the square headed man turn his stomach.

(Insert theme music [here](#))

“Hiya, King Dice,” Mugman greeted with a wave and smile. “Gee, we weren’t expecting you.”

The dice man smirked at Mugs, but before he could speak Cups stepped forward. “What the cuss are you doing here?” Cuphead demanded with a glare.

“Cup!” Mugs gasped.

King Dice chuckled. “You think the boss has all the time in the world to babysit you?”

Cup sneered at the tall, well-dressed man. “So, he sent his errand boy?”

“You’re a week late.” Dice returned Cups’ sneer with a dark grin. “So, yes. You get me. You also get to convince me that you should leave this basement alive.” He crossed his arms and his eyes flashed green.
Cuphead tensed. He was ready for anything. King Dice wasn’t a strong as the boss, but he had a bunch of powers. So many that few even knew what his Talent was, compared to his powers. Cups thought it might be some sort of luck thing. Anyway, the dice man had developed the powers from the boss after working for him for so long. Supposedly, the longer anyone worked loyally in the boss’ service, the more powerful they got. Cuphead and Mugman hadn’t been part of the organization for long compared to others, but the amount of work they had accomplished with their finger guns had impressed many. At least, that was until the stupid owl slipped past them and out of the city. It had been cat and mouse for months after that.

“Best to report now and not waste any more time,” King Dice said leaning forward a bit.

“Yes, sir!” Mugs said quickly, before Cups could say anything to get the man angrier. “We were able to find Bendy, the demon and Boris, the wolf here. They were with a doctor that was working with the owl. His name is Dr. Ryan Oddswell. He was arrested by the cops last night.”

King Dice nodded and looked thoughtful. “Why does he sound familiar?”

Mugs blinked. “Um, he’s a lizard guy.” He lifted his hand a bit taller then himself. “About this tall. Big eyes, glasses, and weird hands. Used to be at the huge school here.”

“Ah!” Dice snapped his fingers. “I remember him now. That egotistical one.” Cup nearly rolled his eyes at the irony. “He’ll have to be dealt with. We ruined his reputation last year, but it doesn’t seem to have stopped him.” King Dice clicked his tongue on the roof of his mouth. “Some people are so stubborn.”

“Are you telling us to do it?” Cups asked, tilting his head and feeling his straw shift.

“No. I have someone else in mind.” King Dice waved a hand and sounded condescending. Cuphead gritted his teeth. That seemed to only amuse the man. “What happened?”

“They got away from us,” Cuphead growled. “They also slipped the cops. We don’t have a clue where they are.”

King Dice scoffed and laughed. “Oh, I see. Is this is going to be a repeat of that Wilson fella? First, an old professor and now, a couple of brats. You two have really lost the roll of the dice. Where’d your winning streak go?”

Cuphead pulled his fists out of his pockets. “Fine! Put us back on star fallen contract collectin’! We were good at that.”

King Dice burst into laughter. “It ain’t up to me, hothead! It’s your fault for playing your cards this way. Ya got promoted, there’s no way back.”

“Mr. Dice, sir.” Mugs pulled Cup back, knowing that he was close to starting shooting. “Could you help us find the demon and wolf?”

That stopped the laughter. King Dice frowned at them and pulled out a deck of cards from his pocket. “Now, why should I do that?” He started to play with the cards in his hands. He shuffled them and caused them to dance between his hands in mesmerizing patterns. Cuphead bitterly remember the first time he saw the casino manager do this trick. Like all the other saps, Cup had been impressed with the simple showman tricks the dice man used to entice people into his games. It had led them to their end.

Mugman glanced at Cups nervously. He knew how much Cup hated the manager. The older brother shook his head. He had to focus. This was the trigger moment. Answer wrong, and they would find
themselves in one of the biggest fights of their lives. Cups yanked Mugs back by his scarf and straightened up to answer. They had to be honest here. They had failed to get the page back. If it was as dire as the boss had made it sound, then this was thin ice territory. “They still got the page, and if they had any time with that doctor then they might have found a way to read it.”

King Dice nearly dropped his cards. “They still have that!” He paused, the wide-eyed look of shock changed to horror. “They found a way to read it!”

Mugman raised a hand with a thoughtful finger weakly pointing up, partially behind Cup. “They, uh, might have. We don’t really know.” He smiled nervously and ducked into his scarf. Dice raised his thin eyebrows. His gaze shifted in between the two cup brothers.

A smirk broadened across his cubed face. “If the boss finds out, you two will become part of his china set.”

“So, that’s it, then? We’re outta the game?” Cups readied himself for the fight. His fingertip glowed with blue energy as he prepared a hot blast.

King Dice raised a gloved hand in a stopping motion. He looked far too smug and happy. “Cool that hothead of yours. I said, that’s if the boss found out.” Cuphead felt his brows shoot so far up in shock he believed he may have lost them. Mugs gasped and covered his gaping mouth. Excited hope gleamed in the younger brother’s eyes. Cup blinked. What? What! Did he hear that right? Was King Dice offering them an out, against the boss?

Cup shook his head to refocus. He glared at the manager. It had to be a hoax. There is no way that Dice would ever betray the boss. “Whadda ya mean?”

“Well, you two fellas do have a pretty good work record. It would be a shame to lose such talents,” the dice man drawled mockingly. Cup narrowed his eyes. King Dice enjoyed his underhanded insults, these cussing compliments were a bunch of hot air.

“Get to the point!” Cups demanded impatiently. He felt Mugs tug on his sleeve to remind him to stay cool.

King Dice grinned, his wide show grin. “I can keep my trap shut and help ya track down those two if I can cash in a favor for later.”

Cuphead snorted. “We’re already indebted to the boss and we’ve all seen how that’s panned out. Why in any level of hell would I want to owe you anything?”

Mugs fretted beside him, but stayed silent. Cups could feel his brother’s gaze on the back of his head.

King Dice frowned and tsked at him, even adding a finger motion around to match it. Cup did his best to not feel like a disobedient child in need of discipline, who had to have the rules explained to him again. “Now, there’s no need to get your straw in a twist. It’s a gamble for me too, ya know. I just thought we could both benefit here.” He sighed dramatically. “But I guess I was wrong. I’ll give your report over to the boss and you can probably expect some collectors during the month.”

Cup growled at the veiled threat. “What would we owe you?” he demanded as his eyes flashed an angry red. He felt the power at the tip of his finger strengthen. It would be so easy to just point it and let the shot go.

King Dice’s huge smile was back. “Just a little favor. I’ll call ya up and cash in someday.” Cuphead narrowed his eyes. The cube head wasn’t going to get specific. It was too vague for Cups’ comfort, but they were in a corner. The only other option was to fight and run. He didn’t know if they could
last a fight against this bozo, and they definitely couldn’t run forever, not if they had collectors on
their straws, like he and Mugs had been. It would never end. But it didn’t seem this whirlpool of
favors would ever end either.

“Fine, but we ain’t offing anyone for you,” Cups stated, blinking the red out of his eyes.

King Dice’s face grew thoughtful. He raised a hand to his chin, and a brow climbed his forehead.
The amused spark in his eye already told Cup what the casino manager would say. “We’ll see about
that. Let’s shake on it.” He extended his gloved hand. Cup stared at it the way most would a sewer
rat in an alley. He finally reached out and clasped his hand. The manager’s grip was bone breaking,
but Cups didn’t flinch. Like he would show any weakness in front of this star fallen schmuck. “It’s a
deal,” King Dice said smoothly.

Mugs looked between the two uncertainly. King Dice withdrew and turned to the wall that had Cups
calling symbols still glowing on it. The man pulled out a few cards from the deck he had kept in his
other hand and tossed them at the wall. His eyes glowed green as the cards hit the wall and stayed in
place. The dice man made a few hand motions and the cards moved around the wall.

As he worked, Mugs leaned over to Cups and whispered. “Are you okay, bro?”

Cup rubbed his probably bruised hand and nodded. He glared at King Dice. “Yeah, just ticked that
we have to owe this bozo.” Mugs turned back to King Dice again and nodded.

The dice man’s eyebrows shot up in surprise yet again. “Well, that’s a twist.”

“What?” Mugs asked, pulling his scarf up to his round nose.

“They’re at one of my casinos, outside of town.” King Dice grinned. Cups and Mugs exchanged
looks. They knew that place. They knew it all too well. King Dice tilted his head. “It doesn’t seem
they’ll be there for long though.” His eyes widened, as did his grin. He almost looked gleeful. “Oh!
This is a good hand.”

“What? What’s going on?” Cups muttered in annoyance.

“You two are gonna take care of two birds with one stone, ya hear me?” King Dice turned to them.
Cups and Mugs blinked. They shared a glance, Mugs looking worried and Cup pretending to be
indifferent. The two turned back to the tall man.

“Uh? Why are we going after birds? I thought we were supposed to get the-

“Wait a second,” Cup said. “How do you know all that, and who’s the broad, and did you say a
doll?”
King Dice sighed and rolled his bright eyes. The green glow was unsettling. “Look kid, nothing happens in my casinos that I don’t know about. I know what those boys are workin’ on.” He winked. “The ‘broad’ is a woman calling herself the Voodoo Queen, and she’s been a problem for us for a while. Get rid of her and the big man will be happy. And yes, I said doll.”

“As in a cutie?” Mugs asked blinking.

King Dice brought a hand up to his face and rubbed his eyes. “No.” He dropped his hand and gave Mugs a deadpan frown that Cup felt like was saying ‘idiot’ without vocalizing it. The older brother’s eye twitch in anger. “An actual doll, like a toy for a child. It changes its appearance.”

“How the cuss are we supposed to find something like that?” Cups growled.

“You’ll know what it is the minute ya see it. You can bet your straws on it.” King Dice smiled. Cups sneered and Mugs gulped. Silence fell between the three of them. Cup had questions, but it was rare they ever got a full explanation.

“Can we ask why a doll?” Cup asked finally.

King Dice again rolled his eyes. He lifted his hands. The cards on the wall jumped off and into the deck he held. They left little square scorch marks in the brick of wall where they had been. King Dice flicked his wrist and the deck disappeared. He waved his other hand and a single square of card stock appeared between his fingers. His eyes finally dimmed to his usual pie-cut black. “Here. This is her name, address, and what ya can expect of the doll. And even a ride down there!” He smirked.

Cups took the offered card and glanced at it. It looked like a business card, but was a little big for that. “That’s a no then?”

King Dice sighed. “It’s part of a machine. The boss doesn’t want people messin’ with it. That’s all ya need to know.”

Cups scoffed and looked down at the card again. “Hey! Wait a second! It says our ride is the ghost train! What the cuss? We can’t travel in that thing!”

Dice threw his head back and laughed. “It’s the fastest way down, and besides, they’re the only ones that are free right now.”

“Hell no!” Cup threw the card down.

Dice snorted. “Then good luck with the police looking for you.” He crossed his arms.

Mugs stepped up again. “Could you help us with that too? We can’t get anything done if we’re wanted.” Dice turned his amused gaze from the angry Cup to Mugs.

His smile fell and he rolled his eyes again. “It’ll take some time to cover everything and divert peoples’ focus, but anything is possible for the Dice King. Give me two days.”

“Two days?” Mugs asked. Cup snorted.

“I have to work this behind the big man’s back, so yeah, two days. Deal with it.” Dice smirked. “Hide like common crooks for a couple days, then head down to your target.”

Cup sneered. Mugs kneeled and grabbed the card. Cup snatched it and pocketed the card. He was already exhausted, and they hadn’t even left yet.
“Now, I’ve wasted enough time here. I am needed back on Inkwell. You two have fun and careful with shooting your eyes out.” King Dice snickered. His grin turned malicious. “And don’t have a bad roll. If I regret my gamble on you two, I’ll make you pay up front.” With that, the dice man spun and hopped down the hole that had reappeared. The hole pulled itself closed, and the boys were left to stare at the burned and fading symbols on the wall and the scorch marks from the cards.

Mugs swallowed. “Well, that went a lot better than expected.”

“Better? Mugs, we owe that square a favor now! I don’t know how it could be worse!” Cups kicked the wall. His foot instantly throbbed, but he couldn’t bring himself to care. How much further could they fall? What the hell were he and Mugs going to have to do for that creep? He didn’t even want to imagine.

“Well, we could be dead,” Mugs muttered into his scarf. Cups stopped and took a deep breath. He tapped his fist against brick instead of punching and thought. That was true, he guessed. They could have died, but they hadn’t. “Look at the cup half full, bro,” Mugs suggested.

Cups scoffed, but found himself smirking at his brother’s terrible pun. “C’mon,” he said, stuffing his hands back into his pockets. “Let’s go back up to the bar. I could really use a drink.”

The two found themselves back at the seats they had left. Cups slouched in his stool cushion and wondered if he should go have a smoke. Did it even matter what he did? Stars, how did he get this low so fast? Oh, right, dice face. Mugs leaned forward to get his elder brother's attention. “Hey Cups, how ‘bout we have a drinking contest?”

Cuphead raised an eyebrow and brushed his hair foam out of his eye. “Cup style?” he asked.

Mugman grinned. “Yeah!”

Cups couldn’t hold back the small smile that pulled at his lips. “Okay. You’re on, bro.” Mugs chuckled as a competitive spark entered his light eyes. His excitement was contagious. “Hey, bartender. Get us six beers.” The ram looked up and nodded. Cups leaned back and watched the ram work. He couldn’t believe this was his life. One step forward and three steps back. In three days he had become indebted to a rat and a schmuck, add that to their contract with the boss, and Cup felt like they would never be free. It seemed like they were drowning, and each time they reached out for something to pull them up, they were just handed another weight to drag them down.

Mugs clapped a hand on Cups’ shoulder, knocking Cup out of his thoughts. “The usual stakes?”


“Berries.” Mugs grinned as he and Cups lined up the large mugs of foaming alcohol, three in front of Mugs and three in front of Cups. Several people picked up on the energy between the brothers and turned to watch the drinking contest. Cups smirked as he glanced around the room. Oh, this was the best part.

“Okay, ready?” Mugs wrapped a hand around the handle of the first mug.

“Set.” Cups did the same and looked over to Mugs. Cups wondered if the people watching could see electricity shoot between the two of them as they stared off.

“Go!” they both shouted. The onlookers had anticipated to see the boys raise the drinks to their lips and start chugging. Cups enjoyed the shock and jaws that dropped as Mugs and Cup lifted the drinks above their lips and poured the alcohol over the rim of their heads. People gasped. They must have
thought the liquor would overflow and make a mess. If the boys wanted it would, but this was a
drinking contest and they were taking the drinks like champs. Neither cup brother spilled a drop. He
laughed at the room’s reaction. He glanced to the side. Mugs grinned, equally entertained. Cups felt
the buzz hit after a few moments. It was a lot faster and stronger than if he drank it. There wasn’t a
way to dilute it when they drank like this besides the liquid already in his cup shaped head.

He finished the first a half second before Mugs and reached for the second. He poured the second.
He heard Mugs giggling and carefully turned to see his brother with a goofy smile. “Look at ‘em,
Cups.” Again, he glanced around, careful not to spill his drink, nor slow down. The entire room was
now watching them. Some folks were starting to cheer for them. Others stared with huge eyes.
Everyone looked hilarious, and Cups laughed at them. The buzz quickly grew stronger, and Cups
felt his face begin to warm. The second drink disappeared. This time Mugs lowered his empty glass
first. He reached for the third with Cups right on his tail. This time, it was a little tricky to keep the
mug steady as he poured it. Mugs had his tongue sticking out in concentration. His face was flushed,
and his arm was a bit wobbly. Cups chuckled at how ridiculous Mugs looked. The younger brother
looked over and made eye contact. Apparently, something was funny, because Mugs started to laugh
too. That only made Cups laugh harder. It didn’t take long for the two boys to nearly topple over
from their shared laughing fit. In the back of Cups’ mind, he realized the room was filled with a
chant.

“Go! Go! Go! Go!” The room vibrated with the noise. Cups' vision and awareness was getting
pleasingly fuzzy. He finished and slammed the last empty glass on the counter. Mugs’ glass was a
few seconds after. Cheers erupted around the room. Cups and Mugs couldn’t help their drunken
laughter.

“I win,” Cup slurred.

“I'll gets you nesh time.” Mugs leaned over the counter and rest his head in his hands with his
elbows on the table top. “Sides, I won da other bet.” A dopey smile spread across his flushed face.

Cuphead knit his brows in confusion. It took him a full minute to process what Mugs said. “Whazz
bet?”

Mugs narrow his eyes in concentration. “Da one ‘bout findin’s the b-b-broz in a day? Or was it
two?” Mugs tilted his head and nearly fell over. He caught himself and straightened up with a
chuckle.

Cups blinked and stared at the wall. It took him a long time to remember the bet, then even longer to
remember how long each had bet it would take for them to find the two. “Noooo. I win dat one,”
Cuphead finally argued.

“Uh?”

“We found dem in time,” Cup claimed.

“We didn’ catsshhh dem,” Mugs argued.

Cup shook his head. The world spun for a moment. He stopped and waited for the world to
straighten out before he spoke. “Da’s not part of da bet! It waz if we found dem.” He pointed up
with his finger and shook his hand. “An’ we did.” He made sure to say that. He knew he was right.
Mugs pouted.

“Na-uh. Not fair. Didn’ even touch ‘em,” Mugs garbled and slumped on the counter, into his folded
arms and scarf. Cups blinked and tried to focus on his face…or was it faces? Did he have two?
Cuphead leaned into him. “Yer ju-justs a sore loser.” Cups chuckled.

“Get off me.” Mugs turned away from him and pouted at the wall. Cups only snickered and leaned on him more. “Cups,” Mug whined.

“Make me,” Cup challenged.

“Y-hic-yer just bein’ a gerk ‘cause I won da bet.” Mugs smiled smugly as he weakly pushed against Cup.

Cups laughed. “You wish.” The two laughed and continued to argue.

At least he had this, Cup figured. Sure, his life was hell and yeah, he owed some crummy people ‘favors,’ but at least he still had his brother. He could deal with all that crap, handle all these schmucks, fight any Tom, Dick, or Harry, and he was even willing to become a monster. He didn’t care how low he sunk, he didn’t care what happened to anyone else, if it meant he and Mugs would live to see another day. Cuphead would do anything. That was his cup half full.

Chapter End Notes

Those two. They are in a pickle.
Next chapter is promising to be long. Really long. That'll be tough since I have a friend's wedding to go to in another state, so I won't have the weekend to work on it. Wish me luck! I've been proud of myself getting these things out on time.
Thank you all for your comments, kudos, bookmarks, art, and for being awesome and reading as a hobby. :3 You make a little ghost very happy. 'ew e/
Oh! And! AND! Someone else has jumped on the Quest Bendy train and started their own story. It has a noir and intrigue spin on things. If you like my story for its mystery, you may like this dark tale. So, check it out!

Similar Story
Quest for The Ink Machine: A Tale of Two Brothers

Alrighty! I think that's it for now. Have a great week!
Until next time,
TAP out.
Bendy learned two things. He never wants this translating business as a job, and some shmuck should be fired from the fizz-wizz company.

Hello~!
First, I wanna apologize to everyone that is dealing with the Warners and their rudeness. Thanks for sticking it out! I have a chapter for them, so they'll have to go back in the story soon. Sadly, this isn't that chapter, so beware the comments. Thanks for all the love you guys send. I3 It makes me happy. I also love all the kudos, all the bookmarks, all of it!
This week I learned of a girl that made me think about my life. I'm gonna get kinda real here. I know I'm usually a goofy ball in these notes, but I've had some serious thoughts I wanna share.
See, this girl had a terminal illness and wouldn't reach adulthood. She was a completely functioning person as a child, but at twelve years old, she started losing her eye sight. She found out that her body would slowly fail from a problem in her cell production of energy. First she lost her eyes, then she would lose the ability to walk and talk over the course of years. So, what did she do? She went to go accomplish her dreams. She went to high school, dated the hottest guy in the school, went to dances, became a cheerleader (all of this while completely blind), and she was the happiest person there ever was. She would claim that she didn't have any problems. She did what she loved to do, even when she became trapped in a wheelchair at 16.

So, I was thinking, you guys are helping me with my dream. I mean, yeah it's just a few chapters on a fic site, but my confidence in writing has taken off because you like reading this. I have had a little dream to someday publish a good book and this feels like a step closer to that dream. It's thanks to you and friends like Mercowe that convinced me to start this thing. My dream can someday be a reality. So, thank you for reading. You don't know how much it means to me. And if you have a dream, go for it. Maybe it'll come in little steps and a lot of practice, there will be challenges and rejections, but it's worth it to say, "I reached my goal. Look at what I was able to accomplish!"
Remember this little ghost is rooting for you! I3

Okay, I'm done being sappy. Let's see how the brothers are doing at the casino. I'll see ya at the end.
“Bendy! Are you alright!” Boris gasped at the loud thunk.

Bendy sighed. “Yeah, Boris. Sorry. This is just getting stressful.” The wolf made a sound of agreement. The pair had gotten a room on the hotel side of the casino. The two beds were soft and warm, the rug was full and comfortable, and the bath and shower were berries. It even had a television. Still, the pair couldn’t relax. They had cracked down on the task at hand, getting the two sides of the old page translated. Oddswell and everyone else that had been at the throw-together clinic was relying on them. It didn’t help that almost as soon as they got in that Bendy had another nasty ink attack. He had taken the pain med that the doc had given him. It had taken the edge off, but Bendy couldn’t come close to calling the attack handled. More like ‘survivable,’ but at least he hadn’t exclaimed anything to distress Boris this time.

The demon sighed again and turned his head to look at the books and papers of scribbled notes and crossed out sections. So far, they had gotten one side figured…maybe. It was really difficult because the ‘important’ parts of the machine translated to such ridiculous and mundane things that the boys were sure they couldn’t be right. A doll, a cup, and a musical instrument, so far. They couldn’t even figure out what the instrument was. Bendy was sure the instrument part was right and the ‘musical’ part was wrong. Then again, the doc said the doll was translated right. What kinda cussing machine was this? It completely threw Bendy.

“Maybe, we should take a break?” Boris suggested with his ears against his skull. He had shadows underneath his eyes.

“I don’t know if we can.” Bendy hated to admit it. He lifted an arm and fiddled with his goggles, his head still on the table. “We’re still close to the city. I don’t know how long we can stay here before things get hairy.” Boris slumped a little in his seat, but didn’t argue. The wolf simply nodded and pulled the page closer to him. Bendy bit his lip in guilt. To add to the frustration, the page hadn’t mentioned anything about locations. It hadn’t said anything about where to find the machine or these parts. With each new paragraph the boys’ desperation and anxiety grew. If the other side didn’t have anything on where to find the parts, that would be it. They would have nowhere to turn. Completely up a creek without a paddle. Boris was adamant that the answer was in front of them. Bendy wasn’t so sure.

He pulled the translation over to himself and looked it over. His eyes itched from staring at it for so long. What time was it? He didn’t know anymore. They showed up early in the day. It has been dark out for a while now. Maybe he should call it and let them just sleep. He was really tempted. The problem was every time he stepped away, the reminder that it wasn’t done would be an itch in the back of his mind. He had been carrying this thing around with him for a month and it was the owl’s dying wish he take it. He couldn’t help but be curious. Add the fact that it was an ancient machine and the demon’s mechanic side kicked in, trying to figure out how it worked. Bendy contemplated the chance of his going mad with said conclusions.

With the application of the doll, differing sizes, ages, and families will no longer matter. The treatment will be applicable to all living beings. One will have to beware the singular use of the doll. The connection it can have with the form it takes is as real as the doll being an extension of the individual. To use the doll as a singular function is to give it a physical part of the individual where the doll will imprint and change shape to reflect the one it has part of. It is as simple as a drop of blood, a hair, or claw and so forth. With the doll in the form of the individual, one can enact their will over the imprinted individual. Pain and damage to the doll will give the same pain and damage to the imprinted. Yet, fixing the doll will also fix the imprinted, as long as the individual is alive. There is a limit, and it will only fix physical damage, not illness. This is not the intended use. In application with the machine, the doll will change to the form of the individual without the use of the part of the individual. Thus, the danger of an effective full imprint is diminished. The doll will remove
the problem with application to the treatment. The individual’s body will accept the treatment, no matter the species of the individual.

Now, with application solved, there are the processes of the actual treatment and the parts needed to do so. Then, the steps to assemble the parts in order for the desired cure.

In the function of the cup of living water the agent will have the needed cleansing affect. It’s effect, on its own, is a temporary revitalizing of the user. In use, it can cure small ailments completely, and in a large application, seems to reverse aging, but again, this effect is temporary. The solution the cup produces never seems to run dry. It will, however, stop production when not in use, thus entering a hibernated like state. The cup also seems to have an addictive problem after continued use. It is advised to avoid using the cup repeatedly in a singular fashion. In application to the machine the living water has a purifying affect to the individual’s system. It is one part of the two that restores the individual to the original health before they were tainted. It is the needed step between the removal of the taint and the restoration of the individual’s system. There is the solution to the temporary aspect of the cup’s solution in the use of another part mentioned in this section. Without the cup there will be no way to completely depose of the ink and restore the individual. The ink will return to the tainted if it is not cleansed.

In the application of the instrument one is advised caution. The notes of the instrument when applied to the machine in a sense ‘stuns’ the illness. This will cease continued break down of the individual’s systems and functions. The instrument has a hypnotic affect though and seems to react to emotions as a catalyst in heighten awareness and reaction. In singular use anger, sorrow, joy, hungry, emotion and physical reaction become overwhelming. This easily leads to madness for the individual affected. Application to the machine does not completely remove the side effects, but they are proven to be temporary and dampened. Yet without a way to stop the processes of the ink there will not be a way to completely remove it from the individual. The risk is benefit above the temporary discomfort to the individual. Nah, in comparison to the suffering of the illness, it is a simple choice for the tainted. The revitalizing steps remove any lingering problems of the cleansing process.

Bendy sighed. This was one wacky machine. Still, it was the treatment and that fed Boris’ hope. He couldn’t wrap his head around these items and just mentally threw them up in the category with the weird floor and window symbols at the school. Obviously, it was magic shenanigans. That was good enough for him. At least it was for now. He’d see how it went when they tried to build the damn thing. Bendy heard a light thump across from him. He looked up to see Boris had fallen asleep with his head on the book.

Bendy smiled and put down the papers. He stood and stretched, his back and shoulders popped. “C’mon bro. I think it’s time we call it quits.” Boris muttered unintelligibly, but didn’t fight his brother as he helped the wolf stand and get ready for bed. After changing and brushing teeth, Bendy pulled the covers over Boris. The wolf sighed in bliss and a small smile spread across his muzzle. Bendy’s lip twitched up at the cute expression. How long had it been since Boris thought to use his puppy expression? The demon kinda missed it. They had been running for so long now with no time to really unwind. At least, that’s what it felt like. He knew there had been breaks, but in the blur of memory he couldn’t really recall them. Boris was still a kid in a lot of ways. Bendy hoped that neither of them forgot that fact.

“Night bro.” He murmured and flipped off the lights. It only took a moment for his eyes to adjust to the dark. Bendy decided he wasn’t quite ready for sleep. Still in his day clothes, he silently left the room and made his way down the lavish hall. He wandered the extravagant building, looking at the soaring ceilings, tasteful décor and offered services. He passed a few beautiful patios that overlooked a back garden before the forest and rolling hills overtook the area. A perfect romantic scene at sunset, he thought. He went down one of the wraparound staircases to the first floor. There, the noise of
other conversations and laughter could be heard. If Bendy wasn’t mistaken there was also a band playing jazz.

(Insert music here)

He watched the groups of late night partiers and couples enjoy their evening with dance, drink, and gambling. He wasn’t paying close attention to where his feet were carrying him, so he was surprised when he found himself back at the bar he had occupied the last time he was here. He looked around in hidden nervousness for the biased dame or the dark man with the tall hat. To his luck, he seemed alone in this corner of the casino. Most were by the dance floor and the open card tables. The pool table sat silently in the center of the room. One couple sat in a booth in the corner, but they didn’t seem to notice anyone but each other.

Bendy decided it couldn’t hurt none to have a seat and get a drink. Nothing alcoholic, just a fizz-wizz before bed. He waited silently at the bar for a moment. He glanced at the couple. They were giving each other sappy looks over their drinks. The guy said something, and the dame giggled prettily. Bendy raised a curious brow. It looked like a third date. He’d never been able to get that far with a dame before. Something always came up, and it wasn’t like there had been a huge selection in Sillyvision to begin with. That, and he had his responsibility to his bro. Though, now that he was older it would have been easier to have a relationship. But with him and Boris on this quest it didn’t seem like Bendy had any hope of a good date. He sighed and turned back. What a bummer. He finally got out to the world only to be too busy to have any fun.

The sound of approaching footsteps caught his attention. “What’ll ya have?” He looked up just in time to make eye contact with none other than the biased barkeep from before. Her business smile dropped when her dark eyes left the glass she had been cleaning to look at him. “Oh.”

Bendy sighed and dropped his chin on the counter. He just couldn’t get a break! The woman inhaled to speak, but Bendy decided to cut to the chase. “Okay, look. I know ya hate my guts and rather never see me again. How about you get my drink, and we can pretend we didn’t see each other?”

The beautiful woman huffed through her nose. “What do you want to drink?”

“A chocolate fizz-wizz, please,” Bendy said. She turned to make the drink. A tense silence fell between them. Bendy watched her work with half lidded eyes, his face blank of emotion. He noted, odd enough, that the same warm feeling had appeared again. It must be coming from her, he figured. Last time, he figured it was just because she was such a knock out, and he was whipped with her looks. This time he knew better and his interest was gone. Despite that, she seemed to give off this inner light that was warm, calming, and gentle. It was like a cozy fire in a winter storm. The feeling reminded him of something else, but he couldn’t really put his finger on it.

She slid the drink in front of him and grabbed a cloth to clean off the counter. Bendy watched the bubbles dance up the drink with the same emotionless expression. Why did he agree to this? Sure, he was sick and this machine with a promised cure was like hanging a can of bacon soup in front of him, but…could he really believe that a doll and a musical instrumental were going to cure him? He had always wavered with his belief in the bird professor that started all this for him. Now, here he was doubting Wilson’s sanity and in length, his own. If they called it quits and went home, would those cup bozos stop chasing them? Would Boris be safer if they did that? If they had to get arrested, could Bendy convince them that Boris wasn’t involved in anything and to let him go? Bendy doubted he could afford to quit now.

The demon sighed heavily and took a gulp of his drink. He spat it back up immediately and started coughing. The woman that stood off to the side turned to look and burst into laughter. Bendy gagged and tried to wipe the disgusting bitter taste out of his mouth. “Agh! What is that? Did I just drink
“tar?” He stuck out his tongue again and shook his head back and forth. He started wiping his tongue on his sleeve. “That’s so nasty!”

“What? It’s a fizz-wizz.” She chuckled and stepped up to him.

“That,” he pushed the glass away, “is an abomination!” She raised a brow and picked up the drink. She looked at it for a second.

“Oh! This is the black licorice flavor!” She gasped and lifted a hand to her cheek in surprise. The cheeky smile on her face didn’t disappear.

“Black licorice! Who would make such a flavor? What is wrong with people!” Bendy demanded while he choked. The girl laughed again. She had a beautiful laugh, like softly ringing bells. Bendy would bet his tail spike she had a great singing voice. “You did this on purpose!” Bendy accused with a chagrined smirk.

“Did not!” she gasped. “They’re right next to each other! It’s an easy mistake to make!” she defended with the same smirk.

“Oh no. That was planned! You pulled a fast one on me.” Bendy found himself smiling. Why wasn’t he ticked? Usually this would make him angry, but there was something about that look in her eyes and the warmth she gave off. He was already so stressed, why make it worse? He might as well laugh instead. Even with the disgusting aftertaste, he had to admit it was a good prank.

She turned to remake the drink. She glanced over her shoulder. “You’ll never know,” she said in a cheeky tone. Bendy laughed. He never expected this from the dark dame that had yelled at him last time. The drink was replaced and Bendy cautiously sipped it. When the familiar sweetness tickled his taste buds, he quickly swallowed a few mouthfuls to wash away the bitterness of the other flavor.

“Stars. I needed that. Thanks, doll-“ Bendy quickly cut himself off, remembering last time. He didn’t want to repeat anything. She had somehow put him in a good mood. He didn’t want it ruined so quickly. The woman seems to pick up on his nervousness instantly.

She looked back at the counter to clean up the mess Bendy had made. “Shouldn’t you be mad?” She wasn’t looking up at him. She was focused on the spilled, sticky soda.

“No?” Bendy raised a brow. Though, normally he would be. He decided to explain himself. “I haven’t had a good laugh in a while. It’s been even longer since I’ve suffered a good prank.” A thought came to him. She would expect the worst from him. Like last time, when he grabbed the shmuck’s wrist. He rested his elbow on the counter. “Did you expect me to yell at you?”

She shrugged. “Or curse me or maybe declare revenge.” She turned to get a new rag that wasn’t sticky and continued to clean up.

“Oh, there will be revenge. A prank war is exactly what I need.” Bendy's smirk teased. The woman narrowed her eyes and didn’t return the smile. Bendy swallowed and realized that in her perspective, that could be really bad. “Nothing over the top, though. Just something as harmless as licorice.” Bendy lifted the glass for another sip. The woman tilted his head and continued to work behind the counter. There was a breath of silence between the two. Thinking of bad moments, her boss had dragged her off to his office last time, hadn’t he? How much trouble had she gotten into?

“I hope you didn’t get in much trouble last time,” Bendy started. He saw her tense. “I didn’t mean for you to get in trouble. I just react to stuff like that.” He shrugged. He wouldn’t apologize for hurting the scum, but he was sorry she seemed to pay for the whole ordeal. At least she hadn’t lost her job.
over it. She was scrubbing the glass she was cleaning a bit harder than necessary. Silence fell again when she didn’t respond. Bendy could practically see the mood falling. He sighed into his drink and took another gulp. It wasn’t up to him if she didn’t accept his peace offering. Why was he even trying? He usually dismissed the jerks that decided to hate him for something he couldn’t help. She shouldn’t be any different…right?

She finally sighed and put down the glass. She looked Bendy in the eye. She hesitated. She seemed unsure on what to say. Bendy waited patiently, curiously even, and watched a fire of determination light in her large dark eyes. “Can I ask you something? It’ll sound rude, but I don’t have anyone else to ask.” She was staring at him intently. Bendy blinked and thought about it for a moment. It was probably something racist. He could deal with that…maybe.

“Oh, he decided. “But only if I can ask a question afterward.”

She pulled back and pursed her lips for a moment before nodding. “Okay.” There was another long pause as she bit her lip thoughtfully. Bendy took another drink and swished the fizz-wizz around his glass. “So, are all demons polite so they can get what they want? Or is it just you and Mr. Hat? I mean, why use manners at all?” Bendy’s eyebrows flew so far up they hit his goggles. He hadn’t expected a question like that. Sure, it was racist, but manners? Really? Wait a second!

“M-Mr. Hat?” Bendy asked. His tail flickered back and forth like a cat’s.

“My boss. You met him last time you were here,” she explained and put a hand on her other arm in obvious discomfort.

“That guy was a demon!” Bendy’s jaw dropped and his back straightened. He nearly dropped his glass.

The woman’s eyes widened. “You didn’t know!”

“No!” Bendy said, shaking his head. “How could I have known?”

“It’s obvious! How could you not have known!” She stared at him in disbelief with her own mouth hanging open.

Bendy put the drink down. Better not to make another mess, he figured. “He’d be the first demon I’ve ever met! I don’t exactly have a long list to compare him to.”

“What? B-but what about your parents?” The girl’s thin brow knit together in confusion, and she took a step back.

“Never knew ‘em. I grew up in a dinky little town in the middle of nowhere woods.” Bendy frowned. So, he was a demon. Did all demons act like that?

“You grew up here on the surface?” she asked.

“What? You thought I crawled outta hell?” Bendy turned his frown on her. She flushed and looked away. Well, that was answer enough.

“What the heck,” he muttered to himself. “The guy was a demon?” He lifted his glass and took another gulp, finishing it. Well, it explained the darkness that had been clinging to him. Stars and moon, that guy had been scary. Another demon, what a weird thought. Bendy knew he was a bit of a rare character to meet, but he always figured it would be easy to spot another. He guessed demons could come in many shapes and sizes too. What had been with that fear he had felt in the guy’s presence? Was that normal? The woman just stared at him in a daze. She seemed to shake herself out
of it when she heard the clink of Bendy’s empty glass on the counter.

“What’s your name?” Bendy asked as she reached for the glass. She looked up at him in surprise.

“What?”

“You asked your question and now I’m asking mine,” Bendy said in a slightly sour mood. He didn’t like not knowing the answers to these questions, but he wasn’t gonna go look for this Mr. Hat to ask. If that’s what it felt like to be around another demon, Bendy was fine never meeting another one.

“But you didn’t answer mine,” she pointed out as she cleaned the glass. She looked down at her hands and said in a dismissive tone. “Doesn’t seem to matter anyway, so you can forget it.” She changed her mind.

Bendy frowned. She seemed to be giving him the cold shoulder again. He sighed. “I don’t know about other guys, but I’m polite because my brother and another friend of mine wanted me to be nicer to people.”

“You don’t have parents, but you do have a brother?” she asked with a raised brow. She didn’t look up at him.

“Yeah,” Bendy answered. His tone was clipped. He didn’t want to talk to this dame about Boris or Sasha. “So, it’s your turn.”

She glanced up at him and down again. “Alice.” Ah, Bendy remembered that now. He had been too focused on the bigger demon at the time.

“I think I get to ask another, since you asked a bunch of questions,” Bendy said. Alice frowned and dried off the clean glass. “What’s your problem with demons? Have you dealt with a lot of them, or is it just the stories?” Bendy asked, truly curious. For him, it had always been rumors and stories. He hadn’t met anyone that had a personal problem with a demon (unless they’d had an issue with him, of course).

She scowled. “That’s more than one.”

“You had way more than one.” Bendy smirked.

“It was only a couple,” she said.

“Yeah, right.” Bendy snorted. She narrowed her eyes at him. “Are ya gonna answer?”

She tilted her head up in fake thoughtfulness. “Uh no.” She smirked. “I’m not.”

Bendy snorted. “Well, that’s rude.” Her head snapped over to glare at him. Bendy hid a yawn behind his gloved hand. “Whelp, it’s late.” He hopped down from the stool and put his hands in his pockets. “Thanks for the drink.” He glanced over his shoulder to her. “Doll.” She sneered. “See ya around.”

“I hope not,” she said. “Sir,” tacking on the title as an afterthought.

Bendy bit his lip to hold back a chuckle. He wandered back to his room. He found himself both annoyed and entertained. That Alice girl wasn’t as bad as he’d thought. No girl with a laugh like that could be that bad. His unanswered questions still turned in his head. What had made her so cold there at the end? And then his mind went to Mr. Hat. Was he Black Hat? That was the name of the casino. It’d make sense.
The guy had been nothing but pleasant, yet the energy that had come off him was dark and threatening. Bendy shuddered. He really didn’t know anything about other demons. His culture was Sillyvision, and his family was Boris. That had always been enough for Bendy. The only weight he had ever felt were the town folk's biases and his dark talent. It was one of the many reasons he didn’t use it much. He had wanted to seem more normal. Normal people couldn't make shadows dance around like puppets on strings.

Now Bendy couldn’t help but be curious. The older demon hadn’t said anything, but Bendy wondered if he had threatened Bendy to leave using his own dark Talent. If he did, why? Did demons not like each other? Bendy had no clue. He sighed and rolled his eyes. It didn’t really matter.

He quickly went upstairs and down the hall to the theis room. He opened the door and silently changed and collapsed into the bed. They would only be here for another day or so. He didn’t have to worry. As he drifted off, Bendy’s mind played with ideas of harmless pranks. Something that wouldn’t make a mess or get the girl in trouble. He wanted something that would surprise her and make her laugh.

Bendy put his empty bowl in the sink. He licked his lips. Golly, he loved bacon soup! He rinsed his bowl out and pushed his chair back under the table. The sound of Mickey Mouse’s circus playing on the television drifted to the demon’s ears. “C’mon bro! We have to get to work. Pete isn’t gonna give us a lunch break if we’re late.” He heard shifting behind him, but the television remained on. Bendy felt a small twinge of annoyance. “Ya know they’ll play it again sometime, bro. We gotta go.” He turned around to find the living room empty. “Boris?” Uneasiness slipped down his spine like icy water. He headed to the wolf’s room to find it completely trashed. “Boris!” he called and turned around to see the living room was equally destroyed. Boris was nowhere to be seen. He turned to rush out the front door. There, in front of the entrance, stood Wilson. The owl looked at him sorrowfully. Bendy stopped dead in his tracks. “Where’s Boris!” he demanded.

“I warned you,” the owl said sorrowfully. “You are endangering everyone you meet.”

Bendy clenched his fist. “What?”

“You’re not serious enough. You’re the only one that can do this, and you won’t be strong enough.” Wilson shook his head in remorse. The owl stared down at the scarred floor. Bendy furrowed his brows in shock.

“W-what?” He shook his head. “I don’t have time for your riddles! I have to find my brother. Move!”


“What are you talking about? I don’t understand!” Bendy scowled. “Get out of the way!”

“And it’ll be the ones you care about most that are paying for your mistakes.” Wilson took a step forward.

“What have I done?” Bendy demanded angrily. He didn’t understand what this bird was going on about. He had to go find Boris. Wilson moved his hand to point behind Bendy.

“Get to the ink machine. Or else,” Wilson warned gravely.

“Ben-dy,” a voice gasped behind him. Bendy spun on his heel. He gasped. Boris was on his knees, doubled over as blood pooled around him. His arms wrapped around his middle.

The wolf looked over at him with eyes full of pain, fear, and betrayal. “Why wouldn’t you believe him?” Boris suddenly coughed up blood and collapsed.

“Boris!” Bendy wrapped his hands around his arm and shoulder to turn him over. Boris’ eyes gazed blankly upwards. “BORIS!” He wasn’t breathing.

“Find the machine.” Bendy looked up, his face suddenly inches away from the bleeding Wilson. Bendy lurched back. Wilson’s body was bent, like after the car accident. His spine and legs were twisted and blood ran down his ruffled feathers. Bendy heard the roar of flames around them. “Find the machine.” A hand closed around his wrist. Bendy looked down to see dead Boris’ gaze turned on him. “Find the machine.” The wolf’s voice was double layered with Wilson’s. Bendy shouted and tried to pull away. “FIND THE MACHINE!”

Bendy shot up in bed, gasping. He looked around the unfamiliar room in panic. He noticed Boris in a bed next to him and calmed down a little. That’s right, they were in a hotel room. They went to the Black Hat Casino, near Toon Town. He sighed and pulled his knees up to his chest. He rested his forehead on his knees and took a few deep breaths. Stars. On top of everything else, Bendy didn’t need nightmares. His breathing calmed, and he got up. There was no way he’d be able to continue sleeping. He went to take a shower. He didn’t think about the nightmare. It was just stress.

When he stepped out and got changed in a fresh shirt and pants, he found Boris was awake.

“You’re up,” Boris said, perking his ears.

“Don’t sound so surprised,” Bendy muttered. Boris smiled. “Go get cleaned up. We’ll get breakfast and finish this translating nonsense.” The wolf bounced up and headed into the bathroom. Bendy sat and looked down at the papers. He was not excited to spend another day working on this. The demon decided right then and there that no matter the outcome of finishing this thing, he was going to go dancing tonight. The music had been good the night before, so why not? He could really use the unwind. But not now, he had just started the day and had to finish this. He glared down at the sheets that seemed to separate him from a good evening. He tapped his finger against the paper impatiently. He sighed and turned on the radio to enjoy some tunes.

(Insert music [here](#))

He found something upbeat to snap his fingers to as he waited. He remembered the book Boris had given him forever ago. He pulled it out and began to read. It took him a moment to remember where he had left off.

Excitement race through him, from tip to tail as he got to part he had left off. Felix was making his way through the ancient Temple of the Jaguar to find the Slab of Siriah, the lost princess. His tail flicked happily with the adventure. Felix had escaped the various traps that surrounded the ancient treasure. He almost gasped when it was revealed that the podium in the middle of the room, that was supposed to hold the item of interest, was empty. Felix didn’t have time to contemplate the situation as a sudden rumble overcame the old structure. The roof was falling in and the great cat adventurer only had minutes to escape before getting crushed.

“Hey, bro.” A hand touched Bendy’s shoulder. Bendy yelped and jumped an inch out of his seat. Boris pulled his hand back. His ears fell back a bit, and he smiled apologetically, showing the tiniest bit of his fangs. “Sorry. Didn’t mean to startle you.”
Bendy huffed and put down his book. “No worries, bro. Ready for breakfast?”

Boris nodded excitedly. “Golly, I am. I’m starved.” Bendy smiled and stood.

The two went downstairs and went to the wide dance floor and gambling room. Past the tables was the buffet. There were plates of eggs, bacon, fruits, hot cakes, waffles, syrups, hams, sausages, and muffins. More food than either boy had ever seen laid out before. The night before had been as equally startling to the two. Their humble lives never exposed to such grandeur. Bendy had been assured that hotel guests were welcome to the food for free. Boris was still having difficulty believing it. He had asked a dozen times if it was okay for him to take a plate…then another…then a dessert…and so on.

“So, breakfast is okay?” The wolf checked, just as Bendy thought he would.

“Yeah, bro. Dig in.” Bendy smiled. He watched as Boris’ mouth watered, and he filled a plate with a large pile of everything. Bendy did the same and the two found a booth in a far corner that gave them some privacy. Boris went to fetch them some drinks as Bendy went to get utensils. He had just sat down when his younger brother rushed up to him.

“Bendy!” Boris exclaimed. He had a paper and a flier in the crook of his arm as he put down the glasses of milk.

“What? What’s up bro?” Bendy asked worried.

“Look!” Boris slammed the flier on the table. Bendy noticed that the wolf’s tail was wagging a mile a minute. His ears were up, and his eyes were bright with excitement. He grinned. “Look what I found!” Bendy leaned over to see the flier. It was an advertisement for a circus that was coming to Toon Town. As soon as Bendy saw the name he knew why the wolf was so thrilled.

*Mickey Mouse’s Traveling Circus for the whole family!*

The image was of the mouse himself grinning in a circle of little bunnies that held instruments. In one corner was the duck and the other had the dog that also performed in the shows.

“Can we go Bendy! Please!” Boris begged. Bendy searched the advertisement. The arrival date was in a few weeks. They couldn’t afford to wait around for the circus to show up. The likelihood that they would still be around when the mouse showed was slim, but then again, they seemed to be sticking around for a while. They could get back in time to see a show.

Bendy looked up to see Boris giving him the biggest puppy eyes that Bendy had ever seen. Sun, moon, and stars! Bendy blinked and then looked away. He didn’t even know Boris’ eyes could get that big! He had missed that? Why had he missed that? He was absolutely insane if he’d missed this manipulative torture! He sighed and looked up again.

“I can’t promise anything, but we’ll try and get back in time to see Mick, alright?” Bendy said. Literal stars appeared in the wolf’s eyes. “Stop looking at me like that!” Bendy laughed and then yelped. He was suddenly lifted into a tight hug and swung around.

“Thankyouthankyouthankyouthankyouthankyou!” Boris hopped around, happily hugging the demon tightly. Bendy couldn’t help laughing at how ridiculously happy Boris was.

“Boris.” Bendy was able to get out from being thrown around like a rag doll and laughing.

“Sorry.” Boris instantly stopped and put Bendy back down.
“Hey, Boris. Who’s the smartest wolf?” Bendy asked.

Boris grinned, his tail still wagging. “I am!”

“Got that right, bro!” Bendy grinned. “I know you’re excited, but we better eat this food while it’s hot and get this work done. We don’t want to miss the circus.”

Boris nodded excitedly. The two sat down and enjoyed the great food. Boris chattered excitedly about the chance he had to meet his hero. Bendy smiled. He was happy to see Boris so excited. The last time Bendy had seen him this enthusiastic was when the two had found that old television and took it home to fix up. He had been wagging his tail so fast that Bendy thought it might go flying off.

Bendy looked over the paper that Boris had brought him. It seemed in the wolf’s exhilaration, he had completely forgotten that they had made the front cover again. This time it talked about how they had been spotted on campus and seen breaking into the doc’s house. Bendy flushed at being caught. Who had seen them? There hadn’t been a soul on the street! Then Bendy remembered Red’s reaction at catching them in the house and the embarrassment at trespassing in the first place waved over him anew. If only they had waited a few more minutes on the stupid porch!

The article went on to explain the capture of the doc and that there had been no sign of the brothers. It brought up some of the doc’s past with the university, but nothing in more detail that Bendy didn’t already know. It also didn’t mention Red or the other patients, to Bendy’s frustration. Were they okay? Did the cops do something with Granny and Steven? What had those damn dishes done to Red?

The paper didn’t answer any of his questions. It just made them seem more suspicious and put the doc in an even worse light than before. Bendy sighed and pushed it aside. Still, no one here seemed to give them a glance. After watching the place last night, Bendy wondered if this place was housing some of the big mooks of the underworld. With how everyone seemed to mind their own business, that seemed to be the case.

Soon breakfast was over and the two headed back to their room to finish their work. It was long and grueling. There was a moment when Bendy had put ‘link’ instead of ‘part’ and that had made the sentence really confusing. They had to keep trying to reword the structure of the sentences to have it make any lick of sense. There were several times when one or both needed a break. Boris would flick on the nice television and find either Mickey or some other program and Bendy would turn to his book. Yet the responsibility and Oddswell’s instructions would always draw them back to the table, no matter how aggravating or slow the translation process was. Finally, near the last rays of daylight, the other side of the page came together into something readable.

As with the work of the musical instrument, the cog is an item that must be used with caution. This is the part that in context of the treatment, ‘kills’ the illness within the individual after it is stunned and before it’s cleansed. The cog is a particularly dangerous item that even within the machine can be extremely dangerous if it’s fixed wrong. The placement and insertion of the part will be explained in the next section. Never the less, the cog’s reality warping seems to counteract the illness in a way like nothing else. The explanation as to why, is still behind the comprehensive mind. There are many theories discussed in later sections, but for the narrative in this particular segment, know that it works and without it there is no way to remove the illness without killing the tainted individual. On its own, the cog is an extremely dangerous item that distorts the very cognition of others. It is actually unclear if it only acting on the mind and senses or if it truely does distort the very fabric of this plain around it. Regardless, the effect on the sufferer is the same, absolute madness. Some individuals have even disappeared after acquiring the part. It is for these reasons that one must
practice the utmost care when handling the cog.

The last part in treatment is the tool. It is to repair and replace the damage the illness has caused on the tainted individual. It will essentially return the corrupted portions that were cleansed to self-sustaining functions. This solves the temporary solution of the cup and saves the individual from the pain of their failing bodies after the illness is removed. In application of the machine, the tool is at full capabilities and any risk it possesses is gone. Individually, the tool is a repairing item, but be wary, the tool will only be able to restore to the knowledge of the one wielding it. For instance, if the tool was taken to a battlefield in the hands of a medicine man, the lives of the warriors would be spared due to his vast knowledge of the body and its functions. Yet in the hands of one of the warriors, who knows not the functions of the body, it would not resort the vital functions of the organs that the warrior is unaware of. The tool also has an application in fixing and repairing the machinery and anything it is applied to as long as the wielder has the wisdom to exercise it. Do not use it in ignorance.

The machine has been carefully crafted and is able to balance out these items and their unique and individual qualities into a functioning cure for the illness. Not only the removal of the corruption, but also the complete and almost instantaneous recovery of the tainted. In practice three hundred and sixty and three souls have been saved. The placement of the items and the application of the proper runes have proven to be imperative to the function of the machine as a whole. The parts do not counterbalance or cancel out the effects of each other in their entirety, though there seems to be some form of reaction. Same in the application of the improper runes. The runes are the best protection of the negative effects from the parts and the balance of the machine as a whole. The wrong rune could bring about the worst case, especially in the workings of such dangerous individual items of the arcane type.

Any mishandling of the parts or misplacement of the runes could, in the best case, kill the individual seeking treatment. At worst, distort the machine and surrounding area it to a grotesque landscape of desolation beyond any description possible. Any being in the location would be forever lost to powers beyond comprehension. For this reason, assembly of the machine must be-

After that it cut off. Bendy sighed and leaned his chair back. He stared up at the ceiling. The air in the hotel room was stale and depressing. Neither brother was willing to comment, even though Bendy was sure they were both thinking it. There was no location of the machine or the parts listed anywhere. There was no direction for them to go. They had hit a wall.

Bendy glanced over at Boris. The wolf was staring at the table with his ears down. He looked like a kid that had dropped his ice cream. He had been so excited just this morning. Bendy truly hated this. His brother shouldn’t look this torn down. It was all this stupid illness fault. Bendy was so tired of all this. Getting their hopes up again and again, just to have that hope dashed in front of them. Couldn’t they get a break? What god did Bendy anger to have this stupid sickness?

“We better write that letter to the doc and let ‘im know that we didn’t get a place to go,” Bendy said. His voice sounded too loud in the quiet.

Boris blinked and then looked up to Bendy. “Okay. Can I write Miss Sasha too?”

Bendy’s eyebrows shot up in surprise. He had forgotten they were supposed to be writing the club owner. She would dish him a piece of her mind if she knew he had forgotten. They still didn’t have any good news to send her. He certainly wouldn’t know what to say. Boris might have a better idea. “Yeah, sure bro. Let her know we made it to the city and we’re doing okay.” He guessed that would have to be good enough. “You remember the code we send to the doc?”

“Yeah.” Boris nodded. “I tell them we’re going to grandma’s house, right?”
Bendy nodded and put his chair back on all fours. He took a deep breath. “I’m gonna go get a drink. You wanna do anything downstairs, bro?”

Boris shook his head as he pulled a couple of blank sheets of paper toward him. “I’ll just watch some programs when I’m done with the letters.”

“Alright. We’ll send ‘em in the morning and go from there, I guess.” Bendy stood and tugged a wrinkle out of his shirt. “Don’t wait up for me.”

“Okay,” Boris said, focusing on writing and giving Bendy a small wave. Bendy headed out the door and down the hall. Would he live long enough for them to start searching? The dark thought surprised Bendy as it crossed his mind. Sure, the ink attacks were painful and terrifying, but the doc’s medicine helped with the pain, he tried to comfort himself. They now knew about the parts of the machine that actually made a cure possible, but everything was so magical and out of his realm of comfort…If he and Boris didn’t get it perfectly, then they could destroy everything around them? That was if they even found the machine and parts in the first place! This was all so ridiculous!

Stars, he really needed that drink.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Bendy. Poor Boris. Now, what will they do? Luckily, you get to find out next week. :D

Oh! And a little peek in the future...

Those of you that are binge reading this, and there are a bunch of chapters after this one...how about a break? Get something to drink or eat. If it's late, maybe go to bed. The chapters will still be here for you. I know I'm guilty of doing this too. It's hard to put down a good read, I understand! But you're on chapter thirty! It's a good round number to stop on for a moment.

Okay. Hope you guys have a good week!
TAP out!
AND WARNERS! DON'T YOU THREATEN MY READERS! I WILL KICK YOU OUTTA THIS STORY SO FAST!!
Miracles
Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Alice is an angel. You can only imagine how complicated that makes things for her.

Chapter Notes

Hello!
So, I realized something last chapter.
Boris the wolf is writing a letter that says, 'We're going to grandma's house,' to Dr. Oddswell house.
But the person that gets the mail from the house is Red Riding Hood.
So, Boris the wolf is writing a letter that says, 'We're going to grandma's house' to Hood.
Wolf-->Grandma's House-->Red Riding Hood
And it wasn't planned at all! XD Hahaha~!
Anyway, silliness aside. Thank you all for reading and commenting last chapter. The Warners are having a bunch of fun with all of you. Once again, this isn't the chapter they'll be in soooooo...they ain't leaving the comment section this time. T-T
BUT! They are gone the next time! It'll be their time to shine!
Anyway, enjoy the chapter. See you at the end!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Alice adjusted the vest and checked her hair again. She loosened the braid just a tiny bit. She may loath working at this casino and for a demon, but that didn’t mean her performance had to suffer. The Surface was definitely not what she had imagined. Alice shook her head as she went to the door of her small apartment. She locked the door behind her and put the key in her pocket. She hoped to leave this place soon. She just had to find her missing halo!

“Hey, Alice.” Another employee waved as he headed to his room. There weren’t a ton of employees that lived on site, but those that did were usually respectful. With all the drama customers gave, it was understandable that the live-in staff would aim for peace amongst each other.

“Good evening. Glad to see you deal with the work.” Alice smiled.


As soon as he was past, her smile dropped. She had already checked everywhere she could think of on the first floor. She sighed. Where could it be? She knew it was here. She could feel it, but where? She shook her head. It wasn’t a good idea to start her shift like this. Night shift was already draining for her, no need to add to it with worry. On her break she would start checking every crook of the second floor.
She turned the corner and entered the kitchen. “Ohf!” She was pushed back and stumbled. A pair of hands grabbed her shoulders and steadied her.

“Sorry! Oh, Alice! Are you okay?” Alice looked up to see Dustin. He was a tall guy in his thirties. He would have been manning the bar before her. Alice thought he was pretty nice, just a bit sad.

“Yeah, I’m okay. Thanks for catching me, Dustin.” The man nodded and removed his hands.

“Good. I didn’t see you there.” He scratched the back of his head.

“Don’t worry about it. Your eyes are probably shot,” she reassured. He gave a weak, and possibly pained, smile and nodded. She went to step around him.

“Hey, before ya go. There’s a fella out there that’s obviously drunk. I told him that his next drink was gonna be his last, so he nursed the one he had for longer than I thought,” Dustin said sheepishly. “I was sure I’d have him gone before we switched.” He sounded apologetic.

“Don’t worry Dustin. I can handle myself.” Alice smiled kindly. “Thank you for the heads up. It was really thoughtful.” Dustin nodded, still looking remorseful and opened the door she came through. Alice took a deep breath and mentally prepared herself for what was waiting at the bar for her. She waved at the night kitchen staff that was preparing. She opened the door and was a bit surprised to see how empty the pool room was. Usually, this time of night had the place jumping with energy. Instead, there were only a few scattered couples and groups on the far side of the room. Alice figured they were mafia, making their shady plans that brought so much pain to the world. That could be why everyone else cleared out.

“Hey barkeep! I-hic-I get one more dsrink, right?” a familiar voice slurred. Alice looked to the lone figure leaning on the bar counter. Annoyance tugged at her smile, making it hard to keep it in place. Of course it would be the little demon that had been the bane of her week. Did he do this to annoy her? It would be like a demon to-

She cut the thought off. After her chat with him last night, she started looking at demons differently. Just like her expectations of the Surface were wrong, her views of demons could also be misguided. She was mature enough to admit she could be wrong. Though the thought turned her stomach.

He claimed he had grown up on the Surface and that Mr. Hat had been the first demon he had ever met. He didn’t have any parents, but he did have a brother. He hadn’t wanted to talk about his brother. Had they had a fight or something? He had also laughed when he discovered the licorice fizz-wizz, which had surprised her quite a bit. She hadn’t expected him to laugh so openly. She honestly didn’t know what to think. On the one hand, he seemed like a normal guy, a mook, but normal. On the other, she had been warned that demons were tricky and charming. She couldn’t afford to trust them in the slightest.

Still, she couldn’t just turn around and walk away. It was her shift. Her job. “Yes, sir. What is it that you want to drink?” She watched his head shoot up and his eyes try to focus on her. She again wondered why he had goggles on his head. His vest and boots seemed to indicate he was a traveler of some kind, but why goggles?

“Oh. Ish you.” He dropped his head back on his folded arm and lifted the empty glass. “Martini.”

Alice took a deep breath and walked over. She grabbed the alcohol and made the drink with hardly a thought. He seemed too drunk to try and mess with her this evening.
“Ya-ya know, ya neve explained why ya hates me,” he stated into his arms. Or not, she thought to herself. Alice glanced up. His white face was buried in his arms, the lens of his goggles reflecting the bar lights.

“Does it really matter?” she asked neutrally. She put the toothpick in the glass with three olives on it. “Your drink, sir. This will be the last of the evening.”

“Yeah.” He lifted his head and rested his chin on a hand. He slid the glass closer to himself. “I’m matters.” His eyes stayed focused on the drink in concentration. Being this close, Alice could feel the darkness rolling off his person. She fought her first instinct to cringe away.

“Why does it matter?” she decided to ask.

“’Cause if yer gonnas hate me, a-at hic! At least hate me fer som-thin’ I did,” he grumbled and glared at the glass. He lifted it and took a small sip. Alice raised a brow. Hate him for something he’d done? Apparently, she was quiet for too long, because he continued. “I can’t help b-being a demon. Di-n’t choose dat. Don’t hate me fer dat.” Alice blinked. He looked at the glass sadly. “’S not fair. Nothin’s fair.”

Alice just stared at him. What could she say to that? Sorry, I can’t? Wasn’t that against her principles? Wasn’t the point of her charity service on the Surface supposed to be act with kindness towards all? Did that include this demon? Could it be that she was in the wrong here? Or was this another trick? She didn’t know! Deeply unsettled, she got ready to check on the groups at the tables and booths.

“I’s fine,” he muttered to his drink and took another sip. “I’m used to it. Lifess’ gust one disapp-hic-disappointment after anotha.” She walked out from behind the counter and asked the tables if they needed anything. Her head wasn’t into it. Was he just trying to make her feel guilty?

When she reluctantly returned to the counter to fill out the three orders she was given, his drink was half gone. She silently prayed that he would stay quiet.

“Hey.” Well, so much for that hope. “Why’s dere dis warm feelin’ wheneve’ yer aroun’? I thought it’s cause yer cute, but now I think its som-else.” Alice looked over at him in surprise, her eyes wide as the two stared at each other. His light eyes were half lidded in a bored looking way. His chin was still on his palm. He was stirring his drink with the toothpick. His face was completely relaxed and open. She shouldn’t be surprised he could sense her presence. Just as she could feel his darkness, he would sense her light. Didn’t he know she was an angel? Sure, her powers were lessened with the loss of her halo, but not so much that he could mistake her for human…unless he had never met an angel before. If Mr. Hat was the first demon he’d met, then would she be his first angel? Was that possible? He really didn’t know? So, he’d been treating her like anyone else and not like an angel? Was that why he wasn’t aggressive?

“What do you mean?” She played ignorant. She was curious on what he would come up with. Not that she would ever admit that out loud.

“It hit me a min-hic-a minute ago. Yo-you feel like th-that mu-mural at the sc-shool.” He wobbled a little in his seat as he took another drink. “Like, all warm’n calm’n stuff. I’s nice. Girl sa-hic-said it was fer peace ‘r som-thin’ like dat. Couldn’t use my shadooows, but liked da feelin’ anyway. Yer like dat. Even doh yer mean and hates me, you gots dat nice feelin’ and I like it.” He lifted the glass and tilted his head back. He gulped the last of his drink and put the glass down. Alice could only watch. He sighed and wobbled out of his seat. “N’vermind. Not important. Thanks fer da drink. I’m a goin’ ta bed.” He took a couple of steps away.
“Can you make it back to your room safely, sir?” Alice asked, knowing that if he got in trouble it would be her fault for letting him go. She didn’t want to be in her boss’ office twice in one week because of this little demon.

He chuckled. “Are ya offerin’ to help, doll?” Alice sighed as she watched he sway. She couldn’t let him just walk off.

“One moment, sir.” She turned to the kitchen door and opened it. She called for someone to come up and watch the bar for her. She then quickly took the drinks she had made to the tables that ordered them. When she got back, one of the kitchen staff was behind the bar. “What’s your room number?” she asked the demon. He pulled out his room key and handed it to her. She glanced at it. Room two-thirteen. Alright then. “Let’s go.” The pair walked in silence toward the grand stairs. He was surprisingly good at staying steady on his feet. He did need a little help getting up the stairs, though. She swallowed her natural repulsion to his dark essence and grabbed his arm to support him. The darkness was cool and brushed her awareness like a thin curtain. She shivered, thinking about it. She expected his arm to be colder, but it was warm, almost pleasantly warm. She quickly dismissed the odd observation.

Alice was silently surprised with how light he was. Sure, he was small, about a head shorter than her, but he was easy to lift. Maybe forty or fifty pounds? She was light for her size too, but she was built for wings someday. What was his reason? Was Mr. Hat this light too? What an odd thought.

When they reached the top, he pulled back. “Sorry,” he muttered and turned his flushed face down. “’N thanks.”

“Sure,” Alice answered. It didn’t take them long to reach his room after that. She unlocked it for him and gave him back his key. “Have a good night, sir.”

“I’s Bendy.” He frowned. “’N you too...Alice.” He went in and shut the door quietly. Alice sighed and began heading back toward the bar. She was already tired, and she had barely started her shift. She really didn’t know what to think of that guy. Part of her never wanted to see him again. Another part of her wanted to ask him all the questions that no one seemed to have the answers to when it came to his species. By many of his reactions to the thought of stories about demons suggested they were wrong. Her wariness and her curiosity warred with each other. If she thought of Black Hat, he matched her idea of demons much better. He was suave, self-absorbed, and demanding. When angry, he was terrifying, and he didn’t mind using his powers or essence to intimidate others. Maybe there was more to demons than she had thought?

She sighed. Father would be so disappointed if he knew she was this uncertain of something that, for most angels in the Upper, was so black and white. Demons were evil. They wanted to cripple any efforts for peace and kindness. They even had a war against the angels a millennia ago. They brought misfortune, despair and depression to the Surface. So, why did the little demon act so depressed when she wouldn’t explain herself? Why did he say he was used to people treating him like that? Why did he like her light essence, if they were supposed to always feel opposed to each other?

Alice shook her head. It didn’t matter! She had a mission! She was going to find her halo, and then, she was going to complete her act of Charity! Feeling a bit better, she was surprised when the sound of sniffling and muffled weeping reached her ears. She looked around to find the source of the sound. It seemed to come from the nearby patio that overlooked the back gardens.

Alice tiptoed to the side of the open glass doors. She peeked around the corner to find a lone person on their knees by the stone railing. Their back was toward her. She looked back and forth, down both sides of the hall. No one was around. Should she leave? As an angel, she should give comfort
to those in need. Yet, her experience on the Surface proved that people didn’t want comfort from her in times like this. She wavered for a moment longer before taking a quiet step forward. As she hesitantly approached, she realized that the person was muttering as they wept.

As she drew closer, she could make out the person better. Probably a boy by the loose shirt and shorts. His bare paws, furry tail, and ears meant he could be a dog or wolf. She took another step and could finally understand what he was saying.

“…Please, please! We don’t have a -hic- a direction to go. I don’t know what to do! Ever since we’ve come to Toon Town, his sickness got worse! I am tr-trying to be strong for him. I’m try-hic- trying to help, but the illness is causing him so much pain! It’s so cruel that we have the treatment written out-sniff- to us and no way of finding the parts to make it!” His voice shook as he spoke. His head bowed, hands clasped, as he wept. Alice was surprised that the voice was younger than she thought it would be. Was he a child? It was difficult to tell in the half light of the outdoor posts. “I-I haven’t ever asked for much. I was always ha-happy to just have my brother and a -sniff- and a meal. So, pl-please. Please! Help me make my brother better! Help us find the parts for the machine! I can’t do it by myself!” The boy dropped his head into his hands. He lost himself to his tears and sorrow. He kept repeating please over and over.

Alice felt her heart go out to the boy. His heartfelt plea touched her, and she felt the need to do something. He was humble and kind. He had a kind spirit. Her first instinct was the hug and comfort him. She resisted. This wasn’t the Upper. That action wouldn’t be acceptable here. She carefully tiptoed back. When she was back around the corner, outside of the patio and out of the possibility of him spotting her, she thought. She put her thumbnail between her teeth thoughtfully. She didn’t have her halo, so her powers were more limited than normal. Not that they hadn’t been limited already. She probably wouldn’t be able to heal this boy’s sibling with her Gift. She grimaced, not that she was very useful with her Gift anyway. She didn’t really have any way of just giving the boys the items he was pleading for. She didn’t know of another way to help the ill one, without taking him to the Upper, and outsiders weren’t allowed under normal circumstances. He said they knew of a treatment, they just didn’t have a way to find the parts…She could use one of her miracles.

The thought struck her and caused to her eyes to widen and for her to drop her hand. It landed on the side of her vest where she had the miracles hidden away. The pouch stashed in the inside pocket of her vest seemed to warm at the attention. She bit her lip. She only had a limited number of miracles she could use while on the Surface. Her Charity service allowed her seven miracles that worked as she desired. She had already used four of them…was it worth it? If she didn’t find the act of Charity that would grant her wings, then she wouldn’t be allowed back in the Upper. It would be that much more difficult if she ran out of miracles before she found the act she was meant to perform. She wavered for a moment longer. She could still hear him. He was beginning to quiet. She couldn’t leave a child so broken. Her resources were so limited, but her heart wouldn’t allow her to turn away, no matter the inconvenience to herself.

With her mind made up, she reached inside her vest and pulled out the pouch. With a deep breath, she pulled the strings loose and grabbed one of the miracles. The energy surged through her and blinding light overtook her body. She glowed as brightly as a star as she stepped out onto the patio again. This time the youth noticed her. He lifted his head to look at her and had to cover his eyes. His ears were now perked on top of his head. His eyes were swollen from crying, and his face showed surprise. “Hello?” His voice still sounded a little choked up and wary.

“Hello, child.” Alice’s voice distorted and echoed with power. She was careful to keep the volume down, since it could be so easy to hurt others’ ears in this state. Thus, her voice was soft and gentle, almost like a whisper. “I have heard your sincere call and have come to help you.”
The boy’s jaw dropped, and he gasped. Alice could see two fangs peeking out. Now, in the light of the miracle, she could tell that the wolf was indeed a youth. He had barely started the journey toward manhood. His round face and large ears still seemed to belong to a puppy. Her heart ached at the thought of one so young suffering. “Wh-who are you?” This time his voice was full of wonder.

“I am an angel. I am from the Upper, and I am here to help you in your time of need, young one,” she said with a smile.

“Really!” he yelped.

She covered her mouth and giggled. “Yes. I will give you a gift.” At first, she thought to cure the boy’s brother directly, but something in her warned against the action. She, luckily, knew the impressions given to her and heeded the warning. Instead, she thought of a way for the boy and his sibling to find the parts they desired. She lifted the miracle in her hand to her mouth and kissed it. The light and heat spiked for a moment.

“Woah!” The boy covered his face and ducked. “Miss angel?”

She felt a portion of power leave her for a time and then her hand held something in place of the miracle. The light dimmed again to the brilliance it was before. She looked over the gift the miracle had brought her. Many times, a miracle would create something. It was rare for it to bring something to her that already existed unless she asked specifically. It was a map, ancient in age, but a few runes in the corner kept it in good condition. She wasn’t sure what to make of this. Never the less, it did its job.

“Here you are, young one. Use this gift from the Upper wisely in your quest.” She approached the boy. He lowered his hands and tried to look at her, but he had to close his eyes again. She knelt in front of him and gently took his hand in hers, placing the map there. “I am sure your brother treasures you as much as you treasure him. He must be so grateful for your support. I pray that this helps you and that you both can be strong enough to find the cure together,” she said. Tears came back to his closed eyes.

He nodded his head and swallowed thickly. “Thank you. Thank you!” he whispered. Alice felt tears prickle at her own eyes at the display of gratitude and hope before her. She gave his hand a gentle squeeze, then pulled back and stood. She took a deep breath and then used the tiny bit of power left to take her away from the patio. She reappeared in a lone corner of the lobby. She took a moment to reorient herself and get used to the warm feelings swirling around her that happened whenever she used a miracle. She checked the pouch and made sure the string was pulled shut. It was safe in her pocket again.

The gift she'd given hadn't given her wings, but she hadn’t expected it to. For that to work, she had to learn a valuable insight that she could take back to the Upper with her and teach to her fellow angels. This way, the angels could serve the Surface, and the Surface could teach the Upper. This was how sacrifice, kindness, sorrow, and comfort were brought to the angels. At least, that was how the legends went. Alice had always hoped to bring an important knowledge back to her people, but many times the insight would be more personal than society shaking like sorrow, even for the angels in her family. Still, she was happy to have helped the young wolf. Now, she had two miracles left to help her perform her act of Charity. It would just have to be enough.

Humming to herself, she almost skipped back to the bar. The other employee looked a little surprised at her great mood. She dismissed his confusion and instead thanked him for helping her. “I'm cheered that you watched the place for me.” The man snorted at her pun, but he was smiling, so she took it as a win.
The rest of her shift went by in a blur. Every time she thought about the wolf boy, she got that giddy rush of happiness that always happened when she helped someone. She was more energetic thanks to using the miracle too. She made drinks, filled orders, and talked to the guests in a more cheerful manner than usual. She shared her puns since she was in such a great mood, no matter who the company was.

It wasn’t until the early dawn hours, and the stars started to disappear, that Alice began to ponder. Why was a kid like him in a place like this? Was his brother not as innocent as Alice hoped? This wasn’t really a place for kids…Then again, it wasn’t really a place for angels. Yet, there were three here. Maybe she shouldn’t judge.

Mac came to replace her for the morning shift. “Thanks, Mac. I didn’t think I’d be able to stand being barred from my bed much longer.”

The thin man groaned. “Don’t you ever stop?”

“Never!” Alice grinned. “Are you saying I don’t even have a shot at making you laugh?”

Mac rolled his eyes. “Go back to your room, and stop torturing me Alice.” Alice giggled and headed through the kitchen doors. With quick steps, she got to her room. She opened the door and turned on the light. She decided to turn on the little radio she had for some music. She took off her vest and undid her braid. She started brushing her dark locks when a catchy tune came on.

(Insert music here)

It was sad and self-pitying, but she liked the woman’s voice. If Alice was being honest with herself, it was a little how she felt about her act of Charity. She felt ignored and stuck. It was like no one thought her help was worth their time. Her efforts were coming to squat. She couldn’t find her halo on her break either. She joined the singer.

“Somebody take a chance with me,” she sang. “Believe me, no, nobody’s baby.”

She couldn’t get too down. There were still moments, like the wolf pup or when that little demon laughed at getting the wrong drink. There were moments of surprised joy and humble gratitude, moments of light amongst all the dismal grey of the Surface. As the song came to a close, Alice felt a pang of homesickness. Before the memories could begin gnawing at her mind and heart, there was a knock at her door. She stood and walked to the little hall that led out of her room. She startled when she realized the door was open and in the entrance stood a tall, grey person with a tall hat. Her stomach instantly turned at the energy coming off him in waves.

“B-boss!” Alice stuttered.

“Alice, do you understand that you left your door open? Everyone out here could hear your singing,” Black Hat stated with a blank expression. His monocle slipped a bit, and he lifted a hand to adjust it.

Alice flushed darkly. Ev-everyone heard her? Oh sweet cheese and crackers! Even the boss? She wanted to disappear like on the patio and never reappear. Why did these things always happen to her? “O-oh. I must have forgotten to close the door when I got in…” She ducked her head to hide her burning face.

The demon cleared his throat, which had Alice raise her eyes. “That may be and yet, I have a… proposition for you.” Alice instantly felt her guard and anxiety rise. The demon smiled, showing his sharp fangs. “We are a little short on entertainers next week. How would you feel taking some extra shifts to sing?”
Alice blinked, her eyes widening so far she feared her eyes would fall out. Her? Sing? Like on a stage? Her? Black Hat raised a brow, and his grin dropped a centimeter at her silence. Alice shook her head when she figured she must be pulling a ridiculous face at her boss.

“Ah! Uh, Y-yes sir! I’d love to sing next week,” Alice struggled to get out.

The grin returned full force. Alice tried to shake the mental comparison to a shark. “Excellent. Then you don’t mind coming with me.”

Alice blinked. “Uh?”

“Come along. We have a lot to do before you can go on the stage.” Black Hat made a beckoning motion with his hand. “We can’t have you in that uniform, and you’ll have to meet the band that you’ll work with.”

Alice blinked. “But.” She glanced back at her room. “I’m already off the clock.”

Black Hat paused in his turn to leave. He glanced back at her. “Does that mean no?” He frowned and narrowed his eye, and somehow his monocle narrowed as well. Alice had given up on trying to understand how the eye piece worked a long time ago.

Alice panicked. “N-no, sir! I’ll be right with you. Please give me a moment.”

Mr. Hat rolled his visible eye. Alice rushed back into her room. She flicked off her radio and checked herself in the mirror to make sure she was presentable enough. She raced back to the hall and stopped before she crashed into the imposing demon. He gazed down at her as she pushed some of her hair out of her face. She smiled up to him.

The demon left, and Alice locked her door then followed him. As usual, Alice felt her skin crawl standing so close to the dark being. The cold and evil rolling off him was piercing, like the icy wind of a dark winter night. Alice trembled and felt goosebumps rise over her arms. It felt dangerous.

The pair turned down the hall and headed deeper into the casino. Alice began comparing the boss’ essence to the little demon she had helped earlier. They both had the darkness that seemed to cling to demons, but where Black Hat’s was like tidal waves, trying to push you away, Bendy’s was more like a curtain or a shroud he just had to wear. Hat’s was biting cold, Bendy’s was cool. She wondered if Hat was warm to the touch like Bendy had been or if he was lighter than he appeared. They both had physical features that one could compare to a demon. Hat’s huge shark teeth, his eye became a slit when he was angry and his forked tongue. She secretly wondered what she would find under her boss’ hat, but he never removed it. Bendy’s head was shaped like two large horns, and he had little fangs and a spiked tail. Still, where Mr. Hat was intimidating, Bendy was almost…cute.

Alice blinked at the thought and then shook her head. She must be really tired.

They finally came to a dim room that was for props and costumes. Several items were stored here, including instruments, magic props, stands, chairs, and many suits and dresses. Boxes and crates were stacked haphazardly around. Mr. Hat stopped and lifted a hand. He called, “Flug! Demencia!” Alice heard a crash and jumped. “Ah, there they are.” Something moved behind Alice. She spun around and shrieked as huge hairy arms wrapped around her and lifted her off her feet. “5-0-5! No! Put her down! We don’t have time for your nonsense.”

The great beast that held Alice whimpered and grumbled, before gently putting Alice back on her feet. Alice looked up to see the huge furry bear with a flower sprouting from his head. His round ears were down, and his huge eyes were downcast and watery. He looked like a big teddy bear. “Aw, it’s okay,” Alice said softly. The bear looked down at Alice with a pout.
“Don’t encourage him, Alice. He’ll just want to hug you again.” Mr. Hat rolled his eye. Alice glanced at her boss, before looking back at the sad bear. She winked at him and the bear turned his head to the side and seemed to perk up. Before Alice had a chance to say anything, another shadow scurried quickly across the wall. Alice spun around in time to see the shadow jump off the wall and land in front of Black Hat. Mr. Hat blinked and looked down without surprise. “Demencia,” he greeted in a bored tone.

“Heya, Black Hat!” she squealed. She was a girl just a bit taller than Alice. She was thin, dressed in a strange lizard-like hat, complete with large yellow eyes and horns, and her long hair was pulled back in a messy ponytail. It was so long that it brushed the ground and curled up in a loop. Her blouse and skirt were wrinkled. She wore long gloves and the skirt was a little too short to be appropriate for Alice’s tastes. She had spiderweb patterned hose and boots on. She also had an unbuttoned vest, much like the one that Alice wore to work.

Black Hat waved his hand and a clipboard was pulled from a shadowy mist that appeared around his hand. Alice couldn’t stop herself from cringing back at the act. “I need you and F-”

Another loud crash cut Mr. Hat off. “Ow,” a nasally voice whimpered.

“Flug! Get out here!” Black Hat barked.

“S-sorry, sir!” A gangly man pulled himself from behind a pile of boxes. He was yanking at a cord that was tangled with his legs. He hopped up and down, desperately trying to free himself. Right when he was able to free himself, he over balanced and, with a wild swing of his arms, landed on the floor at Mr. Hat’s feet. Black Hat and Demencia gazed down at him. The girl was blank-faced, and Hat only looked annoyed. “Wh-what can we do to serve you?” The man had a square paper bag over his head and large black goggles over his eyes. Alice blinked. More goggles?

Mr. Hat scowled, but turned to the clipboard. “I need you and Demencia to reorganize the schedule for next week and get to work on costuming.” Alice felt something brush her hand. She looked down to see the bear had wiggled up to her, almost on his belly, so he could push his head into her hand like a dog. He looked up at her with huge pleading eyes, his tongue sticking out a bit from… was that a smile? So cute!

“Do I finally get my big show!” Demencia jumped up and threw her arms above her.

“No.”

She immediately was on the ground again with a scowl. She crossed her arms and looked away. Alice scratched the bear’s head to watch him light up even more. She was careful not to touch the odd flower.

“I have a new singer for you to dress up. I want this done right!” Mr. Hat snapped. “She has to be appropriate for the casino.”

The girl saluted the demon with a grin and her tongue sticking out of the corner of her mouth. At that angle, Alice noticed the girl’s eyes were different. One was the normal pie-cut black, but the other was light with a pupil being the only black in it. She also had two sharp teeth, like fangs. Alice furrowed her brow, was she human? She felt human.

“Flug, you will work with her and the band to find a good song and work the schedule for them,” Mr. Hat instructed.

Flug got up and dusted off his vest and dress shirt. The thin man adjusted his tie. Alice could have
sworn that she heard him mutter something about a waste of his talents and that he was a scientist.

“What was that?” Black Hat asked.

The man swung his arms up to protect his face. “I-I said anything for the poster boards?”

Black Hat turned to Alice for a moment. His smile grew to show his sharp teeth. “How about Alice Angel, the singer from above.” Alice scowled. People weren’t supposed to know she was an angel! It made her mission all the harder! Black Hat noticed her expression. He smirked. “Something wrong with that, Alice?”

She glanced at the others. They were staring at her. “No, sir,” she stated in a clipped tone.

“That’s an angel? She doesn’t look like much,” Demencia stated in a flat tone.

“Have you already forgotten the other two angels working here?” Flug asked, raising an eyebrow at the girl.

“We have two other angels working here!” Demencia gasped. Flug smacked his forehead. Black Hat pinched the bridge of his nose.

“How could you forget! You were working with Willen last week!” Black Hat growled.

“I was working with an angel!” Her hands came up to the sides of her face. “Gross!” She burst into laughter. Alice furrowed her brows as the three dissolved into an argument. Gross? She had worked around the tables and kitchen her whole time here. She had never met these people, but she felt very out of place here. How much longer would she have to stay here, before she found her halo? The arguing got louder. She didn’t like the contention and darkness here. She felt alone.

“ENOUGH!” Black Hat suddenly grew five feet and black wings appeared behind him. The shadows twisted and turned, and his thin physique suddenly filled out. Silence fell, and just as quickly, he returned to normal. Alice had jumped behind the bear to hide from the power. “I’m surrounded by morons! Measure her so you can find a dress and get these things done.” Flug and Demencia saluted him. “And 5-0-5, clean up back here, and get the set prepped for the show tonight!” The bear suddenly stood up and saluted.

The bear lumbered off into the maze of props and boxes. The girl appeared next to Alice. She had a measuring tape in her hands and, in a speed that was like the wind, measured Alice’s height, legs, arms, waist, bust and so forth. Alice didn’t even have time to feel offended before the other girl stepped back. Alice crossed her arms over herself, insulted that she had gotten no warning and that she had been touched in such a way. Demencia shook her hands, pulling a face like Alice was wet and had caused Demencia’s hands to be contaminated. The girl tucked her tape away and scurried onto the wall, disappearing.

Before Alice could word her opinion, the thin man approached her and asked her to look at several music sheets and genres. Alice helped him sort out a few that she believed she could manage. With that done, Flug also retreated to the dark unknown of the backstage storage area. “Come now, Miss Alice. I believe you need to get back to your room and sleep.” Alice muffled a yawn at the thought and followed the demon man out the doors they came through.

She was surprised that the boss was escorting her back. Usually, he would wave her away after he was done with whatever business involved her. They walked in silence as Alice shot him worried glances. Should she say something? The dark intensified suddenly and Alice gulped, trying to calm her nerves.
“Alice, what did you do last night?” Black Hat asked, without looking at her. Alice stared at him, but his hat was tilted in a way that she couldn’t see his eye or monocle.

“What do you mean, boss?” she asked. Alice gulped. Mr. Hat turned his head and glared at her. All the evil from him focused on her, and she felt like she was wrapped in icy snakes. She froze, unable to move an inch in terror, and he stopped walking along with her.

“Do you think I wouldn’t notice? Stupid girl. You did something last night with a huge amount of magic. The second floor practically stinks of that sunny, flowery, filth!” Black Hat sneered. Alice was shaking like a leaf. She was about to choke out a string of apologies when Mr. Hat’s expression relaxed. “And there is a touch of shadow to you.” He narrowed his eye as his frown deepened. “I hope you didn’t banish one of my guests, Miss Alice.” He waved his hand, and a cane appeared from the shadows.

“N-no, sir! I was only escorting him back to his room! He was tipped, and I was worried about letting him leave the bar alone,” Alice sputtered out. Black Hat froze. His eye widened in surprise. Alice continued. “I helped him up the stairs so…” She had some mark of shadow on her from touching him? She didn’t know that.

“You helped him up the stairs?” Black Hat muttered, bewildered and lowered his cane to the floor with quiet tap.

“Yes, sir! Th-The miracle was some-something completely different! I’m sorry, sir!” She was still panicked, though the pressure on her was lessening by the second.

Black Hat sputtered, then burst out laughing. Alice stopped and blinked in surprise.

“Huh?”

“You angels! You helped him!” Black Hat covered his eyes with a hand and doubled over as he laughed. “You have so much disdain, but then you-” He snorted. “The most ridiculous race! Helping!” Alice stood by and watched her boss laugh at her. What was so funny? Sure, he was a demon, but Alice had helped loads of drunks back to their rooms for the evening. She didn’t get it.

Finally, Black Hat regained himself and straightened up. He started walking again. Alice hesitated a moment, before following him. “Good of you to do your job, despite your ideology;” Black Hat said. “I usually have to fight any of you angels into acting right.” He rolled his eye. They quickly came to the hall that Alice’s apartment-like room was in. “Keep up the work, Alice.” Alice bobbed her head uncomfortably and quickly headed to her door. A compliment from Black Hat might not be a good thing. Why did she feel like she’d betrayed her people? Did she break another rule she didn’t entirely understand? Would her father chew her out if he were here to see this? “Oh, and Alice?”

She turned around to look at her boss. “Yes, Mr. Hat?” she asked meekly.

“Don’t do that light show again,” he growled, but still had his smile. Somehow, that made it more terrifying. “I really can’t stand that rubbish upstairs now, and it’ll take days to air out.”

“Yes, sir.” Alice ducked her head. “Sorry, sir.” He nodded and turned to leave.

“You start rehearsing tomorrow,” he said over his shoulder. She quickly retreated into her room. Alice let out a sigh of relief as she locked her door behind her.

She went to the mirror in her room. She stared at the dazed girl in the reflection. She didn’t even hear the radio. She was exhausted. She needed a shower. She quickly brushed her hair again and went to go wash up.
Tomorrow was going to be an interesting day. Maybe if she saw that little demon again, she would apologize for being so cold. She wondered if she would see him at the bar on her next shift. Maybe she’d use a few puns and see if she could get him to laugh again. He had a nice laugh after all. It was completely different from Mr. Hat’s. It wasn’t belittling. She couldn’t see the little demon treating her like that. Though, he had seemed a bit sad. Maybe she could lift his spirits.

She burst into surprised laughter. That was a good one! She had to remember that for later.

If she was lucky, she might see the wolf too. He wouldn’t recognize her as the angel that helped him. She had probably only looked like a bright glowing light to him. It happened before, but it didn’t matter if he realized she was the person on the patio. She would at least wish him a good day, maybe see him without tears in his eyes. That would be nice. She might even catch a glimpse of the older wolf brother. Sadly, they were probably heading out on their quest right now, so the chances of her seeing them again weren’t great. The water quickly turned cold…as usual, and Alice worked as swiftly as possible to get out before it turned icy. She toweled off and pulled on her comfy night dress before crawling into her bed.

Alice found herself drifting off to sleep quickly. She wondered if the shower had washed whatever shadow mark she’d gotten from touching the little demon. She hoped so. The idea that she had some kinda mark from a demon was creepy. She hoped it didn’t mess up the miracle she’d given to the wolf boy. Everything seemed to have gone great. His journey for that cure would be guided by that map. Her mind slowed, and once again her last thought was wondering when she would get to leave too.

Chapter End Notes

Dear, sweet, confused Alice. Whatever are you going to do? She was fun to write. I like her character a lot. And you can see I am doing something different than what rouge has in the comic. In this story, Alice hasn't fallen. She doesn't have horns. And Black Hat is terrifying! Glad I don't have a boss like that!

So again, thanks for reading! Beware the Warners in the comments. I'll get that back next week. I appreciated all the praise and kind words though! You guys are the best! I'll try not to get that sappy again. I'm a joker at heart anyway....Did I just make a gambling card joke?

Forget it.

Have a wonderful week.

TAP out!

And thank you, Yakko for holding Dot back. -_- I got my eye on you two. 0-0 Besides. This is the last time you get to play around in the comments, so have fun. And remember, I may let you Warners get away with a lot, but this is still my story! Treat it and the readers with respect!

And before I forget again! I found a really exciting Cuphead short. I think the brother bond is written so well! I wanted to share it with you guys. Tell Zoey hi for me, and check out her other Cuphead stories. Thanks! ^^

http://archiveofourown.org/works/12468512
It's the Warner Brothers and the Warner Sister

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

It's the Warners. What more needs to be said?

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello!
So, it's the Warner's chapter. They have full rein (mostly) and I will just be here. That means I have my comments section back! :D ...But I have an odd feeling that I will never have as many comments as the Warners. Oh well, it'll just be nice to talk to you readers again.
And before I forget the Warners gave me a couple of things to say to you guys:
Thanks for all the fun and ideas. We'll be taking all this with us. We wanted you to know that the comments sections is 'cannon' material when we're there so congrats to all of you that spoke to us! You are now in the fic! Didn't see that coming did ya? Now we can change this story to something more fun to spite the author! Look forward to us heroes saving the day and beating the bad guys! -Yakko, Wakko, and Dot
Of course they would try to take over my story like this. Whelp. I don't think I've ever seen a story turn it's comment section into part of the story like this before. I guess we'll just see how things go.
Ladies and gentleman, I present to you the Warners.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Boy! It’s good to be back!” Yakko lifted his arms over his head and stretched.

“Yeah, but that was fun!” Dot grinned.

“Ab-so-lutely!” Yakko said as the two stepped into the hospital. “We may have to tell Wakko everything.” He worried a little about that. There were parts of Wakko’s talent that worked fine and others that didn’t. They could still see the fourth wall and share each other’s talents, but knowing things beforehand wasn’t possible anymore. Their memories and knowledge of future events were in the grey, and the events they hadn’t been there for personally were slowly slipping away. It was getting harder and harder to remember. It was the most locked in to their reality Yakko had ever felt. It was a very odd sensation. He hoped Wakko was really taking it as well as he seemed to be. The information that all the readers gave them would help.

“Yeah! I’m so excited! Can we visit Bendy first?” Dot bounced next to her older sibling.

Yakko got a thoughtful look as his brow knit together. “Uuuuuuh, well, we’ll have to move fast. They’re probably packing to leave the casino by now. Oh! And we want to do that one prank first.”

“Then what are we waiting for?” Dot grabbed his wrist and yanked him down the hall. Dot turned a
corner and they were in Wakko’s room. Yakko was already used to the odd spaces and shortcuts his sister used, so it didn’t startle him in the least. Sadly, the boy wasn’t in the room. Dot scratched her head and dropped Yakko’s wrist. “Uh? Darn it, I had the water ready and everything.”

“It’s not that waterfall you dropped on me earlier, is it?” Yakko gave her a speculative look.

“What? No! Of course not!” Dot waved a hand back and forth in denial.

“Good. We don’t wanna pay for a flooded hospital,” Yakko said.

“Pay?” Dot turned her head to the side.

“It’s one of TAP’s new rules? I think she’s worried we’ll break her story,” Yakko said. Dot snorted a laugh.

“We might,” she admitted.

Yakko heard a giggle and poked his head out of the room. He glanced down the hall and saw his brother half hanging over the counter of the nurse’s station. The younger Warner was in his regular sweater and hat, most likely checked out of his stay and lingering around the nurse that had watched over him while he waited for his siblings…at least that’s what Yakko would have done. The pretty bird shook her head and said something. Nurse Dovil, if Yakko remembered correctly. He zoomed over next to Wakko.

“Hallowwww nurse!” Yakko greeting.

The nurse’s eyes widened in surprise, and then she giggled again. “See, they didn’t take long enough for dinner together.”

“Awww,” Wakko mourned. “But we can still go out and have a glitzy night.” Yakko held back a snicker. It seemed his appearance had destroyed Wakko’s hope for a date.

“Yeah, doll. Don’t let me ruin your fun night.” Yakko grinned.

She giggled again. “That’s sweet, but I really shouldn’t. I don’t want to lead anyone on.”

“Oh, sugar, you can lead me anywhere.” Wakko grinned with his tongue sticking out of the corner of his smile.

Dot appeared. “Ha-boom!” She dumped a glass of water on Wakko’s head. He spurted. Dot and Yakko burst into laughter, then ran for it.

“Speaking of nonsense,” Wakko took off his hat to wring it out, “You fellas wanna start something?” He laughed and shook out his hat as he stood on the counter.

Small alarms went off in Yakko’s mind. Last time they had a prank war, they had destroyed half of the capital city and got banned from a country that, in his opinion, still served the best steak ever. Yakko still missed that steak.

“Woah, now,” Yakko intervened and jumped up next to Wakko. “No need for prank war three.” A pie nailed him in the face. Dovil gasped as the tin fell off. Yakko blinked, unamused. “Really? That’s the third pie in a row. Save some for the beverages, why don’t you?” Using his tongue, he made the pie cream disappear from his head. “Hmm? Is this cream cheese?”

“Cream cheese?” Dot appeared on the other side of Wakko. “Isn’t that odd? Where did you find a
pie like that?"

“The hospital food here is some of the weirdest stuff.” Wakko grinned more fully. “I think I ate
something from one of Dr. Seuss’ books yesterday.” Before Dot could say anything, Wakko covered
his mouth and started coughing. The other Warners stopped and looked over at him.

“Hey bro, you’re checked out now. No need to keep up the cough,” Yakko joked.

Wakko cleared his throat and chuckled. He scratched the back of his head. “I must’ve done
something while fake coughing. Now, it’s real.”

Yakko smacked his forehead. Dot pushed the two of them on the floor. “You’re both wasting time! I
gotta catch that mailman before he’s gone!”

Wakko blinked. “Oh! So, you guys were able to get stuff from the readers.”

Dot raised an eyebrow. “You didn’t know?”

Wakko shrugged. “Bit and pieces.”

Yakko shook his head. “That’s just weird coming from you, bro.” Yakko shrugged. Dot started
walking down the hall. The boys quickly scrambled up and ran to catch her. Wakko snickered. “I
can’t get a date, but when her boyfriend comes up, nothing else matters, uh?”

Dovil tried to get the retreating three’s attention. “Um, excuse me? You left the pie-”

Yakko smirked. “Right?”

“Shut your traps or I’ll leave you!” Dot warned, not turning around to look at them.

“Excuse me?” Dovil tried again.

“Eh, we’d still catch up,” Wakko said, unworried. The three turned a corner and walked into a grand
lobby that sparkled with a chandelier hanging over the room, leaving a very confused bird nurse to
look around the corner to find them gone.

Two huge wrap-around staircases led to the second floor of the grand lobby. The Warners stopped
and looked around the place. Employees were taking coats and directing people around. Fancy dress
and normal attired people entered the room beyond to the card tables, stage, and buffet.

Yakko whistled. “Boy, those fellas know how to travel with style. We sure this is the spot they
checked in? I mean, we were all worried after hanging around that Silly-what’s-it place, but then
they’re living the high life in Toon Town.”

Dot smacked his arm. “They’re on the run and are in hiding.”

“Think they’ll wanna borrow my mustache?” Yakko asked.

“Maybe a fancy hat,” Wakko suggested, wearing the crown he had picked up back in the storehouse
in Warnerburg.

“You still have that?” Yakko asked.

Wakko shrugged. “It’s a souvenir.”

“Would you two stop goofing off and help me look for my man?” Dot asked.
The boys shared a look and smirked. “Us? Stop?” Yakko asked. Dot twitched at the tone he used.

“Why Dot, it’s like you don’t even know us!” Wakko mocked surprise. She stopped and turned to look at them slowly, a huge smile on her face.

“I will toss you two back into the author’s notes and leave you there! No, I’ll throw you into the most boring, self-indulgent, poorly written fic I can find! I’ll put you two in Wikipedia and won’t come back for three days!”

“Woah, woah there, sis!” Wakko put his hands up in a stopping motion.

“Yeah, Wiki is too far,” Yakko said. “We’re family, at least leave us in hell.”

Dot put a fist on her hip, raising a finger on her other hand, and opened her mouth to say something.

“Oh, look. It’s them,” Wakko said and pointed. Dot turned around so fast she left an after image and squealed loudly. Bendy and Boris looked up in alarm at the sound. They had just descended one of the staircases with their travel bags on their backs. Dot hopped up in the air and flapped her feet, somehow staying suspended. Hearts appeared in her eyes as she brought her clasped hands up to her chin and tilted her head.

“Dot?” Boris asked, sounding completely shocked.

“What in the world are you three doing here?” Bendy blinked as his eyes widened further. “How did you even get here?”

Dot suddenly landed in Bendy’s arms princess style. “Oh, Bendy-boo. A girl never reveals her secrets.” She smiled and ran a finger under his chin.

“Don’t call me that.” He frowned. She leaned in to kiss him. He dropped her. “And would you get off me!” he growled. Dot giggled and pounced up.

“Awww, I’ve missed you too, my brave mailman.” Dot winked and leaned into him.

“For the millionth time, I am not a mailman!” Bendy barked and pushed her away.

“You sure about that?” Yakko asked, pointing to the letters in Boris’ hand. “You sure look like you’re delivering letters there, pal.”

“Oh, we’re sending these out actually,” Boris said.

“Letter to a lady?” Wakko wiggled his eyebrow.

Boris laughed. “Well, you’re not wrong.”

“Wait, really!” Yakko pushed Wakko’s head down to lean over him and towards Boris.

Wakko straightened up, but Yakko remained balanced on top of him. “Who! Who are they to?”

“Well, one is to Dr. Oddswell, but I think I remember Miss Hood gets the mail,” Boris said.

“You’re writing that dame!” Yakko gasped.

“That pair of gams!” Wakko’s jaw dropped.

“That beauty!” Yakko demanded.
Boris blinked and raised a brow with an amused smile. “Yeah,” he said slowly. “Oddswell is that doctor that’s helping Bendy, and she’s his assistant so… wait, how do you know Miss Hood?”

Dot snorted. “He needs more than an assistant right now.”

“Why? What happened to him?” Bendy asked, his brow lowered.

“Oh, boy. The fella was arrested on the spot. They got him in the pen,” Yakko said.

Bendy sighed. His shoulders dropped. “I read that, but at least he’s safe with the cops.” Bendy blinked. “Wait! What about Red?”

Wakko turned to Boris again and answered him. “We met her at the hospital.” Wakko gave a matter of fact grin with his tongue sticking out.

Boris’ eyes knit together. “Gosh. Is she okay?”

Yakko shrugged. “A little banged up, but she’s still a real spitfire.”

“Was it those cup guys?” Bendy scowled.

Wakko shrugged. “From what I overheard, she doesn’t know. It was a couple of fellas, but she never saw them. Blindfolded her and tied her up.”

Yakko blinked. He waved out. “Good night, everybody.”

“Knock it off,” Bendy growled. “I’d bet it was them. What scum beats a lady like that?” He snorted in disgust.

“Awww. That’s my mailman!” Dot leaned into him. Bendy pushed her away again, without looking at her.

“Still, I’m glad she’s alive,” Boris said. Bendy looked over at him and nodded. “Have you fellas heard about anyone else? How did you even find us?”

“Anyone else?” Yakko asked.

“We just hung out with the readers for a bit. Really swell folks, they’re cheering for us, you know.” Dot linked her arm with Bendy’s. He shook, but she hung on.

Yakko smirked. “You mean Bendy and-”

“Don’t you dare finish that sentence!” Dot warned with narrowed eyes.

“Let go!” Bendy told Dot.

“Marry me!” Dot replied, clinging to his arm as he lifted her off the ground.

Dot’s brothers ignored this and kept talking to Boris. “So, like I said, whadda ya mean, anyone else?”

Boris glanced at his brother nervously, but focused on Yakko’s question. “An old gropher or maybe a little squirrel boy?”

The boys exchanged a look. “Nope,” Wakko said.
“Never heard of ‘em. They famous?” Yakko asked.

“No. They’re other patients of Dr. Oddswell.”

“Ah. Well, we’ll keep an eye out?” Yakko said. Wakko nodded and stretched one eye wide before snapping it back in place. Boris gave a weak smile.

“Uh, thanks,” he muttered. Bendy and Dot slid by in the background as he swung his arm around, trying to get her to let go. Dot was a blur of the black that wouldn’t budge. Boris stared and turned his head as they went by. His face pulled into a look of complete confusion, with wide eyes and his eyebrows pulled together.

“Nah, we’ve been following around this news guy instead. He went by your guys’ homestead to ask a ton of questions,” Yakko said.

Boris’ attention snapped back to the Warner boys and his eyes widened in alarm. “What! He did? What does he want?”

“Don’t worry, pal.” Wakko hopped out from under Yakko and wrapped an arm around Boris’ shoulders. He was only a bit taller than Bendy and practically had to hang off Boris. “If he was stirrin’ trouble, we woulda dealt with him a while back.”

“He’s a stand up kinda guy. Think he’ll clear your names and such, if we let ‘im,” Yakko added and crossed his arms.

“Really!” Boris’ ears came up and his eyes filled with excitement.

“Yeah.” Yakko shrugged.

“Bendy, did you hear that?” Boris turned to his brother. Bendy had his boot against Dot, trying to force her away. His other arm was prying at her death grip.

“I said let go! I don’t like you, and I never will!” Bendy snarled, flashing his fangs.

“We’re soulmates! Don’t fight destiny Bendy-boo! Let it happen! Don’t worry, I’ll never let go! I’m better than Rose!” Dot exclaimed dramatically.

“Hey sis, the word count is rising, and we got other stuff to do,” Yakko reminded her.

Dot lifted her head and pouted. “If you guys hadn’t taken so long in the hospital then I-”

Bendy swung his arm again, and Dot’s hands slipped. Instead of her flying up into the air, she stepped up to her brothers from Boris’ side. The wolf jumped at her sudden appearance.

“-wouldn’t have had to cut all my fun short,” she finished.

Yakko patted her head. “Sorry Dot, but you know we have so many good plans set up and all the readers are excited for the big show.”

Dot looked down. “I guess.”

“We even got the mallet and the groucho glasses,” Yakko reminded her. She crossed her arms and nodded.

“Finally!” Bendy said, walking up to stand next to Boris. “I couldn’t feel my fingers!”
“Bendy! There’s a news guy that’s working to clear our names!” Boris grinned.

“What?” Bendy asked. It took a moment for him to get filled in on the details. “And we can trust this guy? I mean, he’s a friend of you three.”

“Oh, you don’t have to worry,” Yakko said, waving an arm out.

“He’s completely sane and level headed,” Dot added.

“Aren’t you fellas’ friends of ours too?” Wakko looked at the pair, confused.

“He’s obsessed with the truth getting out, and you fellas are the hottest mystery in town,” Yakko said.

“How could he resist?” Wakko said.

“I know I couldn’t.” Dot grinned and looked pointedly at Bendy.

Bendy took an uneasy step back.

“Why are you three even here?” Bendy narrowed his eyes at Dot. “Besides giving me a headache.”

“Why,” Dot gasped, “We’re here to help you out of the kindness of our hearts!” She put a hand on her chest and tried to look offended. The demon’s frown only deepened, showing he didn’t buy her act. Dot grinned. “And ’cause that’s what girlfriends do.”

“Like hell you’re my girlfriend!” Bendy barked. Boris put a hand on his shoulder to calm him down.

“We decided to drop by to say hi and give you guys a lift,” Yakko said.

Boris turned his head to the side. “A lift?”

“Yeah. You two are headed south right?” Yakko asked.

“How do you know that?” Bendy demanded.

Yakko shrugged. “Fourth wall shenanigans.”

“And ’cause that’s where the bad guys are going!” Wakko said.

“Bad guys?” Boris asked.

“Yeah, they look like this.” Wakko pulled two tea cups out from behind him.

“You already used that gag,” Yakko said.

“Not in this story,” Wakko said.

“Oh, so you remember that,” Yakko said, smirking.

“Li’l bit,” Wakko said and tossed the cups away. The Warners didn’t react to the crash, but Boris and Bendy cringed.

“So, those guys are ahead of us? How did they even know where to go?” Bendy asked, his brow lowering in concern. “Wait, I still don’t understand how you know! We only decided to head south this morning!”
“Don’t worry about it, honey. We’ll take care of them. You two have a prize to go win.” Dot winked. Bendy shuddered.

“But those guys are really strong!” Boris said, alarmed.

“We’ll be fine!” Yakko waved a hand. “We’re the Warner brothers.”

“And the Warner sister.” Dot grinned. Bendy pinched the bridge of his nose.

“So, what are you planning exactly?” Bendy asked.

“Uuuuuuuuuh.” Yakko closed his mouth. “Ya know, it’d probably be easier to just show you.” He turned to the Warner girl. “Dot, if you would be so kind?”

Dot grinned and nodded. She took a step away from her siblings and reached out. She grabbed the space next to her and yanked in. Bendy and Boris gasped and waved their arms as the scene around them seemed to be pulled to the side, like a background picture. Bendy blinked and suddenly the group was standing on an empty cobbled street. Two-story buildings lined both sides of the road. Beautiful iron railings lined the second story of the buildings. The buildings hugged close to each other, causing narrow walkways between them when there was any space from one building to another. Bendy heard jazz music in the distance.

“Welcome, gents, to the sunken city, the home of jazz! New Orleans!” Yakko lifted his arms like he was some kinda showman. Bendy blinked a couple more times. His eyes grew huge and his vest fell off his shoulder a bit with how far his posture had dropped.

“Be-Bendy, what just happened?” Boris mumbled, looking around, just as confused and alarmed as the demon.

“We did a scene jump,” Wakko said, a little out of breath. He coughed into his fist a bit. “Happens all the time. You’re just never aware of it.” Bendy stared at him, not understanding a word Wakko had said, going by Bendy’s completely bamboozled expression.

“You alright there, bro?” Yakko asked.


The girl was breathing a bit harder. She wiped at her forehead. “Girl’s don’t sweat,” she huffed. “We glitter.” Bendy snorted and laughed. Boris snickered.

Wakko snorted and covered his mouth. Yakko bit his lip.

“Sorry,” Wakko gasped. “You what?”

Dot blinked at them, then leaned over to put her hands on her knees. “Glitter.”

Wakko choked, his shoulders shaking as his hand covered his smile. This only made Boris and Bendy laugh harder.

“Don’t laugh!” Dot scowled.

“We’re not,” Yakko’s voice broke, “laughing.” He fought the twitch in his lip.

“Yes, you are!” Dot pouted.

“Noope!” Yakko said. Dot rolled her eyes.
“Forcing scene changes is hard when it’s more than three,” Dot muttered.

“I know. Sorry.” Yakko sighed.

“Do I even want you to explain how you did that? What did you call this?” Bendy asked after finally getting control of himself.

“Fourth wall shenanigans. Matters if you wanna learn about ‘em,” Wakko said.

“Is it the reason you three are nuts?” Bendy asked.

The Warners shared a look. Yakko decided to speak. “Well,” he drew the word out.

“No, thanks. Took to long to answer that.” Bendy lifted his hand in a stopping motion.

“Why didn’t you guys do that for us when we wanted to go to Toon Town?” Boris asked.

“It’s exhausting,” Dot said.

“And you two were funny in your disguises,” Wakko added. Bendy scowled.

“Speaking of disguises, you two need new ones! You can’t go wandering around in the open daylight looking like that! Someone will recognize you!” Yakko said, gesturing to the boys. The pair exchanged a glance. Bendy scowled, Boris shrugged, and Bendy sighed.

“Fine. Whadda ya got?” Bendy crossed his arms.

The Warners grinned mischievously. Before Bendy or Boris could take a step back, the Warners blurred around them. The two spun until they were dizzy with swirls in their eyes.

“What happened?” Boris asked as he swayed and bumped into Bendy.

Bendy nearly fell over and swung his arms to regain his shifting balance. “It’s the Warners. Do you really have to ask?” Bendy shook his head and blinked a couple of times. He looked down at himself. The Warners had put him in dress pants, a button-up shirt, vest, and overcoat. The shoes he wore were shining with polish. He had a cane in hand and felt something on his face. He lifted his hand to feel a fake mustache on his lip, it had knobs on either end of it. There was also a top hat that covered his goggles. “What in the world,” he stated flatly.


“Yeah, you’re dreamy,” Dot said with hearts in her eyes.

“Though, that mustache...” Boris failed to hold back a chuckle. Bendy looked over to the wolf to see him in a plainer outfit. He had a loose newie hat that flopped over one of his ears. He still had his bandanna tied around his neck, and also wore a loose vest over a pullover. He had on simple trousers and his pull-ons that weren’t really shoes at all, since they only covered the back of his paws and his ankles.

“Hey, hey! What’s this? Why am I dressed for a show, and Boris looks like a street paperboy?” Bendy pointed with the cane.

“What? You don’t want an errand boy?” Yakko joked.

Bendy narrowed his eyes, there was even a glint of red in them. Yakko stopped. Oops, stepped on a landmine.
“Either dress him up or dress me down. My brother and I will always be equals,” Bendy said in a non-joking manner. The wind came out of the Warners sails as they realized they might have hit something sensitive.

“Then, we’ll just have to ritzy up Boris!” Dot stepped forward with a smile to cover the mistake. Yakko put a hand on her shoulder.

“Now sis, we wanna hide ‘em, not make them the talk of the town. No one will give them a second glance as two paperboys. You can’t always have a fancy party,” Yakko said. Dot pouted.

“But we were going to go to the parade together!” Dot pouted.

“Why not after we beat up the dishes and get these boys’ names in some good light?” Yakko suggested gently. She sighed, but Yakko could see that she knew he was right. Boy, was it helpful to have a speech talent. She nodded.

In no time, Bendy was dressed in something closer to what Boris had on. The hat was a little too big and fell into his eyes a bit. The pullover shirt and overcoat were a bit more dressed down. They gave him a scarf to wrap around his neck, that also could be pulled over his face. He had loose slacks tucked into his original boots. He hid his tail in his overcoat easily enough and stuffed his hands in his pockets.

Dot gushed. “You look like a little kid with that oversized hat!”

“Did you call me a tiny little shrimp!” Bendy growled and Boris had to hold him back. The girl giggled.

“You’re so cute!” she kept going on. She hopped next to him and tried to kiss him. He reacted quickly and ducked away. Yakko was actually impressed with his reflexes.

Wakko tugged on his pantleg, motioning for him to lean down. Yakko did so, and Wakko whispered in his ear. “The, uh, word count, Yakko. We won’t have time to fight.” Yakko blinked and looked at the word count. Over four thousand eight hundred now. Oops. They had been playing around for too long, and he was only adding to it with this thought. He held back a chuckle. He smirked and straightened up.

“Hey, Dot! We gotta get going,” he called out to her. He was sad that he had looked away for a moment. The crazy hold Bendy had her in was amazing, and he really wished he knew how Bendy had tied his sister into an almost pretzel shape. She was still reaching to kiss him. She looked up at him and used her space talent to appear next to him. “We have a fight to get to and this chapter is ending.”


“That we get another chapter?” Wakko finished.

Yakko grinned. “Don’t know how else TAP will do it.”

Stars appeared in Dot’s eyes.

“Two chapters!” Wakko cheered.

“Well then, what are we waiting for?” Dot said, getting ready for another scene change.

“Hey!” Boris called. The Warners turned to look at the brothers. “Are you leaving?”
Wakko nodded enthusiastically.

“Thanks for the clothes!” Boris waved.

The Warners grinned. Bendy smiled. “And thanks for the lift.” His eye lit up with mischievousness, like he’d just remembered something. “Dottie.” His smile turned into a smirk. Oh, no. Dot gasped. Wakko and Yakko grabbed an arm each as Dot shrieked and lunged forward.

“That’s the second time you’ve done that! No one calls me that!” she shouted. “My name is Princess Angelina Contessa Louisa Francesca Banana Franna Bo Besca the Third!” she said all in one breath like normal. The stunned look on Bendy and Boris’ faces though, were priceless. Too bad this was happening way too often and Dot’s ice thin patience for this mistake was long gone, Yakko thought. She might actually go through with her threat. It was amazing she hadn’t yet. “I allow you to call me Dot. You got that, punk? Call me Dottie again, and you die! I will do it! The next person dumb enough to—”

“Okay, then,” Yakko cut her off cheerfully. “Glad we could help. Good luck on your quest. We’ll see ya fellas back in Toon Town.”

“Or back here for a parade. I love a good New Orleans parade,” Wakko said. “And some sea food and gumbo, oh, and jambalaya.” Wakko’s mouth started to water.

Yakko rolled his eyes. “I do like the jazz…” he admitted. “Oh! Before I forget!” Yakko reached around and pulled out a case. “Catch!” He tossed the case to the wolf. Boris fumbled to catch it. It slipped by him, and Bendy was able to snatch it before it hit the ground.

“What is it?” Bendy asked.


“Uh…what did you call me?” Bendy asked.

“Don’t worry about it,” Yakko said quickly. Boris took it and opened the small case to reveal a clarinet. The wolf gasped, and his eyes lit up.

“You’re giving this to me?” Boris asked, looking up at the Warners in joy and confusion.

“Yep!” Wakko said. “You should use that talent of yours more often. Music is great.”

Dot snapped out of her anger. She turned a fast eye on the wolf. “Make sure to practice! You never know when someone will need a tune for a special occasion.” Dot winked.

“T-thank you,” Boris stammered, staring down at the instrument. Bendy’s eyes softened, and he had a small smile, watching Boris’ happiness.

“You deserve it, bro,” he said, giving his arm a pat.

“This is touching.” Yakko clapped his hands together. “But we have to go! We have a tea party to crash!”

Dot sighed. “Right.”

The brothers shared a smile. “Be safe,” Boris said as the two waved.

“Yeah. Don’t let those scumbags mess you up,” the demon added.
Yakko grinned. “Thanks.”

“Aww. You do like us.” Wakko smiled. Bendy rolled his eyes, but the smile didn’t leave his face. Dot huffed and reached for the spot next to her. With a strong pull, the Warners were again in Toon Town.

“Where are we?” Yakko asked.

“A couple blocks from the train tracks,” Dot said and sat down. Two long distance jumps and a cross over from the comment section seemed to have taken it out of her. Yakko glanced at Wakko to see him not doing much better. When was the last time they had struggled to share and work their talents together? It was odd to see them struggling. They had been messing with reality for so long…Again, he was struck with how odd it was that, with the slipping of Wakko’s talent, the world around them seemed less fluid, less likely to bend to their will. Their view was becoming so limited. It was kinda scary, but every sibling was being brave in their own way. Still, Yakko was worried. Not just for Wakko…though that should be obvious, but for himself and Dot too. With Wakko’s talent disappearing, the weaknesses of his and Dot’s talents may become more obvious.

Yakko bit back a sigh. He wished he had pressed TAP more to explain what was happening. All she gave was vague, ‘it wasn’t me,’ and ‘you’ll have to find out like everyone else, for once.’ They were used to always being in control, but seeing his siblings like this had him second guessing how much control they really had. He doubted they’d be able to leave the story again without getting lost in some other story. Dot would be flying blind if she went now. Wakko just didn’t seem strong enough to handle it.

Yakko shook away these hidden thoughts and focused on the here and now. “Alright, you two. No more junk food. You’re both obviously out of shape.” The two younger Warners glared at him.

“Did you just call me fat?” Dot demanded.

“But I finally got away from the hospital food!” Wakko mourned.

Yakko chuckled. This was better. Jokes and light-heartedness was always better. They could handle whatever was dished out to them together. “Really? You both look like you’d lose a fight to a leaf, let alone a couple of cups.” Yakko wagged a finger.

Dot stuck out her tongue and laughed.

“How would you know? Have you ever fought a leaf, Yakko?” Wakko asked.

“Oh, yeah,” Yakko said. “Every fall.” All three laughed.

“What the-,” a surprised voice cut through the laughter.

“Hey! It’s those zanies from that water tower, Cup!” The Warners turned to see the cup brothers stopped a distance down the street from them. The one in the scarf looked shocked, and the other looked suspicious and angry.

“What the hell are you people doing here?” Cup demanded.

Dot hopped up to stand. “We came to dance, big boy. It’s time to get the band ready.”
No! Warners! You are worse than I am leaving people on cliffhangers! What is with you three? You screwed around the whole chapter! I am so sorry guys. It looks like we'll be having that second chapter since they really left me with no choice.
Oh, and I got this funny idea from Insecuriosity. What if Alice had banished Bendy last chapter...? I put it up on tumblr so if you want a little more to read head on over there.

Maybe I'll do an Inky Extras someday, but I have no time now with finals and working out this next chapter. Idea for later. Thank you all for reading and all the comments and kudos and well, you know how awesome you are.
Have a great week.
TAP out!
A Brewing Battle

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

This battle is going to get red hot!
Now go!

Chapter Notes

Hello~!
Place your bets! Place your bets!
In this corner we have the daring duo! The dishes of destruction! They've taken on the biggest and oddest assortments of bosses and came out on top with a hot pointer.
Cuphead and Mugman!
And in this corner we have the terrible trio! The wackest of weirdos! They've sent a number of people to the loony bin and even tricked Death himself! Yakko, Wakko, and Dot Warner!
Who's gonna come out the winner at the end!
Find out!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Cuphead glared at the three kids.

“On it!” Wakko said. He reached over and dragged a set of fellas in that were set with instruments. The group looked around, confused. “You guys wanna give a tune for this tussle?”

The lead of the band looked at the others, who all shrugged. “Sure, little man,” he said with a deep voice.

Yakko lifted his hand. “Boy, that seemed like it took a while to get these guys here for those of you waiting on an update, uh?” He winked.

“I’m gonna say this once. Get outta our way.” Cuphead stepped forward, the tip of his finger glowed blue.

“Hold on a second! You aren’t done getting ready!” Dot said. She pulled another person out of nowhere. The man was in a suit, his head was in the shape of a microphone. “Can you announce the fight for us, sir?” The microphone man blinked and looked around in surprise.

“How did I get here?” he asked.

“Don’t worry about it, pal,” Yakko said. “We’ll pay ya here for your services.” Yakko leafed a few bills to the guy and handed him a mic that looked just like his head without the face. The fella blinked, but shrugged and pocketed the cash.
“Best you sit up there.” Dot pointed to the top of the building. He looked up and before he could look back down at the girl, he was on the roof.

“What the-!”

“Don’t worry! You’re fine!” Yakko called up. The man blinked and adjusted his bowtie in obvious discomfort. He took a seat and lifted the mic to show he was ready. Yakko gave him a thumbs up.

“Stop screwing around!” Cup growled. He pointed his finger, but suddenly had a lassoes hook his hand and yank it down.

“Cup!” Mugs lifted his own hand to defend his brother.

Dot held the end of the rope, frowning at the cup man. “Tsk, tsk,” she said, dropping the rope. “Who taught you manners? You need to learn patience.” She wagged a finger at him.

Cup growled and freed himself. The Warners lined up on the other side of the street.

“Look, you little freaks!” Cup said. “We went easy on you last time ‘cause we didn’t have to beat ya. If you get in our way, we won’t hold back.”

The Warners snickered. Dot waved a hand. “It was pretty easy back home. Do your worse.”

“Alright.” Mugs shook out his hands and adjust his scarf. “But remember that you asked for it.” He and Cup readied their blasts.

“Is everything set?” Yakko asked. His younger siblings nodded. “Excellent.” Yakko lifted a hand and directed the announcer.

“A brawl is surely brewing!” the announcer declared.

The band started up. (insert music here)

“Now, go!” the announcer cried. Cuphead and Mugman released a barrage of shots. The Warners hopped, rolled, and flipped around the blue blasts easily.

“C’mon. That old schtick man? Isn’t it getting old?” Yakko asked. His eyes widened, and he ducked, just barely dodging a blast to the face.

“Well, we can fight with a classic too, pal!” Wakko said and wound up his arm to chuck a cream pie. Dot and Yakko followed suit. Soon the air was full of dessert. Cuphead and Mugman both widened their eyes in surprise as they had to duck and run.

“Zanies!” Cup barked as he rolled to the side to avoid a cherry pie that got mixed in with the rest. “Why is it always zanies?”

“It’s not that bad, Cup.” Mug chuckled. “They're just pi-” One hit the younger cup brother in the face. He fell over.

“Mugs!” Cup blasted some of the pies away. “Are you alright?”

Mugs sat up, rubbing his nose. “Ow!” He lifted a brick out of the cream. “It’s not just pie, Cup!” Mugs called back.

Cups rolled his eyes. “Great,” he muttered.
“Look out!” Mugs shouted. Cup looked up in time to spot the anvil and jump back. It crashed into the street, breaking through the pavement.

“Thanks, Mugs!” Cup shot away from a few more pies. He growled in frustration. “Well, if this isn’t working, then we’ll bring the fight in close!” Cup gave Mugs a glance and the scarfed brother nodded. The two brothers ran to the Warners. Wakko grinned and stood with his hands behind his back. Cup clenched his fist ready to punch the smile off his face, when he suddenly hit something. He spurted and jumped a step back. He lifted a hand to his face.

“What? Can’t you clearly see I’m right here?” Wakko chuckled. Cuphead ripped the cellophane off him and threw it on the ground.

Dot gasped. “Littering is a crime!”

“Wha-” Cup cut himself off to duck under a huge mallet that was aimed for his head. It turned and came down at him again. He rolled to the side to dodge it. Wakko chuckled as he lifted it again. Cup growled and snapped his fingers. The blue on his finger changed to red. Wakko blinked before a barrage of red triangle shaped projectiles came flying at him. “Eep!” He dropped the mallet and ran. The mallet was blasted to smithereens.

“Woah. What kinda blast is that? That could hurt someone!” Yakko wagged his finger and frowned. Cuphead ignored him.

“Mugs! Switch to green!” Cup ordered as he shot at Dot, who tried to sneak up on him. “Not this time, kid.”

Mugs snapped his fingers and his blast changed to a bright green color.

“Oh no,” Yakko said sarcastically and waved his hands like a magician. “They've color coordinated!”

Wakko snickered. “Well, it is Christmas colors.”

Green projectiles flew at the Warner boys, who easily jumped out of the way. The blast turned and hit Yakko in the back. “Ee-ouch! That smarts!” Yakko hopped around, rubbing his back.

“You okay, bro?” Wakko asked. Wakko raised a bat and knocked a green blast away. It left a small burn on the bat.

“Yeah, I’m good,” Yakko said. “Those ones turn, uh?”

Wakko jumped and turned to swing at the bullet that nearly got him from behind. “Uh-huh.”

Yakko ducked and sidestepped another. “Who knew that they actually had a few tricks up their sleeves.”

“Yep,” Wakko said.

“Guess it’s time to release the hounds,” Yakko said as the boys flipped and rolled. Yakko lifted a pie to throw at Mugs. The younger cup brother dodged.

“Oh, goodie.” Wakko grinned. He reached over, pulling open a hole.

Meanwhile, Dot was twirling around Cuphead, dodging his red blasts with dips, bends, and leaps. “Stop moving!” Cuphead barked. His blasts left holes in the road, but burned out in a short distance.
Dot had gotten some eggs and was trying to retaliate.

“But ballet is all about movement!” Dot said as she went up on her toes. “And I wanna dance.” Cup ducked another egg and came in close to get her. Just as he was about to grab her, a loud shriek rang out and he brought his hands up to cover his head.

“Why is this so hard!”

“I hate this game!”

“It’s as hard as Dark Souls!”

“Git Gud son!”

Dot jumped away. “Cups! What’s going on?” Mugman also was trying to block out the noise.

“I don’t know!” Cup shouted back.

“This sucks! This sucks! THIS SUCKS!”

“No! Not again! I was so close!”

“Nononononono! #$&%!”

Male and female, children and adult, voices of anger and exasperation rang out.

“Uuuuuuuuh.” Yakko scratched his chin. “Wakko, what is this?”

Dot and Yakko looked over at the younger brother. He was standing next to a hole he was holding open in the fourth wall. Wakko blinked. “What? I thought you wanted them to get hounded. I brought in the rage quitters and the angry gamers.”

Dot burst laughing. Yakko snickered. “I was thinking more along the line of dogs, but this works so much better.”

Mugs noticed the three laughing and the hole. He stared through it and shook his head slowly, perplexed at what he saw on the other side. “Mugs!” Cup shouted at him. Mugs shook himself and a glint of determination entered his eyes. He lowered his hand and snapped his finger to blue.

“Hey Dot, go prep the cannon,” Yakko said.

“Aye, aye!” She saluted and disappeared for a moment.

“That’s the hundredth time I’ve died! I hate you!”

“Don’t do it! Don’t! NO!”

“Take that!”

Mugman threw both his fists forward and a large blue blast shot out toward the hole.

“Take cover!” Yakko cried and the boy Warners scattered. The blast destroyed the hole and Cups and Mugs sighed in relief.

“Finally. The cuss was that?” Cup asked.

“Wait!” Mugs lifted a hand to the side of his head.
“I said, what was that!” Cup shouted.

“I can’t hear you!” Mugs shouted back.

“Great.” Cup sighed and rolled his eyes.

“Oh boys~,” Dot called. Cup looked over and stiffed. Mugs followed his line of sight and gasped. A huge cannon was pointed at them, the same one that had nearly taken them out back in Warnerburg.

“Cuss,” Cup muttered.

Yakko gasped from the other side of the weapon. “Watch your language! We’re supposed to be children cartoons!” Cuphead clenched his fists, thinking. “Wakko!”

The boy appeared and lit the fuse. “Fire in the hole!”

Cups’ straw jumped up and became an exclamation point for a second. “Mugs, help me out!” Mugman looked between his older brother and the cannon before nodding with determination. The two rushed at the huge canon and grabbed the lip of it. They lifted it and threw it up in the air until the whole thing flipped around and was aimed at the Warners.

“Ah,” Dot said. “We really should have seen that coming.” The cannon fired with a boom! Smoke covered the blast area.

“Did we get them?” Mugs asked. Cup shrugged and peered into the cloud.

Someone tapped Mugs’ arm. He turned and looked down. There was a little man with big framed glasses, a large nose and a curly mustache. He had a floppy hat and a long sleeve sweater on.

“Excuse me, young man. Is everything okay?” he asked.

“We’re fine, sir, but you better get outta here. We’re in the middle of a fight.” Mugs smiled.

“Dear me! What in the world are you fighting for? Who is it?” The man leaned around to try and see beyond Mugs. Mugman turned to look too. Wakko lifted the gag glasses and winked. He pulled out his baseball bat and wound it up to swing.

“Well, it’s these three zanies that we met a while back. They’re real tough, but I think we got them,” Mugs was saying. Cup turned to tell him to shut his mug when he saw Wakko. Cups’ eyes widened, and Cup grabbed Mugs’ scarf and yanked it toward him. “Wha!” Mugs cried as he tumbled forward. Wakko missed by an inch.

“Watch it, you moron! You almost got smashed!” Cups braked as he sent red projectiles at Wakko. The Warner jumped back to dodge.

“Sorry!” Mugs’ eyes widened as he glanced behind him. “I thought he was an old man.”

“Are you really that stupid?” Cuphead growled, but kept his eye on his opponent. Mugman hunched his shoulders and looked apologetic. “Where are the other two?”

“I dunno,” Mugs muttered as he looked around.

“Then, keep your eyes on this one and I’ll look,” Cup said.

“Okay,” Mugs said and turned to watch Wakko. The Warner waved at him, and he blinked before frowning.
The band suddenly stopped playing. The cup brothers tensed and looked around. The band changed the tune to a western theme. (music here)

“Well now, ‘ere is a problem.” Yakko stepped up to the middle of the street. Cup narrowed his eyes. Yakko was wearing a large cowboy hat, spurs, sharps, a belt with a gun holstered on it and a bandanna. His feet were in cowboy boots that seemed a little too big for him, making him walk funny. He lifted the rim of his hat and spit out a toothpick. “This town ain’t big enough for the two of us, partner.”

Cup blinked and rolled his eyes. “What?”

“You heard me! This here is a stand off!” Yakko said. “It’s a shoot out at high noon.”

Cuphead blinked. “But it’s like eight in the morning. I’m not-”

Dot whistled from the roof next to the announcer, making the man jump and nearly lose his balance. Cup looked up to see her balancing a huge clock on the edge of the building’s roof. It was one minute to noon.

“You gotta be kidding me.” Cup frowned.

Mugs’ jaw dropped at the crazy set up. “Uh, Cup?”

“I got it. You just stay outta my way,” Cup said and stepped opposite the eldest Warner.

Mugs nearly followed, but felt a tap on his shoulder. Wakko pulled back his hand in a peaceful gesture and held up a deck of cards. “Wanna play go fish until they’re done?” he offered.

Mugs blinked, glanced at the stand off between Cuphead and Yakko, then back to Wakko. “Yeah, okay.”

Cup snapped his fingers, changing the glow back to blue. “You guys are pretty slick. I’ll give ya one last chance to back down.”

Yakko chuckled. “What? Afraid of a little peashooter?”

Cuphead pinched the bridge of his nose. “Really?”

Yakko grinned. “What now? This is all for atmosphere. C’mon, you gotta entertain!”

Cup growled, and the bell tolled. Yakko whipped out his gun. Cup fired. Yakko lifted a trashcan lid and somehow deflected the projectile. He jumped and appeared in front of cup man. Cup flinched, and the trigger was pulled. Cup was ready for pain, but instead a sign slid out and unfolded. On it was the word Bang! Yakko laughed at the Cups’ shocked face. Cups narrowed his eyes in anger and fired at the Warner, who jumped away. “I had to take a shot at least, but this story can’t get that dark…I think. At least not by me.” Yakko shrugged and tossed the gun.

The western music switched back to the fight music. (music here)

“Time for you to go to sleep!” Dot called from above. Cup looked up to see the giant clock falling toward him. He dove out of the way and barely missed getting flattened. He hissed as he rolled. He scrambled up and felt the little chip in the back of his head.

“Oh, Dot said as she appeared on the other side of Cup, opposite of Yakko.

“You missed by a second, sis,” Yakko said, back in his normal pants.
“Dang! Now I’m late!” She frowned. Yakko chuckled.

Cup fired left and right. The two jumped and Yakko stuck out his tongue. “Ya missed us!”

“Mugs! What are you doing?” Cups shouted as he continued to shoot. Mugs looked up from the card game.

“Got any threes?” Wakko asked.

“Actually, I need to help my brother,” Mugs said, putting down the cards.

“Oh. Okay.” Wakko stood up and dusted himself off. Mugs made a move to give the deck to Wakko. Wakko waved him off. “Keep ‘em. I have two more.”

“Golly. Thanks!” Mugs slipped the cards into his pocket.

“No hard feelings after the fight?” Wakko asked, lifting his hand to shake.

“Not from me.” Mugs smiled and gasped his hand to shake. He yelped and yanked his hand back. Wakko chuckled and lifted his hand to show the joy buzzer. “Couldn’t resist.”

“Mugs! Get over here!” Cups shouted. Mugs stuck his tongue out at Wakko, even though he chuckled, and ran to his brother. “What the heck were you doing playing cards!” Cups ducked as a horse shoe went by.

“Sorry!” Mugs said. He noticed the chip in Cups’ head. “Cup! You’re hurt!”

“Mugs dodge!” Cup shouted. Mugs looked the way Cups was looking and saw a horse flying at him.

“Eep!” Mugs poofed in a cloud of smoke.

“Time out!” Yakko shouted as the horse landed with a nah. Mugs reappeared on the other side of Cup. “When could you strawheads teleport? How many powers do you have? How does that even work? Are you ninjas?”

“We aren’t answering any of your questions,” Cup said. The horse got up, shook itself and trotted off.

“Aaaw,” Dot complained from on top of Mugs head. “But we have so many!” Dot said. Mugs lifted a hand to swipe at her, and she hopped over his hand and grabbed his straw to spin around the rim of his head. “Like, is that milk in there? Do you have brains or is it just this stuff? I know you can get drunk, but what about if you dump soda in here? Or tea?” Mugs shuddered and tried to shake her off.

“Mugs! Hold still!” Cups lifted his hand to aim.

“And what if I do this?” Dot asked as she appeared on Cuphead’s shoulder and grabbed his straw. She took a deep breath and blew into his straw. He made a high-pitched squawking sound in surprise, and his hair puffed up in a ridiculous way.

“Get off!” He swung around and threw his arms out. He was able shake the girl off.

“Cup, are you alright?” Mugs asked, worried and then chuckled. “Oh golly, bro. Your hair!”
Cups’ hair was poofed up and fluffy looking. He lifted his hand and straightened it out as best he could. Vapor was rising from the top of his head. “Shut up! Don’t laugh!” he said, frustrated.

Mugs couldn’t stop. “Sorry! Sorry! Don’t get steamed over it, bro!”

“I said stop!” Cup scowled and looked away from the other cup man, still trying to fix it.

“So, when you get flustered your head steams?” Dot tilted her own head in interest.

“Sounds like a real hot head to me.” Yakko grinned. Dot and Wakko laughed. Mugs was able to get control of himself.

“Alright!” Cup shouted. “That’s it! I am done playing around. Mugs we’re finishing this, go!” Mugs nodded and disappeared in a cloud of smoke.

Mugs suddenly reappeared in a cloud of smoke behind Dot. Yakko called out. “Dot, look out!” Dot looked up just in time to see Mugs hop up and bring both fists down together. The large blast hit her in a flash. “Dot!” The Warner brothers called out. The youngest Warner lay on the ground, spirals in her eyes and a white flag in her hand.

“I can't believe you blasted my sister! Dot! Answer me, Dot!” Yakko shouted in worry. All he got was silence though. He shared a worried glance with Wakko. They had always played up this kinda stuff, but none of them had ever actually gotten hit before. Yakko made a move to run toward her. Cuphead hopped and spun in the air. A blast of liquid came from the top of his head. The eldest Warner’s eyes widened before he disappeared from view.

“Yakko!” Wakko called out. Cup landed lightly on a foot before looking up. Yakko laid in a puddle of milk, spirals in his eyes. “Yakko are you okay?” Wakko called out.

Yakko lifted his head barely. “Did someone get the license plate on that waterfall? Uuugh.” His head fell back with a splash. Mugs stepped up to Cups. Wakko looked between his two knocked out siblings, before straightening up. He was alone, truly alone. He wouldn't go down without a fight though. He was gonna do his brother and sister proud! He was the Warner that changed all the rules, he wouldn't lose!

“Well…it's time to get serious, then.” Wakko rolled up his sleeves and straightened his hat. “I can handle you strawheads by myself.” The cup brothers shared a glance before getting ready to go again.

Wakko pulled out a mallet. He about lifted it, before he suddenly started to cough. Mugs jumped, but quickly recovered. The cup brothers waited for him to stop, but instead Wakko dropped the mallet and fell to his knees. What was going on here?

Mugs blinked. “Are you okay?” Cups reached up and yanked his handle. “Ow!” Mugs swatted at Cuphead.

“Don’t lose your focus, idiot! It could be an act.” Cup growled, before looking back at the last Warner. Wakko covered his mouth as he coughed and wrapped his other arm around his chest. He seemed to be in horrible pain all of the sudden. The band slowed, and then stopped all together. The members shared looks of uncertainty.

“I donnu, Cup. I think he might need a drink.” Mugman gazed at Wakko with a worried knot in his brow. Mugs never liked seeing someone suffering, he was soft for that reason. That was one of the motivations Cup had to finish fights as quick as possible. He didn't want his brother to waver with sympathy at dangerous times.
Cup grit his teeth. “Hey!” he called to Wakko. “Are ya gonna fight or are you dipping out?”

Wakko struggled to try and stand. He had to beat these guys. He was the last one standing. He had to protect his siblings and stop these guys from finding their pals. It was all up to him. He was (arguably) the zaniest out of his siblings, he should be able to do this! Why did it hurt so much? He nearly got up, only to fall over. Mugs took a step forward, but Cups grabbed his scarf and stepped in front of him. “We won’t be tricked by you.” Cup kept a blast ready as he slowly approached the panting Warner. He seemed pale and small. “What’s your deal?”

Wakko pulled his hand back to show spots of black. “Ah,” he muttered and swallowed. “That’s a bit worrying, huh?”

Cup grimaced. “Wh-what’s wrong with you? You sick or something?”

Wakko looked up at Cup with his brows furrowed. “You look like you’ve never seen a guy cough up ink before.”

Cup gulped. Mugs grabbed his jacket sleeve. “C-Cup?” Mugs was staring at Wakko with wide, horrified eyes. Cup took a deep breath and took a few steps until he was standing over Wakko. Wakko coughed again and curled up. Wakko peered up at the other with blurry eyes. Cup gazed down at the zany, just a kid really. He couldn’t be much older than when Cups and Mugs had started their mess. He looked even younger now on the ground like this.

“Sorry,” Cup muttered before he lifted his hand.

“Knockout!” The announcer called out. One of the band members lifted a bell and another hit it. Ding-ding-ding!

Cup whirled to face them. “Would you guys knock it off!” he barked at them angrily. The band members sheepishly lowered their instruments. “And you!” Cup pointed up at the announcer. “Mic! Get your butt back to Inkwell!” The announcer, Mic jumped, he nearly dropped the microphone he held in his hands. He quickly found a fire escape and made his way back down to the street. The band started pestering Cup and Mugs about how they were going to get home. Mic gingerly approached. Cup noticed. “Mic, get over here!” The man flinched and did so. He looked at the two brothers with caution.

Cuphead was scowling darkly, and Mugman looked depressed. Cup reached into his pocket. “Listen, get these guys a ticket home, okay? This should be enough.” Cup shoved a bundle of bills at the microphone man. “There’s also enough for you to get a lift back to the isles, but before any of you scram…” Cup glanced at the Warners. “You lot, take these guys to the hospital, alright? Then, I don’t want to see any of you again. Got it?” Cup gave them directions to the nearest medical clinic. The band backed off and mutters of agreement were heard. The band members went to get the three siblings. Mic looked down at the money and then back up at the cup brothers. Cup was making a motion for Mugs to follow. The two started to walk away to the old abandoned train station.

Mic shook his head. “This is why it’s so confusing when I see you fellas. One minute you’re beating people up and the next, you’re helping out. Never could tell if you wanted to save and help people or if ya were just looking out for yourselves.” He sighed and pocketed the money. A worried look crossed the man’s face. “Look, it’s not my place or nothin’ but ya know Elder Ke-”

“Shut up!” Cup said harshly. Mic flinched. The cup man didn’t turn around. “You don’t need to understand. Don’t talk to us. You never saw us.” Cup glanced over his shoulder to glare at the man. “Got it?” His eyes were red.
Mic lifted his hands in surrender with a look of panic on his face. “Got it!” he said quickly.

“Now get out of my sight,” Cup hissed, and the man scuttled away to the other people that had been brought there by the Warners. The group had the three unconscious kids and carried them carefully away. Cup blinked, and the red dimmed from his eyes.

“Cup.” Mugs sounded sad and disappointed. “We don’t.”

“Shut your yap, Mugs. You know how it is,” Cup muttered and started to move again. Mugs looked down, sadly and followed. Cup stuffed his hands in his pockets as the two went. “We don’t have a choice.”

Chapter End Notes

Ta-da! The most shocking thing was that some of you had Wakko pinned last chapter, but you weren't sure. Now you are. If ya think about it, it was a little unfair. The Cupbros were stuck in their hotel room all day yesterday, well-rested, bored, fresh and ready to go. The Warners had done all this running around and goofing off and of course Wakko. T-T Sorry Wakko. I'm serious when I say this wasn't my plan. Now Bendy and Boris REALLY need to find that machine!
Thank you all for reading! A double thank you for those that kudos, bookmark, comment, art and so on. You warm my soul. ^^
If it wouldn't be too much of a hassle, could you help with this next chapter? I can't make up my mind.
You can either follow the Cupbros next chapter or the Bbros.
Who do you want to see?
Cups?
Bendy and Boris?
Tell me in the comments.
Voting will close Thursday at midnight.
Now if you don't mind I have to go die over finals and wish I could hug Mercowe. T-T
Wish us luck and see you next week!
TAP out!
A Ghost from the Past

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

The Cupbros get an unlikely ride and meet someone they didn't think they'd see.

Chapter Notes

Hello, hello!
The Cups won by one vote. Why is it always one vote? XD
It's been a rough week all around and I am not really proud of this chapter. I'll probably fiddle with it in the future. It just feels rough to me and -well, that's for me to worry about, you just enjoy. I'll play with it, but right now I have no time. I'm sorry.
But you're not here for a mopey ghost, you're here for the story!
'Sides, I'll be better next week, so no worries. Just got a case of the mopes. I'll get over it and be back to writing like a beast in no time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Cuphead and Mugman stood uncomfortably in the old, abandoned train station. There was an unnatural chill in the building. The two had a pretty good idea as to why that was. Neither wanted to acknowledge the atmosphere. The silence, though, was becoming oppressive. Cup pulled out a cigarette. Mugs glanced at him every couple seconds. Cup felt his annoyance climb. "If you have something to say, spit it out."

Mugs looked over to Cup, then down at the platform. "You didn’t have to be mean to Mic like that, Cup. He was at all our battles back at the isles."

“And he was one of the people that didn’t say anything to stop us. He didn’t help us. He didn’t speak up when we headed to the docks to leave. No one did,” Cup muttered as he glared down at the platform. From the corner of his eye he saw Mugs shift uncomfortably.

“That’s not true,” Mugs said quietly. There was weight and sorrow in his voice. “There was one person that didn’t want us to go.”

“Mugs.” Cup sighed.

“I know,” Mugs said before Cups went into it. “I know,” he repeated. Cups sighed heavily.

The silence that fell between the brothers was now suffocating. Cup struggled to hold back the memories. He tried to find something to say, some other thing to talk about, anything.

“I saw something scary back in that fight,” Mugs said. Cups glanced over at Mugs. The younger was fiddling with the end of his scarf. He had a far away look. “Back when that one with the hat had made that hole and there was all that noise. There were people there…at least…I think they were
people.” His brows lowered in focus. His frown deepened. “They seemed weird, like…like…” He pulled a hand away from his scarf and pointed his finger. A blue glow lit faintly. “It was like our blasts. They were in color, but in more color. Like all of our color blasts together and other colors I’ve never seen before. In a way, it was beautiful to see all those colors, but it also made my eyes hurt.” Cup blinked and watched his brother. His eyes became haunted. “They didn’t look like anyone I’ve ever seen before. They all looked weird, Cup. It was scary. And…and they were all angry, so angry I was terrified, and somehow I felt like I should know them…like I saw them before or knew of them, but I can’t remember them.” Mugs shuddered and wrapped his arms around himself. “It was like they all hated me.”

Cup let out a breath of smoke. “What are you talking about? Of course, they don’t know you. That was just a trick of theirs. We’ve fought zanies all the time bro. You know they do some nutty stuff in fights.” He put a hand on Mugs shoulder. “Sides if they did know you and hate you, it doesn’t matter. I won’t let some freaks get close to you bro. None of those colored creeps will get near ya. You blasted that hole to smithereens, too. They can’t get here.” Cup said, glancing around the chilly area.

Mugs looked over to Cup and smiled. “You’re right, Cups. I shouldn’t worry.” He sighed. “I just wish I hadn’t seen that.”

Cup patted Mugs shoulder and nodded. He hadn’t seen it. He wondered what the heck that had been, but zanies rarely ever made sense…even though he and Mugs were a bit zany themselves. It was probably because they were from Inkwell. He took another deep breath and pinched the cig between two fingers.

“What should we do in the south? ‘Sides the job, I think we’ve earned some fun,” Cup said to lift Mugs' spirits. The younger looked over at Cup with bright, hopeful eyes.

“Really? We can do something fun?” Mugs asked.

“Why not?” Cup shrugged a shoulder. He and Mugs had been going nonstop since Warnerburg and hiding, like scum, in crummy hotel rooms. That could hardly be called a break. Mugs deserved something to really smile about.

“Oh, boy!” Mugs cheered. Right then, there was a screeching whistle. Cup and Mugs covered the sides of their heads.

“Jeez!” Cups grumbled. “We’ve almost gone deaf once today!” He brushed the crack on the back on his head and flinched.

“Ah, Cup! I forgot about that. Here, let me see.” Mugs turned to look at Cups' wound. Cup elbowed him away and covered the stinging spot.

“Oh, boy!” Mugs grumbled. “We’ve almost gone deaf once today!” He brushed the crack on the back on his head and flinched.

“Ahh, Cup! I forgot about that. Here, let me see.” Mugs turned to look at Cups' wound. Cup elbowed him away and covered the stinging spot.

“Worry about it when we get on the stupid train. I’m fine right now,” Cup grumbled. As the boys argued, spirits started to appear. The beings started to move closer to the platform, watching to only two living people with mild interest and confusion.

Cup and Mugs didn’t have time to get uncomfortable around the dead. They had pretty much figured this was what was going to happen. Cup looked at the souls around them. There were the usual round ghosts with their wispy little tails, spirits with their chains and tattered clothing, specters with claws and hoods. The grinning engine pulled past them and the cars rolled by as the Phantom Express pulled into the station.

A frosty wind whipped across the platform, and Cup stopped himself from shivering. The train
screamed to a stop and let out a hiss as smoke rolled off the locomotive. Ghosts, ghouls, and assorted dead embarked and disembarked. Those that could simply fazed through the walls of the car did so quickly. Mugs jumped back to avoid having a ghost fly through him. The ghost gave him a confused look. Cup sighed and stepped up to the last car as a familiar specter appeared before him to block his way. The socket in his face was empty, but an eye glowed from each of his palms.

“Now, hold the bone!” the ghost said. “No living allowed!”

“Shut it, Specter!” Cuphead frowned. “We wouldn’t be here unless we were told to, you know that.”

The ghost’s jaw dropped. “Do my ears deceive me?” He lifted his hands and allowed the eyes in his palms to focus on the cup man. “Why, if it isn’t the cup brothers! Come to haunt up a new fight? We got nothing left for you to take!” the Blind Specter said in a chilly tone.

“Dice said you fellas would be our ride down south,” Mugs said. The Blind Specter lift a hand to glance back at Mugs.

“No way! Only the dead. Go stop your hearts, and we’ll see to your travel plans, but to be honest, I’d rather leave you two six feet under before I see a future where I allow you on this train.” The ghost crossed his arms. The two frowned.

“Then get the conductor,” Cup stated. The ghost scowled, and Cup lifted a glowing finger before he said anything. “Yes?” Cup raised a brow in challenge.

The ghost made an ugly scowl in Cup’s direction before disappearing. Mugs sighed and kicked a pebble. “They won’t let us on if we fight them,” he muttered.

“They’re not letting us on now,” Cup snipped.

“What’s this? A couple of breathers! On my train? Ha!” Cup and Mugs took a half step closer to each other.

A huge skeleton crashed out of the top of the next car over. Cup and Mugs took a few steps back so they could look up at the large skeleton. The skull turned his empty sockets on the brothers. Specter appeared next to him. “See?”

The conductor hat shifted on the skeleton’s massive skull as his sockets narrowed. “You two have some backbone showing up in front of us.”

“Oh, pipe it. You knew we were coming.” Cup rolled his eyes.

“There’s a difference ‘tween hearing that you might show and having to see it with my own eye sockets,” the giant skeleton grumbled.

“So, are we letting them on T-Bone or are we fighting them?” Specter asked.

“Shut your trap spook. You act like you have a choice,” Cup growled.

A giant skeleton hand ripped out of the top of the train car next to the skeleton’s head and pointed at Cups threateningly. “No, you can shut it foam dome. Whether or not I still have my soul, this train is meant for the dead. I should crush you for wanting a ride.”

“But you won’t, since the Boss would have your hides…er, bones. Anyway, stop wasting all our times and just let us on. We got work to do.” Cup smirked. Mugs glanced between his brother and the skeleton.
T-Bone scowled. Specter floated next to him. “You’re not gonna let a breather talk to you like that, are ya TB?” Specter asked, sounding surprised. The skeleton’s bones rattled in frustration before he took a deep breath and let it out through his teeth.

“Let them on,” he finally growled.

“What!?” Specter gasped.

“Do you wanna see hell instead?” T-Bone turned his skull toward the ghost with a raised brow bone. Specter shuddered and shook his head. “Then get them on! We’re gonna be late, thanks to this hold up.”

“Late for what?” Mugs asked with a tilt of his head.

“None of your business!” Specter snapped. Mugs frowned and huffed.

As the two stepped onto the train, the skeleton retreated from the car roof, and the holes disappeared. Specter scowled and disappeared. As soon as the boys’ feet were off the platform, the engine let out an unholy scream and lurched forward. The boys had to grab the rails so they wouldn’t fall. The platform started to slide away. The old abandoned station seemed to flicker. Cup blinked. As the train came into the outside sunlight, it seemed to disappear. Cup tensed and clung to the rail tighter.

“Be ready Mugs,” Cup warned.

“Why?” Mugs glanced ahead. “Oh.” His face dropped, and his eyes widened. “Are we gonna disappear Cup?”

“If we don’t, we’re gonna fall and land on the rails,” Cups said. “So, be ready for anything bro.” Cup tensed as sunlight came over them and the car in front of them vanished. The rail that Cup clung to became see through and more alarmingly, so did his arms. Mugs gasped. Cups looked over to him, to see through him and the street beyond him. “Mugs!”

Cup blinked and suddenly the world went black and a deathly chill went through him. “Mugs! Are you okay?”

“Cup! You’re still there?” Mugs voice sounded next to him.

“Yeah, bro.” Cups sighed. He blinked a couple of times. Slowly his eyes adjusted to the dark. The sky had a few stars. The city that should have been so lively was dark and seemed in ruin. “Where are we?”

Mugs shrugged, he was shivering. It was time they went into the car to warm up. Cups opened the door to see the car was fancy, but in an odd timeless way. He couldn’t tell what era most of the decorations were from. The seats were full of phantoms, a couple of skeletons and zombies. Everyone that glanced their way fell silent, staring at them. Cup swallowed as his throat went dry. Creepy didn’t cover the feeling this place gave off. He squared his shoulders and walked in like he owned the place. Mugs was right at his side. The car smelled like a graveyard after it had rained. The air was cool and damp, but not freezing like outside. Cup kept an eye out for an empty seat. He did his best to ignore the stares, the gasps, and the whispers that followed them down the aisle.

When they got to the halfway point, someone called out to them. “Cuphead? Mugman? Is that you?” Cup turned his head to see someone he hadn’t expected to ever run into again.

Mugs gasped. “Legendary Chalice! What are you doing here?” The ghost blinked, her face drawn in the same surprise as all the other dead around. She blinked her wide eyes and the halo above the rim
of her head bobbed a bit as she shook her head.

“Me? Why, I’m taking the train to go visit a friend in an old mausoleum down in-oh! But that hardly matters now!” She huffed and seemed upset. “When did you fellas die? What happened!”

“Die?” Mugs blinked and glanced back at Cups. “We aren’t dead.”

Chalice seemed even more alarmed and confused. “Not…then how are you on the Phantom Express?”

“Uuuuh, well.” Mugs shrugged.

Chalice huffed. “Come, come, sit and tell me everything!” She waved them over. “I don’t think the living have ever ridden the Phantom Express before, and there must be quite a story you have!” Cup frowned, but Mugs was already taking a seat across from the ghost. Cup sighed and sat next to the window. “So, go ahead,” Chalice said with bright eyes.

Mugs nodded and explained. “Well, Dice wanted us to go down to the south to find someone for the boss.”

Chalice smiled sadly. “You two are still in his service, then. I’m sorry to hear that, but at least you are safe and together. I have been worried for quite some time now. You boys just disappeared after all!” she scolded.

Cup scoffed. “So, what’s the big deal with this train anyway?”

Chalice blinked for a moment in a thoughtful way. “It’s the fastest way to travel for the dead.” She looked out the window. “It’s only a one-day trip to New Orleans instead of three.”

Cups tilted his head in confusion. “But how?”

Chalice pointed out the window. “We’re traveling through the Otherside. Distance is different here. You boys just make sure you get off before the train hits the end of the line, okay?”

“What happens at the end of the line?” Mugs asked.

Chalice smiled. “Well, there’s only one way to go after that. Beyond this world,” she said.

Mugs furrowed his brow in confusion. “You mean, like heaven?”

Chalice nodded. “For some.”

“Oh. Yeah, we’ll absolutely get off before then,” Mugs said. Chalice nodded. Mugs turned to Cup. “That reminds me, we still have to take care of the chip, Cup.” Cup scowled and crossed his arms.

“You’re hurt!” Chalice gasped. Cuphead ignored her.

“It’s not that big a deal bro,” he grumbled.

“I’d still rather bandage it,” Mugs said, looking at Cups pleadingly.

Cups sighed. “Fine.” Mugs was quick to check the crack in Cups head and pull out a large bandage with some soothing gel added to help with any pain. With that done, Mugs turned back to Chalice who was brimming with questions.

“Tell me everything,” Chalice pressed. Mugs gave Cup a quick glance. Cups frowned, but shrugged.
He didn’t have the energy to argue. Mugs smiled and went into telling about the fight. Chalice pulled the conversation to learn about where the boys had been since they left. Mugs gladly told stories about the places they had been since they left the islands. He kept out the jobs they had to do that brought them to those places, but he did talk about some of the people they met, and some trouble they still got into here and there. Chalice laughed and commented and asked questions.

Cuphead quickly tuned them out and stared out the window to the dark world around them. His mind started to wander to his worries and stress. He found himself going over everything.

Cuphead hated everything. His life was a wreak, his brother was an idiot, and he was forced to ride this creepy-as-all-get-out train to a humid swamp to chase down a creepy lady. Those Warners had put up a good enough fight that Cups and Mugs had gotten serious. The brothers did sort of surprised those three, but they deserved it after all the pranks they’d pulled on him and Mugs. He was tired after that fight. To make matters even worse than all that, now he had to sit across from the ghost lady that they helped years ago back on the islands. He really didn’t want to deal with her or anyone else. He was in a rotten mood. He grumbled as he focused on the scene outside. The train gave off enough of an eerie glow that he could almost make out the shapes of the vegetation that flew by. The crescent moon had barely appeared, but it helped light the landscape when there was a break from the trees.

Every was the cussing worst. Every time he thought they made a little progress toward their freedom, stuff like this would happen. Problems, delays, failures, and simple bad luck. He shoved it all away mentally. He tried to think of something happy instead.

Cup sighed. He was so tired. He just wanted it to stop. He wanted to go back home. Back to the islands, back before he screwed everything up so badly. He allowed himself to remember the mostly peaceful woods and cheery residents. He remembered the little fella that taught him and Mugs how to fly bi-planes and the fish that was, oddly, fishing. He remembered scorching summer days when they would go for ice cream and cold winter nights sitting by the fire and when they’d listened to the old stories Elder Kettle told them. He couldn’t quite remember what it was like to feel that carefree and innocent anymore. Sure, he had always been a hothead, but he hadn’t been a cruel kid. Elder Kettle had warned him time and again. He couldn’t count how many times he got himself and Mugs into trouble. It had been fun back then! The rush of pushing the limits had been an exciting buzz that Cup just couldn’t ignore.

Now, though…now, he had given over souls…now, he had blood on his hands. The islands wasn’t filled with those peace woods or happy folk anymore. It wasn’t a place full of light and zany, carefree individuals. It was all his fault. Well, actually, it was his boss’s fault, but Cup had done it. Mugs had gone right along with him too. The idiot would always let Cups call the shots…it was the biggest mistake of Mugs’ life. Cup opened his eyes and glanced over at his younger brother, before looking away. Mugs had never blamed him for what happened to them. He’d never resented him, never yelled or cried about their plight. He would just smile and say they’d do their best. The idiot. He would always just smile at him. Some days Cup would want Mugs to be angry at him. He deserved it, after all, but most of the time Cup was secretly grateful. The whole world had seemed to turn against him for his mistake. Everyone, but Mugs. He was the anchor in the storm. The light in the dark. He was the only reason Cups bothered to fight at all. Cup almost snorted. So much for happy thoughts.

Still, Cup couldn’t understand why Mugs didn’t hate him. If Cup ever even hinted that he should, Mugs would immediately shut it down and claim that Cups was his brother, and they had each other’s back because that’s what brothers do. And every time Cups would drop it, unsure if he should be grateful for his brother’s kindness or ticked because of his stupidity. He didn’t know what to do anymore.
Cup shifted and yawned. He knew what was bothering him so much, why he was thinking about the past and junk he couldn’t change. He glanced accusingly at Chalice, who was laughing at something Mugs had said, before he looking away again. He kept meeting these reminders. Chalice and Mic and the Warners…Cup hated to admit it, but the Warners had kinda reminded him of how he and Mugs used to be. All carefree and silly, feeling like nothing could stand in their way. So stupid. He felt bad for them. And that made him frustrated. He shouldn’t feel this way about a bunch of kids that got in his way. They had picked a fight, so he and Mugs did what they had to do. End of story.

So, why was it bugging him so much? Why did he keep going back to that kid coughing up ink? Why did his stomach twist, thinking about the worry on their faces when Mugs took down the girl or when he’d blasted the boy? It was better they learned they weren’t invincible now, instead of later, he argued with himself. That way, those kids wouldn’t screw up like he had. It was a tough lesson, but it had to be learned by kids like that...right? Cup huffed and felt his head drop a bit. He shook his head and sat up a bit. Why was he so tired?

“Something wrong?” Mugs asked, pulling Cup back to the present. Cup blinked at him. “Is your head hurting?”

“’M fine,” he answered. His eyes were heavy. “I’m gonna nap,” Cup said and slouched a bit in the sit.

“Oh, okay,” Mugs smiled. Cup grumbled and shut his eyes. It was all stupid. He had to focus on what was coming. Forget everything else. They needed to be ready when they got there. No more mistakes.

Mugs watched Cup from the corner of his eye. His older brother had been sulking ever since they had finished that fight. Mugs wasn’t sure how to help him, either. When he got like this, he wouldn’t answer any of Mugs questions. He never wanted to talk about it. The best Mugs could do was not bug him. When Cuphead was breathing deeply, Mugs glanced over at him, worried.

“He has changed,” Chalice said quietly. Mugs looked over to her. She was looking at Cups in a way that reminded him of Elder Kettle, a little disappointed, a little sad, and full of care and worry. She looked up to Mugs. “You two have been through a lot over the years.” Mugs nodded. She took a deep breath. “How is he holding up?”

Mugs shrugged and smiled. “Oh, you know, Cups is the usual hothead he has always been.”

She hummed. “What about you?” she asked.

Mugs blinked. “Me?” She nodded. “I’m fine. Cup is still looking out for me. Things are tough, but nothing we haven’t faced before.”

Chalice hesitated. “Do you think you two will ever go back?”

Mugs shifted. “Golly, I hope so. That’s the goal anyway. Make up the debt and get back home...” he trailed off.

“But?” Chalice asked.

Mugs sagged and looked at his sleeping brother. “There are some days I don’t think Cup wants to go home. He doesn’t want to see another person from back home, and he never wants to talk about Elder Kettle.”

Chalice nodded sadly. “Elder Kettle is a very strong person. He still believes in you boys, and he has
been looking into ways for fighting—

“Fighting!” Mugs hissed quietly, so he wouldn’t wake up Cup. Panic and worry overcame him. “Elder Kettle can’t fight anymore! What is he thinking?”

Chalice smiled warmly. “I told him the same thing. He thinks he should help his boys.” Mugs dropped his head.

“Next time you see him.” Mugs looked up pleadingly. “Please tell him to just, uh, just keep waiting. W-we will find a way. He doesn’t need to-he can’t-I mean, if something happened to him then Cup would never—”

“Don’t worry.” Chalice stopped his rambling. “I’ll let him know you two are okay and still working to get home.” Mugs sighed in relief.

“Thanks,” he said and then yawned. “How are the islands anyway? I,” Mugs gulped, “I know we, uh, we didn’t leave with the best…um.”

The ghost blinked and glanced to the rest of the car like she could find an answer from someone else. “Well,” she sighed. “Many of the residents there are struggling, to be honest. Hope for the debtors is…bleak, but it’s not as bad as many feared. Most of the debtors were allowed to keep going about their business. It’s only occasionally that the-um, well.” Chalice glanced at Mugs. Mugs watched her with open curiosity. “It’s only occasionally that someone has to leave to do something,” she said delicately.

Mugs pursed his lips in a thoughtful line. His eyes became serious. “Has anyone…disappeared?”

Chalice looked down with a sad frown. “W-well, you two vanished first, then there was that mermaid girl, and Hilda Berg and the bird family. I’m not too sure of who else,” she said quietly.

Mugs looked down at his fists. He didn’t let the thoughts get to him, but the guilt was sitting in the corner of his mind. He glanced at Cup. He probably felt just as bad…if not worse than Mugs. Silence fell between Mugs and the ghost. She seemed to be deep in thought. Mugs remembered rescuing her and the gifts she had given the boys. All those cool supers, only for the boss to take them away, except for the one that Cup still had. Mugs didn’t want to tell her that he and Cups had lost her gifts, though. She had risked herself for them and had been one of the kindest people to them while they had gone through the islands looking for the debtors and nabbing contracts.

Boy, that had been a long time ago. She hadn’t changed at all, but it sounded like Inkwell had. No wonder Elder Kettle was itching to do something. He had been waiting for years now. Another pang of guilt hit Mugs at that realization.

This last big job and then they were done. Hopefully. They just had to stop the demon and wolf from building this machine thing, and they were good. Maybe the boss would want them to get those things Dice mentioned, maybe not, hopefully not. It was already taking longer then he thought it would.

“You should get some rest too,” Chalice said. Mugs flinched at suddenly being addressed. “You look tired.” Mugs looked up at her to see that kind smile again.

“Right,” Mugs muttered. “That’s a good idea. Why do I feel so tired anyway?” Fights were tough, but he and Cup were strong and usually could go quite a few rounds before needing a break.

“It’s the Otherside messing with you two. I’m sure this place is draining for someone still living,” Chalice explained. “Go ahead and rest. I'll wake you when we reach New Orleans.”
“Thanks.” Mugs felt his eyes slide shut. “You’ve always been a big help.” He yawned and laid back to rest his head on the backrest.

He heard her giggle quietly. “Good night,” He mumbled and was out in a matter of moments.

Mugs awoke with a start. The engine let out another scream as they slowed. He suddenly felt a jerk and Cups also woke Cups looking around blurry. “Uh? Whazz gonna on?” Mugs asked still sleepy. Chalice giggled at the boys.

“We’re here. You two slept nearly the whole ride,” she said.

“We slept a whole day?” Cups grumbled.

“Don’t be too surprised. The Otherside has strange effects on the living. You two should find a place to eat something when you get off,” Chalice advised.

“What is that Other-whats-it anyway?” Cup asked as he stretched his arms above his head.

“It’s the place us ghosts disappear to all the time.” Chalice smiled.

Mugs smiled. “So, that’s where ghosts always vanish to.” He looked outside to see the dark city shift as they came to an open station. There was a weird feeling, like a warm wind came through the car and suddenly the city lit by bright sunlight. “Woah,” Mugs gasped.

Cups followed his line of sight to the city. “Let’s go.” He stood. Mugs followed and stretched his back. He felt it pop. Train seating wasn’t the most comfortable place to sleep. Chalice followed. The boys and, the still staring, phantoms got off the train to the mostly empty platform. A few pigeons sat in the broken windows and rafters.

The brothers looked around the trashed platform. Light filtered through the broken windows and after the cold and creepiness of the train and the Otherside, the place seemed warmed and peaceful. Mugs couldn’t help but smile.

Chalice flew in front of them. “It was nice to see you two again. I wish you luck and hope our paths will meet again.” She smiled and bowed her head.

Mugs followed her action. “It was nice to see you too. Be safe.”

To his surprise Cups tilted his head down too. Chalice smiled brightly before she drifted back inside and disappeared.

“C’mon. Let’s get some grub,” Cup said. Mugs looked over at his older brother. He seemed to have gotten over most of his bad mood.

“Alright!” Mugs agreed. “Sounds like berries to me.”

“Hold it!” The boys looked behind them to see Blind Specter coming out of the train. “Dice sent this to you. Said it’s the place you’re to stay.”

Mugs furrowed his brows. A spot to stay? “The cuss?” Cup muttered and grabbed the letter the Specter offered. The eye in his palm glared at Cup.

“Like I know. Just don’t let us see you two again until you don’t need to breath anymore,” Specter said and flew back to the train before either brother could ask him more questions. Cups scowled and turned to leave. Mugs was right beside him. He watched Cup rip open the letter and pull out a card.
It was just an address.

“Huh,” Mugs muttered.

“Weird,” Cup said, turning the card over to see if there was anything on the back. “It’s on the riverside.”

Mugs shrugged. “Guess we better go. Hopefully there’ll be a food joint nearby.” Cup made a noise of agreement and shoved the card in his pocket.

It didn’t take the pair long to find the wide river. They followed in toward the inner city as the sun started to move down the sky. Mugs felt his stomach grumble, but ignored it. There was so much in the tightly packed city, entertainers, musicians, fortunetellers, and food just along the streets! He was amazed at all the exciting things around them. The music was energetic, the food made his mouth water, and the smiles and laughing pulled at him to join in. They seemed to be celebrating something.

Cups kept walking quickly toward the address. It was tricky, and they had to stop to ask for directions every now and then. People kept inviting them to do other things. Fun things that Mugs would pout about as Cups walked away and he had to follow. Finally, they came to a large boat that was docked along the river side. There was a dance floor on the level above the entrance.

Something familiar stuck Mugs about the place, but he couldn’t quite put his finger on it.

They walked in to find the place was huge. Lights dotted the pillar arches through out the large room. A spacious stage stood on one wall, a bar on another. At circular white clothed tables, sat light bugs, beetles, fish, gators, and many other kinds of characters. Everyone was dressed up for a party and server bugs flew about the room with trays.

“Have we ever been here Mugs?” Cup asked, looking around suspiciously.

Mugs stared at the stage. “It feels like it, uh?”

Suddenly, two large frogs stepped out on the floor. They were dressed up like most of the people there. Button up shirts and slacks with nice shoes and bow-ties. They were glaring at the cup brothers. Mugs gasped. He knew those frogs! “You have got to be kidding me,” Cup growled as he narrowed his eyes.

“If it isn’t the glass heads, Cuphead and Mugman,” the short brother croaked with a smirk. “Never thought we’d see you two again.”

“Hi Ribby,” Mugs said. He turned to the taller frog. “Hi, Croaks. Boy, what are you doing here?”

“This is our joint! We should be asking you that,” Croaks said.

“Didn’t you know we were coming?” Cup asked.

The taller frog nodded. Ribby spoke up. “We weren’t exactly thrilled, neither. You got some sorta business here in town?”

“Yeah,” Cup said, pulling out the card. “Dice sent us here.” Croaks snorted. Mugs frowned and tugged on his scarf. They were still upset.

“I’d rather have a rematch then be all friendly like.” Croaks crossed his arms. “Do what you got to do, and then get out of here as quick as you can.”

Ribby tossed something toward them. Mugs caught it and looked. It was a room key. “The food and
drinks are on the house,” he growled. “And don’t bring us any trouble.”

Cup chuckled. “Is Dice forcing you to play nice? We don’t need help from a dump like this.”

The frogs frowned. Ribby took a step forward. “A dump! Look here, straw head, don’t think we like helping a couple of the Devil’s pets. If we could we-”

“Rippy.” Croaks put a hand on his arm. Ribby went quiet.

Cup smirked, his eyes half lidded. “Last I checked, he’s your boss too.”

Ribby growled. “Just get what you need and get out. We don’t want trouble,” Croaks repeated.

“Cup.” Mugs bit the inside of cheek. “C’mon, let’s just get some food.” Cups broke his stare off with the frogs to glance at Mugs. He narrowed his eyes and seemed like he was going to say something, but Mugs’ stomach gave out a loud growled and stopped him. Cups sighed.

“Alright, fine,” Cups said and found an empty table. Several of the guests had stopped to watch the argument, but soon turned back. The frogs watched them, but soon were distracted by others.

“Thanks Cup,” Mugs said. He looked over the menu and quickly picked two dishes. Cup ordered a drink and some pasta.

“Yeah, whatever,” Cup said. “Let’s just get this trip over with.”

Mugs smiled and nodded. He really hoped it wouldn’t take them long. It seemed everything was trying to make them homesick lately. He wanted to goof off with Cups and have them both laughing again soon. After they got this Voodoo lady, he was sure they could do something fun.

Chapter End Notes

And there we have it! The Cupbros are in the city! Hopefully, the Bbros find the machine part before they do! We’ll find out next time! Have a good week!

Oh, and be nice to Mercowe. It’s unedited ’cause I was a slow writer this week XP, so all the mistakes are mine! If you find anything funny go ahead and share it. Mercowe teases me all the time, and it is funny. My favorite is still doom-dome

Anyway, have a good week, and see you next time.

TAP out!
Bendy and Boris looked around the grand streets and cobbled paths of the city. Boris had his nose buried in the map occasionally, but each time he looked back up, he only seemed more confused as the lines on his forehead grew deeper.

“What’s up, bro?” Bendy asked.

“I...I’m not sure how to read this.” Boris’ ears dropped, and he narrowed his eyes at the map.

“Here. Let me see,” Bendy said and Boris lowered the map so Bendy could see over his arm. The map had an x over the part they wanted, at least that’s what the boys had assumed. There were no streets outlined, no indication where they were, and no clear path to where they wanted to go. “Are you sure an angel gave this thing to you, bro?” Bendy asked for the third or fourth time today.

Boris sighed. “Yes.”

“And she didn’t give you any tips, or maybe a guide book or something?” Bendy asked, looking at the landmarks the map did give them.

“No. I didn’t even see her face, Bendy. She was too bright,” Boris said, sounding frustrated. Bendy understood. He was frustrated too. They were going in circles, not just in the strange city, but also in this conversation.

“Alright, alright.” Bendy lifted his hands in a placating way. “Then we’ll ask if anyone knows where that is.” Bendy looked around the street to see if he could spot anyone who seemed to know the area.
Boris huffed and folded the map, before dropping his arms. “I just thought this would make it easier for us.”

Bendy shrugged. “Well, it got us here, sort of…Well, the Warners did, but we knew we wanted to go here. Maybe we’re just bad at maps. I haven’t used one before, or that lady wasn’t an angel and was pulling your leg.”

Boris dropped his head back and groaned. “It was! You’re just jealous ‘cause you didn’t see her.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Bendy grumbled. “Whatever. You didn’t either. You said she was just this bright star.”

Boris snorted and smirked. “Oh, no. She had hands. She handed me the map. They were warm and nice, and gentle, and her voice-”

“Okay, okay!” Bendy chuckled. “You’ve already described her enough! Stop!”

Boris grinned. “Absolutely jealous. She was a lot nicer than that bar lady you complain about.”

Bendy snorted. “She wasn’t so bad last time. I got her to laugh and I think she helped me back to the room. Give me time, and she’ll warm up to me.”

Boris rolled his eyes. “Uh-huh. Sure.”

“She will!” Bendy said. Boris was walking away from him, towards a man that was getting out juggling balls from his bag. “Hey!” Bendy called after him and quickly caught up to wolf.

“Excuse me, sir?” Boris asked. The man looked up with a friendly smile. He had on normal street clothes, a simple shirt and pants. Bendy wouldn’t have pegged him a performer. “Can you help us? You see, we’re a bit lost, and we are having a tough time with this map.” Boris explained and lifted the folded map.

“Why, sure thing! Le’ me see what I can do for you.” The man said with a slight accent.

“Thanks, mister!” Boris said and unfolded the map. “See, we’re trying to get here, but we don’t know where we are, and it doesn’t have streets or names written on it.” Boris showed the man and pointed out the x.

The man looked at the map and furrowed his brow. The smile slowly shrunk. “Is dis a joke, kiddo?”

The man stared at the map blankly. “Is dis a joke, kiddo?”

Bendy stepped up to the man. “You can’t see it?”

The man chuckled. “You are very funny. Good joke. Now, I have to get dis show going.” He lifted the balls to show that he was busy. Bendy and Boris shared a surprised look.
“Uh, yeah. Right.” Bendy pulled Boris back. “What was that about?”

“I don’t know!” Boris sounded just as flabbergasted as Bendy.

“Maybe that guy was messing with us.” Bendy glanced back at the man.

“Think we should try someone else?” Boris asked.

Bendy thought about it and hesitantly nodded. “What else can we do? If we can’t get help, then we’ll have to figure out this thing for ourselves.” He shrugged. “So, we might as well test it out.”

Boris nodded, and the brothers headed down the street. It seemed the city was preparing for some sort of party later. Food vendors, performers, and people dressed up snazzy were starting to show up. Bands and single musicians were starting to dot area more frequently. The boys tried a couple more people, but the result was the same, no one saw the map. To them it was just a blank piece of paper.

They took a break at a little burger joint and watched the people going by. “Doubt that it’s a map from an angel now?” Boris asked.

Bendy swallowed his bite of burger. “It’s a weird map, that’s for sure. If I couldn’t see it myself, I’d think you’d finally lost it.” Boris frowned and flicked a fry at Bendy. Bendy caught it. “Hey, no food fights here.”

Boris huffed. “It’s just—we’re so close…and it’s only the first part and,” he groaned in frustration, “and there are all the others too! We only have this and that confusing page to work with, and if we can’t find it will it never show us the others? How long will this take? And will the other parts take days, weeks, months to find!” Boris threw his hands up.

Bendy blinked. “This is really bothering you, uh Boris?” Boris sighed and nodded. “Look, the Warners saved us days of travel already and I’m sure we’ll get that scrap figured out like we got the page figured out…mostly. There’s nothing to worry about, bro.”

Boris took a fry and ate it. “I know. I just thought that this map was gonna have all the answers for us. Instead, it’s gotten harder.”

Bendy smiled. “It can’t be any harder than finding Oddswell.”

Boris smiled back. “Yeah, you’re right.”

“Of course I am. I’m the older brother,” Bendy said, tossing a fry at Boris. Boris caught it in his mouth and ate it.

“I thought you said no food fight,” He said.

Bendy shrugged. “How could it be a fight if you just eat it?”

Boris snorted. The two soon were wandering the streets again. They decided to test if they could get the map to do something else magical, but to no avail. They tried to see if they could figure out the location by describing the landmarks to the locals, but they only got confused looks. They tried to find a tall place to see if they could spot any of the landmarks, but the city covered everything. They even found another map in a shop to compare it to, but to their dismay they found that city had changed the water ways they were hoping to use.

By then, the sun was setting and the city was alive with jazz and lights and celebration. The boys were tired from walking all day, but the city’s energy wouldn’t allow their spirits to be low. Bendy
encouraged Boris to try out his new clarinet. When Bendy started to dance, many people quickly
joined him. There was so much laughing and energy that Bendy couldn’t help but enjoy the night.
He couldn’t really bring himself to worry. It wasn’t until it was late when the boys had found a hotel,
that the weight of their situation sank in. Bendy had no idea what to do tomorrow to find this thing.
There was no direction or help he could turn to. He had hit a wall. What could he do with a map that
he couldn’t figure out and couldn’t show to anyone?

He puzzled over, in his mind, what they could try next, when he felt the almost familiar stab of pain
start in his chest. He quickly grabbed the trash bin and pulled his shirt off before he even started to
cough. Boris dug through his bag, looking for the pain pills that Oddswell had given him and
grabbed a glass of water. He curled up holding the bin to his chest and tried to focus on anything else
but the pain and heat he felt growing. Boris sat with him as he suffered through his attack. He gently
rubbed Bendy’s back and whispered encouragements. Bendy shuddered, gasped, and wept as the
pain caused him to heave again and again into the bin. He felt the ink drip down his face and
shoulders. He would never get used to this. Each of these was like the first. How could someone get
used to this?

Finally, it seemed to stop, and the boys were able to clean up quickly and go to bed. Bendy almost
felt ashamed for Boris having to see him like that. It was obviously bothering the wolf, no matter
how supportive Boris was. It was evident in his agitation earlier that day, the urgency that pulled at
him and made him so frustrated. Bendy was worried. He didn’t want to drag the kid down with this
every day. He still wanted to protect Boris’ smile.

The next day didn’t seem very different. They spent some time talking to people on the street. They
stopped by a little donut shop for breakfast and there Bendy had found the day’s paper. He was
surprised to find that he and Boris were on the cover. It was the wanted posters that had been fixed to
really resemble them. The heading said: The Bbros Strike Again? They were horrified by the
following article. A fight in Toon Town that sent three kids to the hospital. The kids were identified
as the Yakko, Wakko, and Dot Warner and had been fighting an unidentified pair outside of the old
town train station, before the pair disappeared. None of children were fit for an interview and the
people that had dropped the kids off had disappeared.

The article speculated if Bendy and Boris had had a falling out with the Warners, since they seemed
to have possibly been linked to a bust in Warnerburg. It seemed the kids’ guardian, Dr. Otto
Scratchansniff, had not been aware of the ordeal or that the Warners were in Toon Town. It went on,
but Bendy couldn’t stomach anymore.

Boris seemed to be on the edge of tears. “They got them Bendy. Those guys got them.”

Bendy put a hand on his shoulder. “Yeah,” he muttered. He felt disgusted, angry. Not only with
those schmuck Cup guys, but with himself. He should have told them not to go fight. He had thought
that the Warners would be fine. They were so crazy he didn’t think anyone was a match for them.
He had underestimated those two, and his friends paid for it.

“How’s this our fault?” Boris asked.

Bendy looked up. “No Boris,” he said. “It was those Cup mooks. They did this. Besides, even if we
did try to stop them, they’re the Warners. What could we have said to persuade them away from that
fight?”

“But maybe-”

“Don’t think of maybes. It’ll only drive you crazy. It’s in the past, bro. We can’t do anything but find
that machine part and head back,” Bendy said.
Boris dropped his head. His ears and tall were limp with sorrow. “Yeah,” he muttered. Bendy’s frown deepened.

“We have to stand up and keep moving forward,” Bendy said. Boris nodded again and followed Bendy out of the shop. The two didn’t have any direction though, and it wasn’t long before the two found themselves were sitting on the curb. “Well, so much for moving forward,” Bendy grumbled into his fists as he glared at the cobbled street.

They didn’t have much time to wallow in their misery when a voice addressed them. “What has two lads like yourselves so low?” a richly accented woman’s voice asked. Bendy glanced up to see a dark woman with a bright smile and a concerned look in her eyes.

“We are having a tough time finding something,” Boris said. “We’ve tried everything we can think of.”

“Oh, well let’s see if I can help! I’m rather good at helpin’ out folk ‘roun’ here,” she said. Her head was wrapped in a decorative cloth, she had hoop earring that glistened when she turned her head. Her figure was rather pear shaped, but not unattractive. She appeared to be in her thirties, yet there was a certain energy that came off her that felt familiar to Bendy. He narrowed his eyes a bit suspiciously.

Wait…what was that?

“We can’t show you the map we’re using to find it. You won’t be able to see it,” Boris said. She raised a surprised eyebrow. Her eyes glinted. “A map? A map I can’t see? What an odd thing!”

A little red flag came up for Bendy. “It doesn’t really matter. We’ll be on our way.” Bendy stood up and took a step onto the street.

“Now, now little man. At least give a gal a chance! Let Lady Facilier help. I love to help where I can.” She stepped in front of the boys. Bendy narrowed his eyes. Did she just call him-

“Do you really think you can?” Boris asked quickly. Bendy shot him a frown and Boris shrugged.

“Well, how will we know unless we try?” Lady Facilier said with a warm smile. “Let me show you to my shop. There may be something there that can help you.” Bendy snorted softly. She was probably some shady shop lady that was gonna try to scam them into buying something. Good thing that nonsense didn’t work on Bendy.

“Can we Bendy? We don’t really have any other ideas,” Boris asked. With a sigh, Bendy agreed to go. The woman grinned and motioned for the two to follow her.

“You boys aren’t from around here, now are you?” Lady Facilier asked with a knowing look.

“No ma’am,” Boris answered. “We come from a small town.”

“Oh, how nice. It’s this thing ya boys are lookin’ for that’s taken ya away from home?” she asked, slowing down and putting herself in between the two. She looked at Boris when she asked the question. Bendy felt a twinge of annoyance.

“Pretty much,” Bendy said before Boris could. The woman looked over to him without missing a beat.

“Not good to be away from home too long. People will start missin’ ya,” she said. “Now, let’s see how Lady Facilier can help.” The woman steered the boys down a narrow alley way. The sounds of the street quickly disappeared in the distance. Bendy felt his nerves rise as they came to a secluded
opening where a tall twisted tree grew. The leaves were just starting to show signs of changing. The back doors to the buildings around them showed age in the worn wood and rusted nails.

“No worries. This is just my little shop,” she said, waving her hand at the largest door.

“So, how are you going to help us exactly?” Bendy raised a brow.

“Why, I’m gonna ask my friends for a bit of help.” She grinned. She opened the door and quickly ushered the boys in. If Bendy thought that there was something weird with the woman, then he was nearly blindsided with the weirdness of her shop. The off-putting energy was twice as bad here. The boys looked around the dim place. Candles lit the place in an eerie light. Rows of shelves offered strange and unique objects. There were crystal balls, herbs, little figurines, wooden masks, little pouches that seemed to be full of something, small dolls, alligator heads, skulls, various animal bones, and many other things. Clothes, like scarfs and bandanas with strange symbols and designs hung from the ceiling, shifting in a strange breeze that didn’t seem to come from anywhere.

“Wh-where are your friends?” Boris asked nervously, eyes on a jar that seemed to hold a canine’s skull.

“Oh!” She grinned again. “Let me show you!” She led them to a table in the back of the shop. A thick cloth covered the circular table. Large, fancy carved chairs were pulled up to the table. Masks were placed around the table to seem like they were watching. A crystal ball sat on the table, next to a candle, and a book. “Now, have yourselves a sit and take a little journey with me.” Bendy blinked.

“Is this some kinda magic trick thing you do for tourist? Look lady, we don’t really have any money for a show,” Bendy said.

“Hush now! I ain’t chargin’ you none.” She frowned. “Now sit, let’s see what my friends on the Otherside have to say!”

Bendy cautiously sat down and Boris slipped in the chair next to him. Lady Facilier weaved her way into the grand chair across from them. She took the book away and placed a deck of cards on the table. Bendy and Boris raised an eyebrow each. “Now, let’s have a peek in time. Get some information that could help, ya see, and then, let’s spot this thing of yours. What is it, by the way?”

Boris looked to Bendy to answer. Bendy’s eye became half-lidded as he watched the woman play with her deck. “A doll,” he answered. “We’re looking for a doll.”

Facilier blinked and her brows disappeared in her head dress. “Ah,” she said. “Alright. You boys take three cards each. One for the past, the present, and the future.”

Bendy frowned and Boris tilted his head, his ears still down. She flared out the cards and offered them to the boys.

The boys shared a look. Bendy asking Boris why he’d let them come in here, and Boris looking back apologetic. Bendy reached over and pulled out three random cards. Boris followed his lead.

“Wonderful!” She waved her hand and the rest vanished. Boris’ eyes widened. Bendy tensed. That energy was stronger now. “Now, let’s start with you little man.” She spread the cards Bendy had picked and turned over the first one. “You’ve always been a hard-working boy, and many have worked to put you down. You’re never really understood, but a few have accepted you, and that’s been good enough for you” Bendy blinked. It was a picture of him in his work clothes with figures grinning maliciously behind him, but kinder looking people ahead of him. “Now, you are on this journey to save yourself and others from an…inky situation. You’re sick?” She looked up at him.
Bendy’s eyes widened.

“Uh, um, well.” He looked over to Boris who seemed equally shocked. “Ye-yeah.”

She nodded. “So young.” She pursed her lips. “Seems that there are many out to stop you too. False accusations, hunters, and...something else.” She narrowed her eyes and looked puzzled. “You gotta get that thing workin’ or you and others won’t have much longer to be hopping around.” Bendy gulped. The image on that card didn’t look very different from the first one. This one had him dripping ink and the threatening figures...were shaped like cups and another couple of shadows behind him. “Now, in your future I see a long journey in a strange land. You will find people that were friends and are then strangers. Still, I see the gears of machinery working for you.” She grinned. “That’s good.” The card only showed gears fitted together with the shadows of figures cast over them. Bendy blinked and gazed at the card in confusion.

She turned to Boris. “Now, you suga’ have done the best you can. You have been helped and are willing to help ever since you had the strength to do so. You have had guidance for as long as you can remember.” The card showed a dog following footprints. “Now, you’re struggling to feel helpful to your brother. You have a map from a great being, but no idea how to use it. You have an idea of what you are looking for, but no help on how to find it or build it. Your battle is time,” she said. Boris gazed at her unblinking with huge eyes. The card showed the dog looking in distress at a mess of separated junk in the way of the path. “Now, in your future, you’ll take a different route. You will be the one to blaze the trail to success or failure. Many will be set against you. Hope or despair, which will claim you in the end?” It showed the dog going off the trail and into the shadowy forest.

“That’s a lot to put on him.” Bendy scowled. The boys shared a look. Bendy was untrusting and Boris was worried. She giggled.

“The cards don’t lie,” she said. “And it seems you two are racin’ the clock, so I ain’t gonna waste your time.” She smiled and pulled the crystal ball toward her. She waved her hands over the ball. “Now, to ask my friends on the Otherside.” The ball clouded over. “Where in land of water green is the doll? Show us the place quick. Answer my call.” The fog in the ball turned. The energy was strong now and Bendy could finally pin it down. It was the same as Black Hat! Dark energy was swimming around the room and became more and more excited as she talked. He glanced around the room, feeling watched. This could be bad.

“Ahh!” she said excitedly. “There! Deep in the swamps!” She pointed at the ball. “Far in the swamps east of this city lies a door to a cavern long forgotten. Beyond the traps and the floods, there is a chamber that holds your treasure.” She looked up at the boys with a giddy glee of a girl half her age. She took in the boys shocked faces and huge eyes. Her smile became pleased. “Told you I could help.”

Bendy shook himself out of his stupor. “H-how did you--”

“I just asked my friends! Now, you don’t better get going! You’re are burning day light!” She waved her hands at them in a shooing motion. “The swamp in too dangerous at night,” she said.

The brothers stood. A hopeful gleam was back in Boris’ eye. “But where in the swamps? East how far?”

“Deep in the swamps. Possibly, say, a four-hour boat ride in?” She turned her head as if she were listening to something. “Yes. That seems about right, ta me.” She ushered to two out. “Now, I’m nice enough to not charge ya nothing for this, but if ya boys find what your lookin’ for, come back and visit Lady Facilier, okay?”
“Thank you!” Boris said with a smile. “We will!” Bendy nodded, but didn’t say anything. He was still disturbed by the energy that the woman had around her and her shop.

“Now, you boys take care now!” she called and waved as the two made their way down the street. They waved and headed back to the busy streets of the city.

“She was nice,” Boris said. “I wasn’t sure when we went into that place, but she was really helpful.”

Bendy kept a look out around them. “Yeah, but I don’t completely trust it. There was something up with that dame and her shop. I didn’t like it,” Bendy said.

“But we know where to go now!” Boris said joyfully, his tail wagging.

Bendy hummed.

Lady Facilier chuckled as she walked back to her table. She put the folded-up piece of paper down. “Those two fellas were cute, real innocent types. Don’t see that around much,” she said. “Course they’d be the kind to get an item from the Upper. Too bad I couldn’t do much with that cussing angel’s blessing on them.” She moved around her shelves, pulling out bottles and pouches of items to place beside the paper. “How did a little demon get a blessing anyhow? I have never seen such a thing in all my years,” she said, shaking her head with a smile. “Oh well, when they come back from either not finding the chambers or from finding it empty, I’ll be sure to have something prepared for them.”

The masks around her grinned and shook with glee. “I knew you would like that,” she said. “Sorry, I couldn’t feed ya. Maybe the next batch will have some souls for ya,” she told them. “Right now, let’s see if we can crack the concealin’ spell on this thing.” She smiled. “If there are more things out there like my dear trinket, I will be a very happy queen.” She looked over to the locked chest that sat behind her chair with a smirk.

She went over to it and unlocked it. She pulled out a doll and held it in the palm of her hand. It looked like a skeleton, the skull grinned at her. “Oh, it looks like the last fella died. Too bad. I wanted to play a bit more today.” The masks shook again. “I know it would have worked on them, but they would have known what it was the moment they saw it.” She pouted and put the doll back. “Guess I’ll save for ya for another suga’,” she said and turned back to the table.

Lady Facilier started pouring powders and liquids into a bowl and stirred. “Now, this could get tricky. Can’t tell if it’s angel made or was just held up there. The magic is strong anyway. I really have my work cut for me this time.” She grinned. “This is gonna be fun.” The substance she was stirring started to glow and wisps of smoke started to rise from it. “What say you friends? Shall we?” The masks clattered, excited.

Chapter End Notes

Ssssooooo close!
I am the worst. Hehe.
Whelp. I wonder what will come next. Hopeful the boys figure this out quick! XD
Again, happy day, happy holidays, and Merry Christmas to you wonderful readers.
Thank you all for your sweet comments and everything else you gift me with. It warms my soul. ;3 I love talking with you. ^w^
I hope you have a great week and I will try to get a chapter out next Monday. I'm not sure I will be able to since I am moving back to college, getting school stuff ready and of course...the distracting boyfriend. >w>
So, hopefully next week, if not the week after!
TAP out!
A Difficult Day All Around

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

The Cup brothers find Facilier.
The Bbros find the swamp.
Nobody has a good day...
Unless you count the Voodoo Queen...

Chapter Notes

Hello Hello~!
My dear lovelies! Oh, thank you guys so much! Sorry I didn't respond to your comments. I am trying to get this life of mine in order. Thanks for all the congrats and understanding! For those that asked, I am going to have a summer wedding in July, so I have time before all that planning madness. ^^

I have decided to change post day to Fridays. It seems the least busy in my schedule for now (let's see if that holds true, eh?) and I made it extra long to make up for the lack of chapter earlier this week. I hope you enjoy.
Oh! Oh! And! I found this clip while hunting down a version of 'Friend from the Otherside' that I thought matched the Voodoo Queen. (Everyone kept singing it so I'll put it in this chapter) Enjoy ^^

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Jt9MyksVYU

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Mugman looked at the lively street hungrily. He trailed Cup at a short distance, fighting with himself. He was getting distracted by the smells of cooked meat, baked goods, and sweets, by the shows of entertainers and sounds of musicians, the sight of goods being sold. Cup had to remind him a dozen times that they could screw around only after the job was done. To Mugs relief, it seemed pretty straightforward this time.

Ribby and Croaks had reluctantly given them the address Dice had for them. They were supposed to take down a voodoo queen and get some magic thing from her. Dice’s message said the magic thing would be obvious once they saw it. Mugs really hoped it would. He didn’t want to miss out on the fun things this city had to offer, and he thought if anyone needed a break, it was Cup. His brother had gotten over his mood from the other day, but he was still a bit low. Mugs had a pretty good guess as to why too.

“Now remember, Mugs. We can’t trust anything when we get there. This lady is so dangerous that the boss sees her as a threat,” Cup said. Mugs nodded. “At least that’s what that square claims.” Mugs let out a breath, not quite a sigh, to hide his chuckle. Cup really hated Mr. Dice and sometimes he would get like this to spite the man in little ways. Cup had a gift when it came to be annoying to
the boss’ right hand man, and Cup didn’t trust a word the guy said…ever. After years of knowing the casino manager it had almost become funny. Though, Mugs didn’t trust the fella either…

They came to the center of a street and Cup looked down at the address again before looking around, annoyed. “What’s wrong?” Mugs asked.

Cup huffed. “We’re on the right street, but I don’t see the number around.” Mugs peeked over Cup’s arm to see the address. “What the cuss are we gonna do if we can’t find the place?”

Mugs shrugged. Cup rolled his eyes at the response. “We could ask around,” Mugs suggested.

“Great,” Cup muttered, still sounding annoyed. The two started to search the street when a dark woman in a flowy dress called out to them.

“You boys lookin’ for somthin’?” she asked in an odd accent.

Mugs glanced at Cup, then slowly approached her. “Yeah. We’re looking for an address,” he said. The lady raised a brow. Her head was wrapped up in a scarf thingy that looked really fancy. It completely hid her hair. She had big hoop earrings too.

“Maybe I can help you boys. What’s the address?” she asked. Mugs looked to Cup again. The older brother narrowed his eyes at the woman and offered her the card with the address on it. She took it in with a hand that bore a few bright rings and thin bracelets. Her nails were polished and tapered to tips that reminded Mugs of bit of claws.

The woman’s eyes widened a little and then she smiled. “Oh! I know the place. Come! Follow me.” She turned and walked down the street and into a narrow alley between two buildings. The brothers shared a look and slowly followed her. Cup had his hands in his pockets, probably with a hand ready for a fight. Mugs mentally prepared himself. He felt adrenaline course through his veins. His stomach turned in a familiar and unpleasant way.

“C’mon slowpokes! Right this way,” she called back to them. She disappeared around another corner at the end of the long, narrow alleyway. It opened to a space behind the buildings. There was a tall, twisted tree that was starting to lose its leaves, a few old doors with everything else being brick walls, and cobblestone. Mugs looked around for any traps and didn’t see anything so far.

The woman was standing by a large door that looked heavy. Above it was the address they were looking for. “Here it is! Mind me askin’ what you have to do with the person runnin’ this here shop?”

“We have some business here,” Cup answered without missing a beat.

She raised a brow. “Business? What handsome? You don’t need a love potion, do ya? With your looks suga’?”

Cup’s eyes widen and his face flushed. “Uh-eh? Wha-? No! What the cuss? Hell no!” he denied loudly. Mugs hid his laughter behind his hand. Golly, did Cup look flustered. Mugs got control of himself first.

“No, ma’am. We need to talk to her,” Mugs jumped in.

“Talk? Huh. You be needin’ some guidance from the Otherside?” She grinned.

Mugs startled. “You know about the Otherside?”
The woman lost her smile and stared at Mugs with wide eyes. “ Seems ya do too.” She shook off the surprise and gestured to the door. “ Well, let’s have a journey and meet my friends from the Otherside!” She grinned. The door swung open and Mugs could only see darkness. He thought he heard something echo from within.

“You’re the Voodoo Queen!” Cup snapped and glared at the woman. She grinned proudly.

“Oh, absolutely suga’! Queen Facilier at your service.” She nodded her head.

“Why didn’t you just say so!” Cup demanded.

“If ya had two strangers asking for you and pulling such intimidating faces, wouldn’t ya stay quiet ’til you were sure they were the bees’ knees?” she asked and turned to walk into the shadows of her shop.

Cup growled. He walked over to Mugs. “Stay on your guard,” he muttered as they slowly entered the shop.

Mugs’ first impression of the place was that he was back on the Phantom Express. It was that creepy, but there was more energy here. But, where the train was an unsettling calm of a graveyard, this place was more like a waiting predator. The moment he put his guard down, it would pounce. He stared at the things in jars and skulls grinning from shelves.

“Now, you two need more help than anyone I’ve ever met before,” the voodoo woman said. Mugs focused on her. She was moving stuff from a round table that was surrounded by masks and candles. “Come have a seat, gentleman.” She waved her hands to the two chairs across from hers.

Cup and Mugs shared a glance. This place was already putting them on edge. They just needed to find the item Dice had asked for, take care of this woman and they’d be good. Mugs had thought it would be straight forward, but this place was giving him second thoughts.

Cup sat and Mugs followed. The woman pulled out a deck of cards. “Relax, boys. I’m here to make your dreams come true. I’m gonna look into your future and change it round some too. With my voodoo and hoodoo, I can do what I please.” The boys shared an uneasy glance. “Pick three cards boys. Let’s see what fate has for you.”

“We’re not here for your show. We want the doll,” Cup said.

“Ain’t no show here, suga’. ‘Sides you couldn’t care less for that old thing. What you want is freedom. The choice to go where you want and when you want. You want your soul back, right? Come now. Let Queen Facilier help you out. We don’t need to fight. I can help you,” she promised. Mugs choked in surprise. How did she know that! He turned to Cup with wide eyes. Cup looked equally shocked and a bit angry. He glanced at Mugs, but kept his attention on the Voodoo Queen.

“How?” he asked.

“Please,” she snickered. “If there’s ever someone that could break a soul contract it’s me! I know my trade, and I know it well.” She grinned. “Y’all would just owe me a little favor.”

“And what would that be?” Mugs asked, already weary and a touch hopeful. Cup kicked him under the table and Mugs flinched, but held back his pain. He frowned back at his brother. Cup wasn’t looking at him, though.
“You would need to bring me an angel,” she said simply. She was met with absolute silence.

“Huh?” the brothers responded together.

“Did I stutter?” she smirked.

“Lady, you’re crazy if you think we can catch an angel and drag it to this creep dungeon,” Cup stated flatly.

The voodoo woman frowned. “Well,” she played with the cards in her hands, “let’s see then.” She offered them to the boys.

Mugs looked to Cup. He tilted his head to indicate Mugs to go. The younger brother gulped and reached out. He pulled out three cards, and the Voodoo Queen spaced them out on the table.

“Now, you boys are from a set ‘a islands in the sea. Ya gotta bad debt and nabbed souls to save yourselves,” the woman said, raising a brow. Mugs cringed, and Cup glared at her. “You failed your friends and became the hitmen for the devil himself.” She whistled. “That must have been quite a trip.” The two stayed silent. Neither bothered to look down at the cards. They both kept their eyes on the Voodoo Queen. “Now, you are sent after a pair that ya can’t seem to catch. Your debts only worsen, and the spiral down ain’t unending.” Mugs noticed Cups fists were shaking from under the table. Mugs swallowed and took a deep breath. “But in your future, I see…” she dropped off and stared that the card. She pursed her lips.

Cup angled his hand, ready to fire. She sighed. “Ya’ll really will never get what ya want,” she said, then looked up at Cup. “But ya already know that, don’t cha?” There was a sudden flurry of motion. Mugs made to stand up, but he was tied down to the chair. He looked down to see snakes wrapped around his arms and chest. He let out a sound of surprise and alarm. He looked over to see Cup in the same position. He let out a string of curses and thrashed about, trying to free himself. The snakes hissed at him menacingly.

“Now that ain’t very gentleman like.” The woman said. Mugs snapped his head to see her looking up. There was a burn through the fabrics she had hanging there, right above her head. Smoke rose from the hole in lazy curls. “Anyone ever teach ya it’s rude to interrupt folk when they’re talking?” She turned a cold eye on the brothers. Cup snarled. Mugs struggled harder. The snakes were like steel. Every time he thought he had loosened one, it would shift and become tighter.

“Let us go!” Mugs demanded. She laughed.

“Now, I like ya boys. You’re determined and…talented. I’m still willin’ to make a deal here,” she said.

“Bite me,” Cup growled.

“Don’t be that way, suga’. Queen Facilier is a fair boss to work for. My contract will at least have an end. You do the time n’you walk free with me. Ya really think that old devil will ever let ya walk away? No way in hell.” She snickered. “Ya’ll never get your souls back at the rate you’re going, but my friends from the Otherside can help.”

Friends from the Otherside. The boys jumped as the strange echo that seemed to come from all around them. The brothers looked around, but didn’t see anyone. They weren’t as alone as they had thought.

Mugs frowned. Cup made a choking noise. The boys shared a look. Cup’s glare was glowing red. He fought his restraints, but there was conflict in his eyes. A hint of a question.
Should they betray the Devil?

Mugs bit his lip. He didn’t know! Would they never be free if they kept working for him? Would working for this woman be better? What would she want them to do? Mugs didn’t know! His face must have given away his indecision and panic, because there was change to Cups. His face hardened in resolve.

“Lady. We’ve already made one screwy deal. You really think we’re dumb enough to make another?” Cup said.

“You’d be foolish to stay with the Devil,” she warned. Her eyes seemed to start glowing a deep purple.

“No.” Cup shook his head. “We’d be idiots to betray him for you. You really think you have a chance in hell to beat him? Yeah right.” Cup smirked. “You won’t even be able to beat us. You’d have no chance against him.” Facilier narrowed her eyes and raised a hand.

“You’ll regret underestimating me, boy!” she declared. Green and purple fog curled around the floor and climbed the walls. The masks around her rattled and shook.

“Yeah, yeah. Tell us something we haven’t heard a million times,” Cup said. Cup twisted his wrist painfully and in a blink, there was a flash of blue. Mugs felt his restraints loosen. He looked down to see the burns on the snakes and them cringing in pain. He wrenched free and stood. He turned and fired at the Voodoo Queen. She laughed and twisted away from his blasts and disappeared in her creepy fog.

Mugs turned his hand to Cup to free him when something collided with his back and pushed him down. He hit the ground hard and had the breath knocked out of him. “Get up, you idiot!” Cup barked at him. Mugs wheezed and tried to get his feet under him. Queen Facilier appeared in front of Cup.

“Ya thinkin’ of fightin’ me? The Queen of Voodoo? You think you stand a shadow of a chance?” She laughed. “Are you ready for the truth, suga’?” She waved her hands. The fog curled and pulsed around her. The masks suddenly started dancing off their hooks, voodoo dolls jumped off their shelves, skulls and bones clattered and shook like they were laughing. Purple symbols formed out of the colored smoke and began to glow and dance.

Mugs was on his feet, taking aim at the queen when a mask knocked him several feet back. He landed on his back with a grunt and slid further. Mugs didn’t give himself much time to recover. He got up and aimed again for the woman…Something yanked his arm down. He nearly fell over. Looking at his arm, he saw two voodoo dolls clinging to him, gigging with malice. Their button and stitch-eyes gleamed in the darkened room. Mugs tried to shake them off, but they clung harder. He grabbed one and fought to rip it off him. “OW!” He looked at the other doll to see it jabbing a sewing needle into his forearm. It lifted its arm to stab him again. He quickly grabbed it and ripped it off. The second doll climbed up him and clutched his scarf, choking him. He spotted more dolls approaching.

At the same time, Cup was dealing the Voodoo Queen. “Ready?” she said. The voices, masks? echoed her words, power vibrated around the room. She pulled out a knife that seemed to be made of bone. Carvings swirled on it, reflecting the symbols flying around in the smoke.

“Go jump in the river!” Cup growled as he struggled. He tried to lift his hands, but dolls were holding them down. His red eyes didn’t leave the knife.
“CUP!” Mugs shouted. He finally shook off the doll trying to choke him. Facilier raised the knife and slashed down. “NO!” Mugs snapped his fingers, shooting green, star shaped projectiles. They were all misdirected by the dolls, masks, and symbols. None came close to the woman. He snapped again, and the blue bullets were all blocked. If he could get enough energy for a super blast, maybe he could break through these minions!

“Do ya feel the change?” Facilier grinned. “You’re changin’, bendin’ to my will.” Purple fog overcame the chair Cup was on. Mugs’ older brother cried out. He wasn’t fast enough! He didn’t have a blast ready!

“Cup!” Mugs lunged forward to try and reach him.

“Run you idiot!” Cup screamed. He sounded like he was choking, in pain. Mugs had to save him, had to-

The fog cleared. A simple little teacup sat on the seat, a striped, bended straw leaning against the rim. Mugs felt his knees give out, and he hit the floor hard. His face was slack with shock, jaw hanging open and eyes wide. His arms dropped to his sides limply. “C-Cup?” There was no response.

Queen Facilier stepped up, her skirts swished around her, as she reached down and picked up the cup. “There now. Real good improvement with no mouth, ain’t it? He’ll make a great addition to my cupboard.”

Hot rage replaced numbing shock. “Let him go!” Mugs demanded. His voice shook, and he forced himself to stand on trembling legs. She turned her head and gave him an appraising look, her hoop ears sparkling in the colored lights of the symbols. Her brow raised, and she took the hand with the knife and gently tapped her chin with her pointer finger, the blade carefully angled away from her and glinted with Cup’s blood. She held the cup gingerly in her other hand.

“You sure ya wanna me to do that, suga’? I drop ‘im from here, and he’ll shatter in a million pieces,” she said teasingly. Mugs tensed and looked at the cup held loosely in her hand.

“Ch-change him back!” Mugs demanded. “Give him back!” He lifted his hand, ready to act. She laughed.

“I don’t think so. Ya’ll aren’t leavin’ my little shop here.” She waved the knife gracefully. “Prepare to join him on my shelf.” He heard the scuttle of the dolls around him, and who-know-what-else. The masks grinned at him. Mugs had never felt so alone before. “This is what happens when ya anger my friends from the Otherside. Ya pay the price.” She took a step forward. Mugs nearly fired at her, but if he did, then she would drop Cup. What should he do? What should he do? He didn’t know! His mind was racing, but it was all happening too quickly. He didn’t know what to do! How could he get Cup back?

“Don’t worry, suga’, tableware don’t need souls. I’m doin’ ya favor, if ya think ‘bout it. That devil won’t be get ya now.” She smiled bright, her eyes glowing. The masks laughed. “Now, come here.” All her minions lunged at him. Mugs did the only thing he could think of. He dodged. In a puff of smoke, he vanished. He reappeared on the other side of the room.

“Oooh!” Queen Facilier sounded excited. “Ain’t you two some oddities! I can’t wait to see what I can do with you!” A dark presence overcame him. Terror had him freeze for a moment.

Something brushed his arm, nearly grabbing it. He disappeared again. He appeared outside of the heavy door. He took a step back, his mind blank with panic. The ghost of darkness still felt like it was around him. He turned and ran. He heard the door creak open and laughter, but he didn’t dare
look back.

He made it to the street and kept running. What was he gonna do? She had Cuphead. He didn’t know what to do! He ran and ran, aimless.

“Could this get any worse?” Bendy asked. He looked down the tree to the splashing and hissing alligators. Boris sat on a branch above him, his ears folded, tail tucked, and completely soaked in swamp water. Bendy wasn’t much better. The scarf the Warners had given him was now torn and practically useless. He had also lost his hat. A gator was probably ripping it to shreds.

Boris gave him an unamused look. The alligators were crawling over each other, trying to reach up to the boys. The tree swayed and groaned. “You had to ask, didn’t you?” Boris looked down at him. Bendy shrugged and smiled apologetically. The tree shuddered, and the boys had to grab the trunk to not lose their balance.

“Well, I’ve had enough. I’ll take care of these guys.” Bendy stood up on his branch and rolled his shoulders.

“No! Dr. Oddswell said you couldn’t!” Boris said.

“You got a better idea? Grab a stick and swing it at them?” Bendy looked up a little annoyed. He was strong enough to handle a few overgrown lizards.

“W-we…uh,” Boris faltered.

“Exactly,” Bendy said and popped his knuckles. Just as he reached out for the shadows, the tree shook again, and Bendy lost his footing.

“Bendy!” Boris shouted. Boris dropped back and hung upside down by his knees. He threw his arms out and was able to grab Bendy’s tail.

“EEEOW!” Bendy shrieked as his tail was yanked, forcing his fall to a stop. Pain shot up his spine. “Letgo! LetgoletgoletgoLETGO!”

“OhnoIamsosorry! I’msorryI’msorryI’msorry!” Boris chanted as he pulled Bendy up as quickly as he could from his upside-down position. Bendy grabbed the branch Boris lifted him to. Boris let go of his tail and worked on getting himself turned right side up.

“Why my tail?” Bendy almost whimpered, tears pricked his eyes. He brought his tail in front of him and held it close as it throbbed in pain. “It’s okay, tail. He didn’t mean it.”

“I am so sorry, bro! It was the only thing I could grab,” Boris explained.

“…Okay,” Bendy mumbled, still clutching his tail and the branch. He didn’t look up at the wolf.

“I really didn’t mean it,” Boris kept going.

“It’s okay, bro. I know,” Bendy said. He started to steady himself and sit up on the branch.

“I just grabbed the only thing in front of me. You were falling, and you were gonna fall right into those alligators and I panicked and-”

“Boris,” Bendy cut him off and finally looked up. He moved a hand to the trunk of the tree and let go of his tail. “It’s fine. You saved me there, bro. Thanks.”
The wolf let out a sigh and shut his eye in relief. “Sorry.”

Bendy rolled his eyes with a smirk. A loud hiss and slight shake of the tree had him looking down at the gators again. They seemed to have multiplied. “Oh, c’mon,” he groaned to himself. “Now what?”

The boys sat there as the sky darkened. Bendy looked up to see clouds rolling over the sun. They seemed dark and heavy with rain. Within twenty minutes the first drops started to hit Bendy and Boris’ heads. Bendy glanced to the wolf to see a look of resignation. “Any ideas?” Bendy asked. The wolf glanced at him and then back down at the water lizards.

“Not really,” he said softly.

Bendy sighed. Then an idea struck him. “Hey, you still got that can o’ soup?”

Boris carefully brought his backpack around and dug through it. “I got two cans of chicken noodle, some bread, some honey, and a can of beans. Why?”

“Pass me the chicken,” Bendy said. Boris wobbled as he tried to bend down without dropping the bag or falling. “Just drop it, bro.” Boris did and Bendy caught them easily.

“What are you doing Bendy?” Boris asked.

“I’m hoping the smell of meat will distract these guys long enough to let us escape,” Bendy said.

“You really think that’ll work?” Boris asked as he dug through his bag.

“It’s better than just sitting here,” Bendy said. Boris didn’t say anything to that. He shifted around the bag more vigorously as his eyes widened and jaw tensed. “Is something the matter, bro?”

“Bendy...do you have the map in your bag?” Boris asked slowly, not looking at him.

A bad feeling started to turn Bendy’s stomach. “No. You had it last.” He narrowed his eyes at the quietly panicking wolf. “Why?”

“’Cause it’s not here!” Boris squeaked. “I can’t find it in my bag!”

“What!” Bendy roared. “What do you mean it’s not there? You lost it!”

“I don’t know!” Boris barked back, finally looking down to the demon.

“When did you last see it?” Bendy asked.

“Just after lunch,” Boris said.

“You didn’t drop it in the swamp?” Bendy asked.

“Yes, Bendy. I dropped it in the swamp,” Boris said sarcastically, his face deadpan. Boris’ frown deepened. “Of course not! I would’ve said something!”

“I mean, you didn’t pull it out at all since we left the city?” Bendy asked.

“No,” Boris pouted.

“How about after we left that lady’s shop?” Bendy narrowed his eyes in thought.
Boris blinked and raised a wet ear in question. “No,” he answered slowly.

“No,” he answered slowly.

“Boris, how likely is it that lady stole it?” Bendy glanced down at the cans in his hands and back up to the wolf.

Boris’ ears flew up in surprise. “Her? But she was so nice!”

“Exactly! Free my tail spike! She pickpocketed that map and sent us on a wild goose chase!” Bendy grit his teeth. He had seen the interest in her eyes, the greed. He should have known. Especially with that creepy energy around her place. She had practically been wearing a sign that said, ‘no good’ and Bendy had still been bamboozled!

Boris’ shoulders and ears dropped. “I’m sorry,” he said.

Bendy blinked out of his angry thoughts and back to the present. He looked up and raised a confused brow at Boris. “Sorry? Why are you sorry?”

“I was the one that wanted to listen to her.” Boris sighed and shook his head.

“Don’t worry about it.” Bendy waved it off.

Boris nodded and took a moment to breathe. “So, I guess we head back to the city.”


“Then, maybe she was telling the truth about the temple and it’s really around here somewhere,” Boris said.

Bendy snorted. “Well, whatever comes next will come. Right now, let’s get outta this tree.”

“Sounds good to me,” Boris said.

Bendy punctured the cans, and then tossed one in one direction and the other can in the opposite direction. As soon as they hit the water the motion under them shifted to the cans. Not all the gators left, but enough were gone that Bendy felt confident he could protect himself and Boris. “Okay, bro. You ready?”

“No,” Boris answered, looking down. “But I have ta go anyway.” Boris stood up carefully on the branch and looked ready to jump.

“Alright. Three…,” Bendy stood and looked down at the remaining reptiles, “Two…,” they hissed excitedly, “One!” the brothers jumped.

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Mugs pulled his legs up to his chest. The alley was cool in the shadow of the close-knit buildings. Mugs was curled up behind a dumpster. He clutched the sides of his head as the fight played over in his mind again and again. The memory of Cup’s shriek of pain echoed in his ears. Mugs shook, with a far away look in his eyes. He didn’t notice the tears running down his face. He curled into himself tighter.

He’d left Cuphead. He'd just ran. He had abandoned his brother. His mind went blank, and he ran. What kind of brother was he? What was she doing to him? Mugs shuddered.

What was he gonna do?

What could he do?
They hadn’t expected the magic she’d had. She was just too strong. With Cup, together could have taken her, but alone…

Mugs sniffed and brushed at the tears. “What do I do? Cup, what do I do? I can’t beat her alone. What do I do?” he mumbled to himself. He was no good at making decisions. Cup was much better at planning and then making things happen. Mugs couldn’t. He just couldn’t. He didn’t know.

If he did something wrong, Cup would be gone forever. Mugs didn’t even know how to change his brother back. If he beat her, would he change back? What if he didn’t? Would he have to do something special? Could he force her to change Cuphead back? What if she refused? What if there wasn’t a way to change him back? Mugs, alone, with the teacup that had once been his brother. Mugs choked on his panic. New tears pricked his eyes.

Alone.

He was completely alone.

No Cup to lead him. No plan. No obvious goal.

He had always had his brother to back him. They had been separated before, but Cup always came out on top. There was usually a plan, or an action to take. They would meet back up. Mugs would never worry, because his brother was strong. He knew Cup could handle himself. They would win and get whatever they needed to get.

This was different. Cuphead needed Mugs to save him.

But he didn’t know what to do!

He squeezed his eyes shut and whimpered. He lost himself to his fear and panic as his mind went in circles. He calmed down after an unknown amount of time.

His eyes ached, and his nose felt stuffed. He sniffed again and looked around. The sun had moved a bit. The sound of people walking, talking, and laughing wasn’t far. Car engines were just beyond that. Someone was playing a saxophone somewhere.

Mugman felt pathetic. If he had been alone from the start, he would have never gotten through the islands. He would have never left. Suddenly, an old irritation rose within him, one that he was used to and had held back for a long time. Now, it surfaced with new energy like it was fresh and new.

If I had been alone, I would have never gambled my soul away. I would never be in this situation! I would be at home with Elder Kettle! I would never have gone after the debtors, never hurt my friends, never hunted down people for that horrible monster!

Mugs gasped at the sudden flash of anger. He shook his head roughly. It had been a long time since he’d thought that. Mugman leaned his head back. It clinked against the brick wall gently. Mug took some deep, slow breaths and worked on calming himself down. He didn’t blame Cup. Not really. They had just been a couple of kids that got in over their heads. Mugman had been there, and he hadn’t stopped Cup. He’d wanted to, but he hadn’t. He was just as guilty as Cup. Besides, he loved Cup. He would have been sad without his brother. Mugs had decided to follow Cup, to help in all this…madness. They were in this mess together.

Mugs looked down at his gloved hands. He had fought just as hard as Cup. They carried the guilt together. Mugman clenched his fists. Cuphead needed him. Mugs had to think. He had to do something. Sitting here wasn’t saving his brother.
But what could he do?

His throat closed with fear. He still didn’t know. He couldn’t do this alone. Who could he go to for help?

He gazed at his closed hands, trying to think of anyone that would help. Anyone that they knew. They’d never came this far south before. He didn’t know anyone here…except the frog brothers! Mugs shot up. He swayed with how quickly he stood. His vision swam for a second. Mugs quickly shook it off and raced to the river. It took him longer than he wanted. He had run a long way. He didn’t even know where he was. He had to stop and ask a couple to point him the right direction.

He was gasping for breath and covered in sweat by the time he saw the water flowing toward the ocean. He looked up river then down. Which way? He chewed on his lip. Up or down? He looked back and forth. The agony of indecision clawed at his mind. He shut his eyes and moved. He hoped he choose right. He raced on and then came to statues and buildings that seemed familiar. His hope rose as the place seemed more and more recognizable. He didn’t hold back his smile when he spotted the boat casino and restaurant. He raced through the doors without pausing. He nearly crashed into a table and then nearly into a fly waiter.

“Sorry! Excuse me! Sorry!” Mugs called as he spun and skidded around. Still another waiter dropped a metal platter that rung with a loud crash.

“Hey, hey, hey! What’s all this noise?” Mugs looked up to see the Ribby and Croaks walk into the dining room. They scowled when they spotted Mugs.

“Ribby! Croaks! I need your help!” Mugs panted and hurried over to them. Croaks straightened to his full height and crossed his arms. Ribby narrowed his eyes and sat back on his haunches.

“What’s this about?” Croaks demanded. The two looked at Mugs suspiciously.

“It’s Cup! I need help! We have to save Cuphead!” Mugs pleaded.

The frogs bug-eyes widened in surprise.

“That hothead is in trouble?” Ribby asked.

“Yes! The Voodoo Queen did something to him! She’s too strong! I need your help,” Mugs explained as quickly as he could.

The frogs shared a baffled look. Silence fell over them as Mugs fidgeted in front of the frogs.

“Well, I’ll be,” Ribby said. “The Voodoo Queen.”

“I never thought we’d live to see the day,” Croaks mumbled in amazement.

“He’s really gotten himself in a bind. That porcelain schmuck bit off more than he can chew,” Ribby added.

Mugs felt his nerves fray. “Yes! What should we do?”

The frogs focused on him again. The shock and awe turned to smirks.

“We?” Croaks asked. “What we?”

“We ain’t gonna do anything! That half empty cup had it comin’ to him!” Ribby croaked with glee.
“Yeah, good riddance,” Croaks added.

Mugs jaw dropped. “Y-You aren’t gonna help?”

“No!” the two frogs answered.

“B-b-but! You have to! You, uh-,” Mugs stammered.

The frogs laughed. “We don’t gotta do a thing you say!”

“We should celebrate! This is a great day,” Ribby said.

“What!” Mugs gasped. “But he’s my brother!”

“Look,” Croak said. “You two ruined our lives. We have to be here because the Devil said so. We never go home. We don’t keep even keep half the money we make. We don’t get to make our own choices anymore.”

“We even had to house the schmucks that beat us!” Ribby glared at him.

Mugs scowled, his shock turned to frustration. “If you guys hadn’t lost your souls to the Devil in the first place, you wouldn’t have to do any of this! It’s your fault you’re here, not mine or Cups. Get over it! Right now my brother is in trouble! I can’t do this alone. You two are the only ones I can turn to, so you have to help me.”

The frogs shared a smirk.

Before Mugs knew it, he found his keister on the cobble street outside the boat casino. They had tossed him out. Just like that. They had been laughing! Mugs had half a mind to go back in and remind the slimy amphibians just how strong he was.

But…

That would waste time, wouldn’t it? Beating up the frogs wouldn’t help Cup. Mugs sighed and stood up. He brushed off his bruised bum and slowly walked back into the city.

It looked like he was on his own. Mugs gulped. What was he gonna do?

Chapter End Notes

Hey, you guys! This is Mercowe. Soooooooo, Tap was all like, "You should post something in the author's note. You haven't said anything in a while." I'm not really as entertaining as Tap, so this takes me a little out of my comfort zone. Haha, but after our discussion, I remembered something that made me laugh while I was editing this chapter. Near the end when our poor, cute Mugs is asking for help from Croaks and Ribby, Ribby's name made a mysterious transformation and suddenly turned into...RIPPY! Hahaha! It had me laughing for a minute when I imagined what that would look like. Afterwards, I tried to look it up and I found a cartoon that was exactly what I was imagining! Here it is, I hope you like it.

https://drive.google.com/open?id=18LnsZEhaSMLqpVS9mP2-kdqDR4CWSef1
(By the way...Now Tap regrets suggesting that I post in the author's note. Hehehe. :D I love teasing her!)

Mercowe nooo! I trusted you! XD You loveable dork. I guess I was asking for it.
See you all next week!
Mercowe and TAP out!
One Step Forward and No Steps Back

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

The Bbros go on an adventure. Felix the Cat made this look easy!

Chapter Notes

Hello, sorry I'm late.
This week I had a funeral, a wedding, and I had to figure out my classes for the semester. In other words, it's been busy and a roller coaster of emotions. *Sigh*
And I woke up this morning missing something very important to me. T-T So I'm hunting for that...and moping about it too.
Mercowe has been a great help in motivating me to get this done. I hope life calms down, so I can get back on schedule. Thanks for sticking with it guys and being so patient. You are awesome and I am so lucky to have such amazing readers. I made this chapter a little longer for you. Now, I gotta go find a thing.

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Enjoy! I'll try to post on Friday. Though I don't know if it'll be possible. Have a good week.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy gasped and pulled himself out of the water and onto dry land. He collapsed on the moss, panting for sweet oxygen. Okay, dry-ish land. Boris was gasping right next to him.

“That’s it!” Bendy declared to the raining sky. “I hate the swamp!”

He looked over to his brother. His pant leg was torn, his hat gone. There was a small rip in his backpack and cuts from branches along his face and arms. He was dripping wet and looked exhausted.

“We’ll never get outta here at this rate,” Bendy groaned. “We have to come up with something.”

“We could send out a distress signal,” Boris said.

“First off, there isn’t anyone around for that. With our luck, it’d just bring more of those damn, star fallen gators. Second, signal with what? A flag through these trees? A fire? Everything is too wet to burn!” Bendy threw his arms up in frustration. “If I ever see that card lady again, I’m gonna send her flying,” Bendy growled.
Boris groaned, but didn’t comment. The boys stayed there for a moment, letting the rain fall on them.

When they found the energy to move again, the two headed west, but were stopped by the water. They had to turn south and sometimes back track. It was slow going, and even though they avoided the water, they would slip and sink in mud and moss. They would jump at the rustle of brush and splashes in the swamp. Neither wanted to think about the creatures all around them.

It was hours later, and with the area was darkening with the end of the day, Bendy felt dismay sink in. He didn’t want to stay in the swamp at night.

“Bendy. I don’t think we should be walking around in the dark,” Boris said quietly. Bendy sighed. He knew Boris was right. He had hoped they could have found something, a boat, a person, a cabin, anything, but there was only swamp and rain.

“Yeah,” Bendy agreed. “Guess we’ll have to set up around here.” Boris nodded and grabbed his pack straps. “Not down here.” Bendy stopped him. “With the rain and all the wildlife, it’d be safer to stay in a tree. We won’t wake up neck deep in water and gators.”

Bendy looked at Boris for a moment before nodding again. “Which tree?” He sounded so tired that it pulled at Bendy’s heart. The wolf hadn’t complained once as they had spent hours in the wet wilderness.

Bendy looked away and tried to find a tree that would hold them, but wasn’t so tall that it would be hit by lightning if any showed up. It took a little searching, but eventually Bendy found a tree that seemed to work. He lifted Boris up and then Boris pulled him up. Once they were up, they started to tie their backs to the thick branches. The area was getting darker. Soon, the night would be on them. Bendy glanced up at the rain. It didn’t seem it would be stopping any time soon.

“Hey, Bendy, what’s that?” Boris asked. Bendy turned to see Boris pointing at something on the ground. He narrowed his eyes to see if he could spot what Boris was talking about.

“What?”

“There. By the rock that has a tree growing on it,” Boris said still pointing. Bendy scanned the ground. He finally located the rock Boris was talking about.

“Yeah. What about it?” Bendy asked, glancing at the wolf.

“Doesn’t it look a little too square to be a regular rock?” Boris asked.

“Uh?” Bendy blinked and looked at the stone again.

“Let’s take a closer look before it gets any darker,” Boris said, pulling his bag back on before shimmying down.

“Huh? Wait! Boris! It’s already too dark, don’t just-,” Bendy argued, but the wolf jumped to the soft, muddy ground and was quickly making his way toward the rock he had pointed out. Bendy groaned and rolled his eyes. “Stars. We’ll just have to climb this cussing tree again,” he grumbled to himself as he pulled his pack on too and follow his brother.

Bendy splashed to the rock with an annoyed frown. The undergrowth was too tall for him to see Boris. He grumbled complaints to himself, but was cut short by Boris.

“Bendy! Get over here!” The urgency in Boris’ voice had Bendy pick up his pace. When Bendy got through the last of the branches, he found Boris kneeling in front of a pile of rocks. He was scooping
and brushing mud off a section of the stones.

“Boris?” Bendy asked.

“Bendy look!” Boris glanced over his shoulder. Bendy looked around Boris to see that the pile of rocks was set up in a square shape. There was a sunken seam around the edge, like it could move or open.

“What in the world?” Bendy knelt next to Boris.

“And look at this!” Boris had uncovered an odd symbol in the mud. “What is it?” Boris tried to wipe the mud off his gloves to no avail.

“I don’t know,” Bendy admitted. He got closer, trying to see it more clearly. It looked like a lizard of some kind and skeletons. “But it probably means trouble.”

“Think this is what Lady Facilier was talking about?” Boris asked. Bendy shrugged. “How do we open it?”

Bendy stared to poke around for a knob, lever, or any indication on how the passage worked. There wasn’t anything on the stone face besides the symbol. He tried to pull it and push it with no indication of it giving. “I think I’ll have to break it,” Bendy commented.

“But it looks like it was opened before,” Boris said pointing to the indent.

Bendy shrugged. “Maybe it was from the inside? There could be other doorways.”

Boris furrowed his brow and rested his hand on the symbol. Nothing happened.

“C’mon, bro. I’m gonna force it,” Bendy said.

Boris sighed. “Alright.” He pushed against the symbol to get up when there was a hissing sound. The boys froze for a half second before the block of stone suddenly fell and Boris fell with it. “Ah!”

“Boris!” Bendy scrambled to the edge and leaned down to peer inside. “Boris! Are you okay?” There was a heavy crash of stone on stone. “Boris, answer me!” Bendy shrieked as the worry turned to panic. He strained his ears against the sound of the pattering rain and peered into the dark, hoping for any sign of the young wolf.

The sound of coughing came up to him. “I’m alright! I bruised my tail, but that’s it.” Boris’ voice echoed up to him. Bendy let out a sigh of relief.

“Can you see anything?” Bendy asked. Slowly the demon’s eyes were adjusting to the black curtain before him.

“ Barely. It’s really dark,” Boris answered.

“What do ya see Boris?” Bendy asked anxiously. The shapes of carved stones slowly came to Bendy’s eyes, but he couldn’t make out the ground or size of the space where Boris had fallen.

There was a splash. “Ugh. It’s wet down here. You look pretty far away Bendy. Maybe twenty feet up?” Boris’ voice echoed.

“Think I could jump it?” Bendy asked.

“Please don’t. How am I gonna get out if you jump down?” Boris asked.
Bendy bit his lip in frustration. He had a good point, but Bendy didn’t want to leave Boris down there to explore by himself.

“I’ll get us a way back up and then climb down to ya. You just wait there, bro,” Bendy said. He didn’t wait for Boris’ answer. Bendy found two thick vines that could hold both him and Boris. He quickly knotted them together, and when they were about long enough to satisfy him, he went back to the passageway. “I got us some vines. I think they’ll do. I’m tossing them down,” he warned. Boris gave him the go ahead and the demon threw the vines. There was a small splash and then silence. “Are they long enough?”

“Yeah! And they can hold me,” Boris said. Bendy didn’t waste anymore time and quickly climbed down the makeshift rope. His feet landed with a splash in water that came up a bit past his ankles. He scowled as he felt the water enter his boots and seep into his already soaked socks.

Bendy tried to look around the room. He could only see a slightly curved wall with the slab that had fallen with Boris behind them and the mass of swallow water before them. “Can you see anything, bro?”

“No and I walked along the wall while you were getting those.” Boris pointed to the vines. “I couldn’t find a corner though. This is a really big room.”

Bendy hummed and started forward slowly. “Careful Bendy,” Boris said behind him. Bendy stepped cautiously into the dark. The ground felt mostly flat. It was probably the same stuff the walls were made of. He heard Boris splashing up behind him. The only sounds were their feet and the patter of the rain through the hole. Bendy nearly picked up his pace until he almost tripped on a small ledge. Maybe one of the slabs was tilted. He stepped up and felt the ledge sink back down. Alarm raced through Bendy. All of the booby traps that Felix faced in his novels came to mind.

Boris bumped into him. “Bendy? Is something wrong?” Bendy stepped back and pulled Boris with him. It was too dark to make anything out now.

“I think I just triggered something,” Bendy said nervously. All his senses strained to pick up on anything.

“Wha-” Suddenly there was a blinding flash. With a great fwoosh the room was lit up. The boys had to shut their eyes at the sudden change. Bendy tensed, ready for an attack or trap. He blinked his eyes, willing them to adjust faster. When they did, he gasped.

The room was lit by huge basins of fire attached to the walls. The carvings along the sides of the wall glowed the same orange/yellow color as the flames, connecting the basins in a line of ancient rune symbols.

“Woah,” Boris gasped. Bendy agreed, it was amazing. The room was huge, twenty feet high and about twice that in length. The room seemed to curve so the boys could see the back wall. The water grew shallower in the center of the room. Long swathes of vines, moss, and other plants hung from the ceiling and clung to the wall. There were rectangular statues that were scattered about the room, some broken, others whole. They towered eight feet high and were also covered in runes and carving like the rest of the room.

“Do you think we found the right place Bendy?” Boris asked in an awed whisper. Bendy carefully approached one of the rectangles. The carvings were like the writings on the page they had. He was even able to make out a symbol here and there. Not enough to read it, but enough to feel a bubble of excitement rise in his chest.
“I think so, bro. Look! These symbols are like the journal page,” Bendy said. Boris came close and looked at the marks.

“You’re right!” Boris perked up. His tail started to wag. “We found it! We found the place Bendy!”

“But we haven’t found the doll yet,” Bendy said stepping back from the shape. “C’mon bro, and be careful where you step. There could be traps.” Boris stuck close to Bendy’s back after that. The energy around him was still full of excitement. Bendy smiled at little, happy that his brother’s spirits were lifted again.

Bendy kept a close eye on the walls, floor, ceiling, and the odd statue pillar things. He didn’t see any trip wires or obvious slabs that indicated a trap. The boys slowly reach the middle of the room. There was barely any water there.

"Bendy." Boris sounded really nervous. "Is that what I think it is?" Bendy glanced at wolf and followed his pointing finger. In the shallow water was a grinning skull.

Bendy gulped. "Y-yeah bro. That's a skull," Boris whimpered. Bendy looked around again. There were shapes covered in moss and plant slime and white bits scattered around. Bones. Oh. A grand looking door stood against the wall. A few stairs lead up to it and four of the statue pillar things lined either side up the stairs. Bits of white bones and parts of skulls littered them. Animal and...other. Two fire basins sat above and to the side of the door. Beautiful patterns and pictures lined the frame of the door, partially covered in moss and plant life. There were creatures with multiple heads, giant cyclopes, dragons, angels, and swirls that looked like whirlpools. Battles and dancing. It was an odd mix of beauty and violence. Time wore away half the old beauty. There were indents that might have once held jewels in several dragons' eyes and angels' halos. The colored magical flames gave it another worldly feel.

“I bet this is it.” Boris said. Bendy narrowed his eyes at the magnificent door.

“Hold the phone Boris. Does anything strike you as odd here?” Bendy asked. Boris turned around to look at the demon. He dropped an ear and raised a brow in confusion.

“You mean besides the bones?” Boris asked. He looked back at the door and then at Bendy again. Bendy shifted a little looking at the door, then the floor.

“Well, just that it seems a bit off,” he stated. Now that he thought about it, he kept comparing the room to one of Felix’s adventures. There were also supposed to be traps, or beasts, or enemies around. Now that he was trying to voice his thoughts, they sounded childish and silly.

Boris tilted his head. “Yeah, but how?”

Bendy felt his face heat up. “Well, it’s just that I read something like this in a book,” he mumbled.

“What?” Boris knit his brows together. “Are you okay Bendy?”

Bendy took a deep breath. “IreaditinaFelixadventuresbookonce,” he said in a rush.

Boris blinked and took a moment to absorb what Bendy said. Then he smirked. “Why ya blushin’ bro?”

Bendy felt the heat in his cheeks get worse. “No reason! Nevermind! Let’s just go!” Bendy started marching toward the ornate door. Boris burst into giggles.

“No! Wait! Bendy! I’m sorry! Don’t walk away,” Boris called after him. Bendy kept going until
Boris caught his wrist. “C’mon bro. Don’t be like that.”

Bendy huffed.

“Share! Share Bendy!” Boris pleaded. “I won’t laugh! Felix’s books are great. If there’s something in them that can help us, then share.”

Bendy glanced over his shoulder to a completely serious Boris. Boris nodded in support. Bendy sighed.

“What do you mean Bendy?” Boris asked again.

“Well, it’s just that the door to the treasure is usually on the opposite side of the room from the entrance. There are these bones, but there aren’t any holes in the walls or ceilings. No trip wires. No hinges to show a trap door. So what killed them? And why is it so showy? Weren’t they trying to hide it?” Bendy said. Boris tilted his head.

“You think it’s a fake?”

“Or a really good trap?” Bendy made an aggravated sound. “Or maybe I’m overthinking.” Bendy rubbed the back of his head. Boris turned and walked away. “Boris?”

“One minute,” Boris said. Bendy blinked and watched the wolf walk around the shallow water, looking down to the ground. He grabbed handfuls of moss and a large stick from the water. He rolled the moss into a big ball. When he stepped up to Bendy again he had a wad of moss the size of a softball. He handed it to Bendy. Boris then turned to the door and tossed the stick at it. The stick knocked on the door and bounced off it. It clattered down the stairs to a stop. Bendy raised a brow.

“Uh, what are you doing?” Bendy asked.

“If there’s a trap, maybe we can trigger it,” Boris explained with a shrug.

Bendy hummed and looked down at the ball of moss. He tossed it up a little and then looked to the door. He brought his arm back and tossed the ball. It landed on the middle stair with a splat. The statues glowed red and four blades swung by the space from each block. A wall of blades slipped past each other and then disappeared. Boris gasped. Even the stick was sliced to bits.

Bendy whistled. “Well, I guess that’s our trap,” Bendy said and put his hands on his waist. Boris looked between Bendy and the stairs.


“Maybe we can get something to set it off and slip by?” Bendy asked.

Boris looked around. “I don’t know.” He sounded nervous. “Hey, Bendy, if those things are swinging blades, then does that mean all of them are?”

Bendy blinked and looked around at all the rectangle statues that scattered around the room. Oh. “None of them have gone off except the stairs.” He sounded just as nervous as Boris. “Maybe we should get out of here,” Bendy suggested.

“Good idea.” Boris turned to leave and the rectangle beside him lit up. The magical blades appeared from thin air, attached to the pillar block.

“Boris look out!” Bendy grabbed the back of his shirt and yanked him away. The blades swung right
in front of Boris' nose causing him to yelp. The boys fell back on top of each other with a splash. Bendy was crashed under the wolf.

“Th-that was close,” Boris mumbled resting a hand over his muzzle.

“Yeah. You okay?” Bendy asked breathless.

"I-I'm o-okay." Boris whimpered.

"Good.Can you get off me?” Bendy asked.

“Sorry,” Boris said. He rolled off the demon and sat in the water in a daze. “I almost died.” He gulped patting his nose again to make sure it was still there.

“Yep. We keep doing that.” Bendy sighed. He didn’t move immediately.

“Why did it go off?” Boris asked, still sounding dazed.

Bendy grabbed a handful of slimy plants growing on the floor. He sat up and tossed it at the same block in front of them. The block glowed and slashed it. He did the same in the opposite direction. Nothing happened. Boris blinked. “Uh?” Bendy tossed plant matter in a couple other directions to test it.

“It was a trap. They won’t let us go back. We can only go forward,” Bendy said. "It's herding us like cattle."

“Is there any way to turn them off?” Boris asked.

Bendy shrugged and rested his arm on his knee. “If it was a normal trap maybe. I don’t know magic. They reset. I don’t know where the power for these things comes from, how they are triggered, or how to stop them safely.” Boris sighed and dropped his head.

The boys sat in silence.

“It’s always one step forward and three back, uh Boris?” Bendy said.

“Yeah,” Boris agreed flatly.

“If we can’t go back, we might as well go forward.” Bendy stood up and offered a hand to Boris.

“So, through the fancy death doors?” Boris asked. Bendy looked at the doors with narrowed eyes.

“Through the fancy death doors,” Bendy agreed unenthusiastically. The boys walk up to the stairs and stopped. “Any ideas?”

“I thought you had a plan,” Boris admitted.

They stood for a moment in silence. “We could try and break them,” Bendy suggested.

“With what?”

“The floor stabs?” Bendy bent down and tried to get his fingers between the gapes in the stone. After some work Bendy was able to lift the stone slab and pushed it toward the statues, hoping to topple one. He felt the slab collide with the pillar and a moment later the it shook, and he heard a scraping sound echo through the room. For a second Bendy thought it was working.
“Bendy get back!” Boris shouted. Bendy jumped back from the slab, just as a blade sliced the rock and it crumbled to rubble. “Are you okay?” Boris asked.

“Yeah. Thanks.” Bendy let out a shaky breath.

“What if we tossed something for them to slice and then went while they reset?” Boris asked.

“They’re a wall of blades! And what if they just swing back, or go completely around?” Bendy said. “I don’t want to test it.”

Boris grumbled. “Then what? Are we supposed to go over them?”

“Hey! That’s an idea!” Bendy said.

“What?”

Bendy pointed to the vines growing out of the ceiling. “We can climb over on those.”

“But they’re too small. I don’t think there are enough to hold us up,” Boris said, lightly tugging on a thin vine that had reached the ground.

Bendy frowned. “Well, I’m gonna try.” Bendy lifted his head in defiance.

Long story, short. He fell. And almost lost a few inches to the red blades. They tried Boris’ idea too and almost ran right into the blades that did swing back, leaving no room for them to slip by. They tried throwing another slab, but that ended in rubble. They tried everything they could think of. It was a miracle they didn’t get themselves killed or hurt (Besides a few bruises. No big deal.) and after a few hours, they had made no progress.

Finally, as a last-ditch effort, Bendy suggested using his Talent.

“Didn’t Dr. Oddswell tell you not to?” Boris said. He was sitting in the water, too tired to care about being wet.

“It’s either that or stay here until we run out of food,” Bendy said flatly. Boris made a noise in the back of his throat. The two were exhausted and a bit hungry, but unwilling to eat in the wet room, surrounded by killer traps. Bendy reached for the shadows. They withered and spun around the room, dancing opposite the magic fire. The shadows were energetic and twitchy, almost nervous. There was a kind of aversion to the fire that Bendy had never felt before. Weird.

Bendy focused on the doors and willed the shadows to reach out and open them. They splashed water and pulled down vines.


Bendy grit his teeth and tried again. He lifted his hand and focused on the door. The shadows danced around the floor and ceiling, unwilling to approach the basins on the walls and mounted above the door. “It’s weird,” Bendy muttered. “It’s like they don’t want to go near the fire.”

Boris tilted his head. “Isn’t that normal?”

“No,” Bendy answered. He pushed harder, feeling the exhaustion worsen as his Talent began to drain him. Bendy’s frown deepened. It shouldn’t be so hard to do this! The shadows tentatively reached out to the door. The stone statues glowed red. Bendy wasn’t too worried. He pushed more. The shadows got halfway up when the blades released and the flames in the basin flew up to brush
the ceiling.

Bendy shrieked and pulled back. “Bendy!” Boris called out. Bendy felt the burns from the fire. Then he felt the pain of the blades biting into him. “What’s wrong!” Boris demanded over him. When had he fallen? Boris was holding him up. The shadows retreated, withering in pain. Bendy pulled back. It had felt like it was him that was hit, not the shadows. What is going on here? That had never happened before. Bendy looked down at himself, expecting cuts and burns, but there was nothing. He looked fine.

“Bendy!” Boris’ voice broke with panic and worry.

“I-I’m okay?” Bendy mumbled. “H…how the cuss?”


“I, uh, I felt it. I felt the fire and the blades,” Bendy said, carefully pulling away from Boris. “Ow,” he muttered.

“I-it’s not the ink?” Boris asked nervously.

“No. I never felt pain from my Talent.” Bendy knit his brows together in confusion.

“I guess magic is different,” Boris said, looking at the door.

“Yeah,” Bendy agreed slowly. “But now we are back to the drawing board.”

Boris hummed. “But you are okay?”

“Yeah. Whatever that was, it’s disappearing. I just feel sore and tired now,” Bendy huffed.

“I’m glad you’re okay,” Boris said. Bendy snorted.

“Neither of us are gonna be okay if we don’t get outta here,” Bendy grumbled.

Boris shifted uncomfortably. “Yeah.”

“I’m out of ideas,” Bendy admitted with a scowl.

“Me too.” Boris’ ears fell.

“Damn this star fallen-.” The door suddenly opened, cutting Bendy’s curse off. A little woman with a white cloth wrapped around her head leaned out. Simple hoop earrings glinted in the fire light as she looked around the room. She must have been in her forties with crows feet starting to line her dark eyes. She pursed her full lips, leaned around the door to look around the entire room. A thick metal necklace followed the curve of her neck. The boys were so shocked by the woman’s appearance that they froze.

“Oh no. These ain’t it neither. Whelp, sorry ta disturb ya boys,” the woman said in a cheery voice. She started to close the door.

Bendy and Boris were on their feet instantly.

“Wait!” they shouted.

“Please don’t go!” Boris raised his hands in a stopping motion.
“We need help!” Bendy added.

The woman paused. “Now, why you boys need little old me?”

“The door is booby-trapped. We can’t get up there,” Boris said. “Please ma’am. We’re trapped down here.”

The woman sputtered with laughter. “You ain’t trapped chil’ern.”

The boys’ eyes widened in bafflement.

“Um…yeah, we are,” Bendy argued uncertainly. She opened the door wider and stepped out. She was dressed in white, the dress wrapped around her frame loosely. She was a bit plump in form and exactly round.

“No, no.” She lifted her hand and a bright, golden light encased it. She waved it up and the two basins above her were snuffed out by the light. The red carvings stopped glowing. “Ya just gotta do is put out the fire.” She lowered her hand and stepped down the stairs.

The brothers panicked. “No! Wait!” Boris waved his arms. Bendy cringed. Any moment those blades would show up!

And then they didn’t.

The brothers blinked. Bendy’s jaw dropped.

“Ho-wha-but-I don’t,” Bendy stammered. He couldn’t understand. She made it look so easy. This weird woman was walking down the stairs like it was no big deal. How! He shook his head. The world continued to astound him when he least expected it.

“Pick your jaws off the ground. I didn’t do nothing dat great,” she chuckled at them. “Now. What are two whippersnappers like you doin’ in a space like this?”

“We could ask you the same thing,” Bendy said defensively. He was done with odd strangers that did weird magic. Or any magic.

She turned her dark eyes on him and raised a brow. She then chuckled like his suspicion was cute. “Oh boy! I forgot to introduce myself! Shame on me. I’m gettin’ forgetful in my old age.”

Boris tilted his head. “You don’t look that old ma’am.”

She really laughed at that. “Now, ain’t you sweet! I’m Mama Odie, the Voodoo Queen of the bayou.”

“A voodoo queen!” Bendy snapped. “So, are you like that broad we met in the city? You gonna do some weird card junk too?”

Odie seemed to be taken aback. Her warm smile dropped, and her eyes narrowed a little. Bendy felt Boris rest a hand on his shoulder. “The city? You talkin’ about that Facilier woman by chance?”

Bendy’s lip twitched into a sneer. “Yeah. That’s right.”

Odie scuffed. “Dat woman is one of the reasons I moved out here. Don’t wanna fight over somethin’ as silly as territory. I was done dealin’ with people anyway.” She crossed her arms and huffed. Bendy hadn’t expected that reaction. He gave Boris a confused glance. Boris shrugged in return.
“Um, you know her?” Boris asked tentatively.

Odie turned her annoyed eyes on him. “Know her? I can't stands her!” She shook her head. “Dat woman is gonna get 'erself in trouble! She gonna pull that kid down 'ith her too!”

“So, you don’t like her?” Boris asked.

“Do I sound like I would?” she scoffed.

“And you’re not gonna curse us or anything?” Bendy asked.

“Now, why would I do somethin’ like dat?” Odie chuckled. “You chil’ern are lookin’ for a way outta here?”

“Wait! Why are you here?” Bendy lifted a hand to stop Boris.

“I was pickin’ some swamp ‘shroom for my jambalaya. They like the damp, dark corners, ya know? Den I slipped and found my little old self in this long old hall. Fell quite a ways too! Been lookin’ for a way out myself even! Though, the longer I’m here the more interestin’ this place becomes. I had no idea dere was all dese caves down here!” she explained excitedly.

Bendy and Boris shared a look. Bendy sighed. She knew magic and could help them. He rolled his eyes. Fine. Boris swallowed. “Will you help us?”

“Why sure chil’. What kinda Mama would I be leavin’ chil’ern in the damp dark?” She smiled warmly. “This old woman will do the best she can to help y’all out.” She rolled up her sleeves. Bendy frowned. He didn’t want to do this. He didn’t trust her after what happened.

“Thanks.” Boris sighed in relief. “I’m Boris and this is my brother Bendy.” Bendy nodded.

“Why it’s a pleasure.” Mama Odie grinned. “We best get goin’ den. It’s only gettin’ later.” She turned on her heel and walked back up the stairs.

The boys…hesitantly followed her up the stairs. They both eyed the blocks like they were sleeping predators. She was already gone through the door when she called back. “C’mon now! I’ll die of old age if y’all keep walkin’ that slow.” Bendy really hoped he wouldn’t regret this.

Chapter End Notes

Hey, this is Mercowe again. Haha! It's been a really crazy week for both me and Tap. Oh, boy. Oh, boy, oh boy, oh boy. The chapter would have been posted by Friday, but unfortunately, Tap's computer took it upon itself to decide that it needed an update...and that it didn't need anything that was currently up. So, she lost three pages of writing, and was back to square one. In fact, I think that this week was sorta weird. Bad things kept on happening...(BTW, the thing she lost was her engagement ring, so if any of you happen to have supernatural item finding abilities a tip would be greatly appreciated.)

Anyways, this is a great chapter. Personally I especially loved the ending. Have fun everyone!
Also, just for fun. This is my favorite typo of the week.

"Bendy gulped. "Y-yeah bro. That's a skull," Boris whimpered. Bendy looked around again. There were shapes covered in moss and plant slim ..."

My first thoughts after reading that? *In a radio ad announcer's voice* "Try it now! Plant slim, the watery, dirt mixed formula made right for all your dieting needs!"

"Plant slim, it slims you p(l)ants! Just 99 cents a bottle. Order now!"

Have a good week! Mercowe and Tap are out!
Greeting Doors

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Bendy, Boris, and Mama Odie have an adventure. This wasn't how Bendy imagined things going.

Chapter Notes

Hello lovelies.
Sorry it's so late, but at least it's the right day...right? -_-u
Anyway, thanks to all of you that were concerned about my ring. That was really sweet and Castiel's suggests were awesome. Thank you. ^^ I still haven't found it and I told my fiance. He ordered a new one.
Apparently, my ring wasn't really expense, but it was so unique and creative that I love it. It's blue flower petals and silver flecks, held in resin (plastic) and it's glorious...or was. *pout* So, yeah. My fiance is smart. I'm great at losing stuff, so I'll probably need a replacement every...six months or so. *sigh* I literally have a flower as an engagement ring.

Enough of that. Some of you have been having a rough week. :/ I'm sorry to hear that. I send you my ghost hugs, even if you can't feel them you have them. This little ghost hopes your weekend is better.

Enjoy the chapter! ^^ (and Mercowe and Deeked. If you two can't get along I will put you on opposite sides of the comment section. =3= I'm watching you.) Now, I'm gonna go to bed. zzz.

Bendy and Boris had been wandering the halls with the bayou queen for about half an hour. Bendy was certain- absolutely certain- that she was nuts. It only took him ten minutes to reach this conclusion. She would nibble on different plants randomly, flit about the hall, up, down, side to side. He had stopped trying to keep track of her since he was only getting a headache. They would stop at every door, and she would sniff it and tap in a couple times. She would whisper to it too. Not some sort of spell, just greetings and asking permission to enter it. Bendy was waiting for a swinging blade or a collapsing wall to finally take her out. She was like a trapped bird, fluttering this way and that. It was only a matter of time before she hit something.

“So, Mrs. Odie,” Boris said.

“Mama Odie. I don’t need dem stiff titles. I think of others as family.” She waved a hand over her shoulder.

“Mama Odie,” Boris corrected himself. “How long have you been down here?”
Bendy sighed. He wasn’t really up for small talk. The hall didn’t seem to have any end. It would curve and bend left and right, stairs down, stairs up, it would widen and narrow and branch off. Honestly, he had gotten lost around the same time he’d figured that Odie had a few screws loose.

“Oh, ya know. Prolly a couple days,” she said cheerfully. The boys stared at the back of her head with wide eyes. “It’s hard to say without any sunlight. ‘Et dis place is drafty, not stuffy. Dey need some windows down here!” she continued on a bit about how silly the people that built this place were to not put in windows.

Bendy and Boris shared a worried look. Boris’ ears were down. “How long have we been here?” he asked. Bendy shrugged.

“Overnight, I think. It’s probably morning or midday,” Bendy said. Boris took a deep breath and nodded. “We should stop for a break and food soon. We didn’t eat in the flooded room,” Bendy said.

“Okay.”

As they continued on, the tunnels became more crumbling with each turn.

“It’s pretty quiet for a place full of booby traps,” Bendy said.

Boris perked up and looked around. “Gee, you’re right Bendy! Why haven’t-,”

Suddenly a loud crash had all three turn to look behind them. A cloud of dust obscured the last corner the group had turned from far down the tunnel.

“Maybe the tunnel just collapsed,” Bendy suggested weakly. The three travelers held their breath as they waited for the dust to slowly drift down. There was an odd scraping sound. Bendy couldn’t figure what it was, but it was coming from the dust. Suddenly a huge, scaly head shot forward from the screen of dirt.

“Stars! RUN!” Bendy cried and was already dragging Boris behind him. The snake head was so large it took up most of the tunnel. None of them could see anything beyond the head except scales that scraped and scratched at the walls. Stones were knocked off walls and ceilings, bones cracked as the great serpent passed over them.

“Cuss! Cuss! Cuss! Cuss!” Bendy cursed as the boys ran for their lives.

Odie somehow kept up with them, she was just a step ahead of them. “I’d tell ya to not use such foul language, but it’s good to know you’re still there, sonny!” she called over her shoulder. She lifted her hand, the bright golden light she had used before reappearing in her palm.

“Swell to know you care about my manners, you crazy old bat! By the way, there’s a giant cussing snake chasing us!” Bendy hissed.

Mama Odie clicked her tongue in disapproval. “Dat ain’t no reason to be rude chil’.”

Before Bendy could shriek what he thought rude really looked like, Boris spoke up. “What is a snake this big doing down here?”

“Dat’s what we’re gonna find out!” Odie cackled. “Dis way!” She suddenly took a sharp turn left, the boys and the snake right behind her. Bendy really slowed at the sight of the wall before them. A strong, callused hand wrapped around his wrist and compelled him forward. Boris barked in surprise. Bendy tensed for impact. At the last instant, Odie dove right. There was another tunnel before them. The snake, jaw wide and believing they were cornered, slammed into the wall full force. It collapsed
stunned for a moment.

The three pulled themselves off the damp, mossy ground to look at the creature. They panted and held bruised limbs as they stared wide-eyed. The scraping sounds continued as the snake withered in pain at the impact. A hiss so loud it caused ripples in the puddles escaped its terrible jaws.


The boys and woman hurried down the tunnel as the snake recovered. She brought them to a large door.

As she did her usual, odd door greeting, Bendy snapped. "What the hell are you doing talking to a cussing door! We're being chased!"

"Hush boy! I'm disarmin' de traps! Unless ya wanna get killed!" Odie barked at him and focus on the door again. The boys shared a baffled look.

Bendy peeked back to see the snake had made the turn and was picking up speed toward them.

“Can we go!” he demanded, the urgency in his voice making Boris whimper. Mama Odie pushed the door open and ushered the boys in quickly. As soon as they were through the threshold, fire basins bloomed with light.

“Not again!” Bendy cried.

“No worries. Dey’re mine,” Odie said pushing the boys further into the room. It was huge, at least three stories tall and as wide as the room Bendy and Boris had entered the temple from. “Dis is the room I slipped inta when I first got ‘ere,” she explained in her usual cheerful tone. She was running a wide circle around the room, her glowing hand held in front of her and her footsteps as light as a bird’s. Did nothing faze this lady? Bendy did notice the fires in the basins were the same gold as her palm. There weren’t any pillar statues here either, thankfully. His relief was short lived as the huge serpent forced its way through the door and into the large room.

It appeared even angrier than before as its sharp glare fixed upon the boys. The creature's long, scaly body followed it, and as more of the serpent came, the higher it pulled its head. It slowed in its motions as it took in the room and the occupants. The boys were soon craning their heads back to look at it. The reptile’s eyes shined with murderous glee.

“Where’s the next exit!” Bendy demanded, unable to pull his eyes away from the great serpent.

“Da snake’s in dat only one!” Odie answered right next to him. Bendy flinched.

He ripped his eyes from the terrifying and fantastic creature before him to glare at the woman. “You trapped us in here with that thing!”

“Hold your head and give me a jiffy!” she hissed back at him. She wasn’t even looking at the snake. She was focused on her hand and the light she was directing on the floor. “Tell me when it ain’t in the tunnel anymore.”

“Are you crazy! It’s already in here with us!” Bendy snapped.

“Even de tip of it’s tail?” she asked. Bendy glanced at the door. It was almost completely blocked by the huge coils of the snake, but he thought he saw that snake’s form still coming in the door way.
“I don’t think so? Why does that even matter? It’s about to eat us!” Bendy glanced at the woman.

“Just trust me and shout when it’s completely in!” she ordered, and then dodged to the side as the snake lunged to strike. The floor split from the power in it’s attack. It hissed angrily when it missed. Bendy could feel its hiss shake his ribs. The boys ran in the opposite direction from the old woman. Bendy’s mind raced with a plan as the ground shook behind him from another strike. He didn’t want to know how close it had been.

The boys stopped and kept an eye on the snake, waiting for its next move. “Boris!” Bendy looked at his brother for a second before focusing on the serpent again. “I need you to place yourself in sight of the doorway. Shout when it’s completely in.”

“What are you gonna do?” Boris panted.

“Someone has to be bait to get it in here,” Bendy muttered.

“What!”

“Just do it!” Bendy shouted. He raced away from Boris, toward the center of the large room. Bendy looked back and noticed that the snake’s head was following the wolf, who was trying to go around the room to the wall that had the door. “Hey!” Bendy addressed the snake. “Fork face! Down here!” Bendy waved his arms. The snake’s head twitched and glanced at him. “Yeah, I’m talkin’ to you, scales for brains!” Bendy hopped a little and pointed at the reptile. He had no idea if it could understand him or if it was just interested in his movements, but he at least got its attention. “Were you born that ugly or did your mom drop you as an egg?” The serpent hissed and turned completely toward him. Uh…maybe it did understand him. Bendy took a half step back.

Boris had placed himself against the wall and watched the snake. The old woman was waving her hand on the other side of the serpent, but was otherwise motionless. “So, are all your family members this fat or were you the glutton of the bunch?” It lunged and Bendy dove and rolled away. He felt the air brush past him from the attack. The ground shook and Bendy’s heart raced with even more adrenaline. He pulled himself to his feet quickly and jumped back, further in. “Golly, you’re fast! Too bad you can’t hit the broadside of a barn!” Bendy shouted with a shaky voice. It lunged again, and again Bendy was barely able to get out of the way.

He kept taunting it, luring it further in with each step, jump, and dodge. With each failed attack, the snake grew more and more agitated. It hissed and lunged more, cowling again for a second strike and a third in fast repetition. Bendy’s legs were burning, his heart felt like it was going to jump out of his chest.

“It’s in!” Boris cried urgently. “I see it’s tail!”

The shout got the creatures attention.

“Odie! It’s in!” Bendy shouted. The snake snapped its head back to him and went to strike again. Bendy was surprised by the sudden change and was a step too slow.

“Righty-o!” Odie cried and there was a flash of bright light. Bendy shut his eyes, and prepared himself for the crushing pain of the snake’s jaws.

It didn’t happen. He hit the ground roughly and rolled.

“Bendy!” Boris called. “Bendy! Are you okay! Bendy!” Boris’ voice grew more desperate with each silent second that answered him. Bendy was struggling to find his voice. He tried to open his eyes to find the wolf, but all he could see were spots.
“I’m fine, Boris!” Bendy was finally able to answer. He coughed and pulled himself up. He blinked rapidly to clear his vision. “What happened?”

“Bendy! Thank the stars!” Boris said. Bendy could hear his paws hit the stone as he ran to the demon and helped him stand up. Boris hugged his brother quickly. Bendy chuckled and patted his back. “Don’t you ever do something that stupid again!” Boris said.

“Sorry, bro. It worked though,” Bendy said. Boris pulled back with a huff. Bendy looked around the room. “Where’s the snake?”

“It looks like it disappeared,” Boris said, looking around too.

“How did she make something that big vanish?” Bendy shook his head in amazement.

“Beats me,” Boris said.

Mama Odie was sitting on the floor, her back to the boys as she muttered to herself. She seemed as tired as the boys, since she was a bit hunched over. The boys approached her to see if she was alright.

“Hey, Mama Odie? Are you okay?” Bendy asked. “You really saved my bacon there.”

“Right as rain chil’, and I dare say we have a new friend,” Mama Odie said cheerfully, if not with a bit of exhaustion.

“Whadda ya mean?” Boris asked. Odie stood and stepped aside.

The boys both jumped back as they saw the snake. It was much, much smaller than it had been. Its nose was smashed flat, its fork tongue hung out to the side, its slit eyes watched them warily with an intelligence that confirmed to Bendy that it did understand them.

“That’s the snake!” Boris gasped. “How did you make it so small?”

“Ah, well, ya know. I just had to dig a little deeper,” Odie answered with a chuckle. Bendy scowled.

“Great. We beat it. At least we have dinner now,” Bendy stated. The snake’s jaw dropped, and it pulled back into its self, like it was cringing.

“Now, now. No need for hard feelin’s. He’s sorry,” Mama Odie said.

“Sorry! He tried to eat me!” Bendy said indignantly.

“Sorry! He tried to eat me!” Bendy said indignantly.

“And now you tryin’ to eat him. Hush up son,” Odie wagged a finger at Bendy disapprovingly. “He be willin’ to guide us outta ‘ere if we help him get his treasure found.”

“Help him?” Bendy raised a brow and glared at the reptile. The snake ducked his head under his own coiled body.

“Was he trapped down here like the rest of us?” Boris asked, gazing at the snake that was hiding under his coils.

“Not dat I understand,” Odie said. “Think he was a guard of a thingamajig for a long time. Den one day it was gone. He didn’t know where. Hunted for it and who done took it. When he saw us, he figured we was de thieves.”

“You’re a guard?” Boris asked the snake directly. The snake lifted his head from it’s hiding place
and bobbed it like a nod.

“Were you guarding the doll?” Bendy asked. The snake’s eyes widened, and he nodded faster. Bendy frowned. “Show us to the room, snake.” The snake looked to Mama Odie. She nodded kindly. The snake turned and began slithering back to the door.

Odie shared with the boys what she had learned. “He’s been ‘ere a long time. Long, long time. He’s even older dan me and that sayin’ somethin’. He been gaurdin’ dis doll from every person dat came with bad intent. He grew up ‘ere and got big, real big. Too big. The tunnels were becomin’ too small for him. He couldn’t leave his charge, so he was stuck. He thought he would keep grown ‘til he done got stuck ‘n dat’d be the end of him. He’s actually grateful to be small.”

“He’s still the size of a python,” Bendy grumbled.

“Nothin’ compared to dat beast he was, though,” Odie said with a gleam in her dark eyes. She lifted her hand to her eye and gently rubbed it.

“Whatever,” Bendy huffed and stuffed his hands in his pockets. The snake led the way through winding tunnels and doorways.

“It’s nice ta not discombobulate traps every two steps.” Odie stretched her hands in front of her. The snake hissed softly.

“Oh? Is dat so?” Odie asked. The snake hissed again. “I don’t see any problem in dat.”

“What?” Boris asked curiously.

“He wants to leave with us. He don’t wanna stay ‘ere no more. ‘Specially if he ain’t got nothin’ to guard no more,” Odie said.

“Does he know the people that built this place?” Bendy asked, looking at the reptile curiously.

“No. He just hatched ‘ere and knew what his job was,” Odie said.

Bendy narrowed his eyes. “Strange,” he muttered.

“What?” Boris asked.

Bendy blinked. “Nothing. Just weird that he already knew he was supposed to be a guard.”

“He prolly hatched on a rune,” Odie stated simply, then focused on the snake. “Say, if ya wanna get outta dis place, why don’t ya move in with me? I could use the help.”

The snake lifted his head off the floor and looked back at her even as he kept slithering forward. He bobbed his head in a yes.

Odie let out a sound of glee and celebration. “Oooooooweeee! I’m gonna call you Juju!” The snake blinked, and Bendy swore he saw the snake smile.

So, the newly named ‘Juju’ led the group into a room that seemed the most ornate room of the entire place and yet the most ruined. The walls, floors, and ceiling were scarred with slashes and burns from previous traps and battles. Like much of the other rooms, moss and water and other plant life populated the room. The images of art and history were in ruin and unidentifiable. Bendy imaged they were probably similar to the images that had adorned the door the boys had first come to down here. He wouldn’t be able to learn anything from these.
On the far side of the once glorious treasury sat a smashed pedestal. The table was broken down the middle, the stone sat at an angle; partly obscuring the headless statue that sat guard over it. The statue had four arms, and in each hand, it held a broken weapon. A spear, sword, knife, and javelin. The statue was dress in robes that seemed almost real in the fire light. Behind the statue was a huge snake skin. The head of the skin was right over the shoulder of the statue, as if the empty eyes of the great serpent was watching what the statue was doing.

Bendy raised a brow at ‘Juju’. The snake noticed and looked up to him, coiling a segment of his body as if in a shrug.

“’Parently he put dat dere as a warnin’ ta thieves,” Odie explained. “Bet dat gave some of those scoundrels a good scare,” Odie chuckled. “Now, what’s it we lookin’ for?”

“It’s a doll, but according to, uh, Juju, it’s gone.” Boris stepped up to the table and checked around the broken slab. Bendy joined his brother to look around for any sign of the people that took it. Sadly, neither the wolf or demon were able to find anything.

“What ya’ll lookin’ for?” Mama Odie asked.

Boris stood up and dusted his shorts. “We were hoping to find a clue, but it seems whoever took the doll didn’t leave a trail.”

“Is dis doll dat important?” Odie asked, walking closer to the table.

“It’s something we need to fix a machine,” Bendy said plainly.

Mama Odie raised a brow. “A machine?” Bendy could hear the amusement in her voice.

“Yeah, almost as weird as having a giant snake guard it his whole life in an underground dungeon that doesn’t allow you to leave,” Bendy said. Mama Odie didn’t say anything to that. Bendy poked his head up and spotted the snake. “Hey, why doesn’t this place let us leave anyway? I wouldn’t think the people that built it would want to force intruders deeper into the halls and such.”

‘Juju’ bobbed and weaved around with soft hisses. Bendy turned to Odie and waited for her to explain. She was looking at the statue.

“Mama Odie,” Bendy said.

“Uh?” She turned to him with a grin.

“What did he say?” Bendy asked.

“Didn’t ya hear him?” she asked. Bendy rolled his eyes. She chuckled and stepped up to the broken stone table. “He said that the temple was a secret and if anyone dare enters, they can’t simply leave to give away the location and bring back more trouble.”

“So, no one is supposed to know about this place?” Bendy pulled himself off and dusted off his pants and vest.

“Yep!” She rested a hand on the table and gasped. She yanked her hand back like something bit her.


“The table!” she said, looking at it piercingly. “It was broken by shadow.”

“Shadows?” Boris said.
“Can’t ya feel it?” she asked the boys. Bendy and Boris shared a look, before resting their hands on the table pieces. A moment passed, then two.

“I don’t feel anything,” Boris admitted.

The two turned to Bendy. The demon narrowed his eyes focusing. He might be feeling something, but it could easily be his brain just wanting him to feel something too.

“Well chil’?” Mama Odie asked.

“There’s…maybe, a…humming?” Bendy said, uncertain. Odie nodded like this made sense.

“Dat woman sent her little troublemakers ‘ere to get dis doll,” she said in a more serious tone than Bendy had heard from her since he met her. “Guess dis thing is a bigga deal den I was thinkin’!” she huffed.

“Wait.” Bendy held up both his hands. “You’re telling us that the Facilier voodoo lady took the doll?”

Boris’ ears perked. “And she knew about this place! She sent us here!”

Bendy looked to Boris and pointed at him. “Sent us here to get killed by the traps and the snake! That witch!” he growled a curse and slammed a fist on the table. “How much you willing to bet that she even had the cussing thing right in front of us?”

“And she might have stolen our map, Bendy!” Boris’ ears dropped, and his eyes widen. “Oh, this is bad.”

“You’re tell me! We gotta scram back to New Orleans yesterday!” Bendy jumped over the ruined table and started for the door. “C’mon!”

“Wait now! You chil’ren are gonna go face dat Facilier woman?” Odie asked with surprise.

“We have to!” Boris said, jogging to catch up with his brother.

“Wait, wait, wait.” Odie waved her hands. “Ya’ll are gonna get lost dat way. Let Juju lead us!” Odie and the snake caught up to quickly. “And what are ya’ll gonna do when ya face her?”

“Force her to give us back our stuff. That’s what!” Bendy said.

Mama Odie laughed. “You don’t stand a chance.”

“Wanna bet old lady?” Bendy looked at her with a flash of red in his eyes.

“Ooooh boy! You’s a real hothead. But that ain’t what you need, sonny,” Odie said, back to her cheery self.

“Then why don’t you come help us Mama Odie?” Boris asked.

“No,” she stated bluntly. “I am done messin’ with people. I ain’t never settin’ foot in dat city again.”

“Why not?” Boris asked with his brows drawn together.

Mama Odie fiddled with the ring around her left ring finger. “When I first got dis power, everyone ‘n deir dog wanted a favor. I thought I was helpin’, but I learned what people want is usual’ the worst thing for ‘em. I had angry people come back for deir money and angry families come back to tell me-
"she cut herself off with a shaky sigh. “My own wish also done backfired on me. I found that people just need to see what they need, wants truly important insteada what they want.” She scowled. “But nobody wanted to listen. They were deaf and blind! I got fed up and left.”

The boys shared a sad, but understanding, look. They knew what it was like to deal with selfish people that didn’t want to listen.

“We won’t ask you to come with us, then,” Bendy said. Odie looked over at him with a measuring look. It softened into a warm smile.

“Ya’ll have good hearts. Even though you’ve seen like cruelty in de world, you still meet others with kindness. You still got a way to go, but ya know where your heart lies. Dat’s important for your quest,” she said and rested a gentle hand on Bendy’s arm. A strange warmth brushed him. He blinked and glanced at her callused hand, but she was already removing it. He puzzled on why that felt so familiar.

It wasn’t long until the snake had them climbing up a slight incline. They found a blocked wall that Bendy pushed open easily. The stone slab fell over with a splash and warm sunlight hit their faces. The swamp land glistened like a jewel in the midday sun. Hanging plants swayed in the gentle breeze and bird songs dancing in the air. Wild flowers filled the area with a sweet scent and the water was calm and reflected like a mirror. It was one of the most beautiful sights Bendy had ever seen.

“We’re out!” Boris leapt with joy, throwing a fist in the air. “Fresh air!” He jumped out of the tunnel and rolled on the moss like an overly excited puppy. “Freedom!” He laid on his back with a huge grin. Bendy chuckled.

Bendy turned to Mama Odie. “Thanks for all the help. We would have still been in that first room if it wasn’t for you.”

“Hold on dere. Who said I was done helpin’?” Odie put her hands on her hips.

“But you said-,”

“I said I ain’t goin’ back dere. Didn’t ever say I wouldn’t find ya’ll some help. Ya can’t go facin’ dat woman by yourselves.” She grinned mischievously.

“You know someone?” Boris wagged his tail.

“I’ll find ya’ll someone.” She laughed. “I’m sure dere’s someone in dis world crazy enough to help ya’ll with dis fight.”

“Thank you, Mama Odie!” Boris said from the ground.

“Sure thing, hon. Now, let’s get back to my place. I’m sure it ain’t far and ya’ll need some sleep and food in you.” She waved her hand and the boys grinned and followed. Boris shook the moss that clung to him. When she lowered her hand to him, Juju coiled around her arm. “How you boys feel about jumbo?”

“Never had it before,” Bendy admitted.

“Well, we’ll be fixin’ dat crime right soon!” Odie chuckled.
bones and staring skulls without a glance of its button eyes. It ignored the high pitched chatter of its fellow dolls and the low hum of the masks on the walls and curtains. It hopped up and pulled itself onto the arm of a great chair. The occupant too focused on what was on the table to notice its presence. The crystal ball swirled with green and purple energy as the woman waved her hands around it.

The Voodoo Queen groaned in frustration. The doll gently touched her arm. The woman ignored it. The doll repeated the action with a touch more urgency.

“What!” she demanded, turning a dark glare on the little doll. “What is so important that you dare interrupt my search!”

The doll bowed. “The travelers made it out of the temple alive, my queen!” the doll squeaked in a child like voice. She grabbed the doll and lifted it up to her face. Her angry glare had changed to a dazzling smile.

“Good! Oh! That’s so good! Dem boys are more resourceful than I had first thought! If we get ‘em, I’m sure we’ll be able to rope the angel that blessed ‘em too.” She giggled. “Good job,” she told the doll and placed it on the table. “I will at least have a trail to an angel. It ain’t too hard to cast a led spell on somethin’ strong like a blessin’.” She made to stand, but the doll lifted it’s arms to get her attention again.

“There’s more,” the doll said. “They didn’t get out alone.” Queen Facilier sat back down and gazed at the doll. “They had help.”

“Who?” she asked.

The doll twitched. “The Voodoo Queen of the bayou.”

“I am the only queen!” Facilier suddenly knocked the doll of the table. It landed with a soft thud on the floor. The masks clanked above. “I chased her out and stripped her of any title!” she huffed. “Who does she think she is, fiddling in my affairs? Doesn’t she know her place?” She turned her glare from the crystal ball to the doll again. “Where are they?”

“Headed back to her home,” the doll answered as it pulled itself up. Queen Facilier gritted her teeth.

“I need to do something to stop her meddling,” she muttered. She quickly got up and pulled a large curtain aside to reveal a mask that took up the entire wall. “Friends, our plans are in the hot pot! I need a little help. We can’t let those boys escape us!”

The masks seemed to share a look before the largest one dropped its jaw to reveal a spinning green and black portal. Shadows of grotesques beings and creatures reached out and climbed the floors and walls. Unearthly screams, howls, and laughter filled the dark room. The bones rattled and masks clanked. “Yes! Yes! Go! Bring the demon and the wolf here!” she laughed.

Chapter End Notes

Mercowe here. It's starting to look like my taking over the end notes is going to become a semi-regular thing. At least Tap liked the idea. I'm still not really that sold on it.

By the way...Whelp...That was harsh Tap. I feel like Deeked and I were both being
totally reasonable, especially considering the fact that the two of you have apparently been conspiring against me with your telepathic powers.

Anyways...Here's my favorite typo of the week. In the moment when Mama Odie, Bendy and Boris enter the chamber where they'll shrink the snake Tap describes it...and this is how it originally read.

It was huge, at least three stores tall...

Didn't know you could fit shopping malls into underground temples, but I'll roll with it. Anyways, I hope y'all enjoyed this chapter as much as I did. Lots of fun things are coming up next week, so look forward to it!
Chapter Summary

Nobody gets what they want, but they do get what they need. I guess everyone just had to dig a little deeper.

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello!
Aren't you all a bunch wonderful lovelies~! There were so many great comments last chapter, I was giddy! ^_^ Mercowe didn't know what to do with me! I hope this chapter entertains you and helps with your busy life. I know some of you are running around like a chicken without a head. (I may be like that too.)

I really enjoyed writing this chapter. The ball is really rolling now! And holy hades! We hit four hundred kudos! What! This was supposed to be a little project in the back of Archive Land with like...ten people looking at it once in a while? How are there so many of you?! What happened? Ｙ(ಥ﹏ಥ) More the merry for this adventure. And we aren't even close to halfway in this tale. XD

Thanks for sticking to it and reading guys! I couldn't imagine all the fun I've had typing for you. It's been awesome.

And with that enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Lady Facilier smiled as she drank her morning brew. The light of the sun streamed through her curtains, showing an inviting day, despite the end of summer. Breakfast of eggs and bacon was eaten, and the dishes sat out on the table. The day was starting out productive. She would get around to that. The morning paper was enjoyable, at least for her. She could see her delicate plans slowly, oh so slowly, blooming in the factories and the fields. As the rich fat cats and sugar barrens lost their profits, the scales of power and money would slowly tip, and she would in act phase two.

Suddenly a thumping beat of footsteps raced down the hall. A blur of a boy raced past the table. “Ah, ah, ah! No running in my house. I know I taught ya better than dat, boy.” The child skidded to a halt by the breakfast table.

“Sorry, mama. I’m running late,” he said breathlessly.

“Ya didn’t even fix your hair.” Queen Facilier started to mess with his unruly locks.

“Mama,” he whinnied, swatting her hand away.

“Take that pouch o’ herbs to Mrs. Ardoin. Her daughter Eudora caught ‘erself a nasty fever and those should help,” Facilier said.
Her son groaned. “But that’s outta the way to school mama. I’m gonna be late!”

“Take ‘em and this.” Lady Facilier stood up and reached into her bag hanging on the wall. She pulled out her purse and handed the coins to him. “Use the trolley and ya shouldn’t be late.” He looked down at the coins and smiled with a nod.

“Ya be safe. I love you son.” Facilier hugged him affectionately. He grumbled.

“What was dat boy?”

“I love you too mama,” he said quickly, returning the hug and then racing out the door before she could tell him anything else. She chuckled at his energy. She sighed at the mess on the table and started clearing off the dishes and leftovers. She paused at her tea cup.

(A little music for your soul)

“Nah, I need a second cup today. Your brotha’s been a real headache ta me, so it’s his fault,” she said to the cup with a smirk. She refilled it, grabbed the morning paper, and made her way back to her shop. There, the dolls were dusting off her products. The masks were sleeping, and the infernal map sat on her table, mocking her. She set the cup down on the table and turned to her chest. Unlocking it, she pulled out the doll. It still resembled a skeleton. It was no bigger than the other dolls she had running around her shop. It didn’t seem to be the best made doll. In fact, it lacked details in its design and didn’t move like the others. It was boring in comparison. Yet, it had become one of her most prized possessions. She brought it to the table and set it down, next to the paper.

“Now, who should we visit next?” she asked with a wicked smile. One of her dolls pulled itself up on her table. An update? Already? It’d only been a couple of hours! She gave the little being her attention. It bowed to her.

“News from the city. The shadows lost the Cup person,” it said in a high-pitched voice.

“What! How?” she demanded, slamming her palms on either side of the little minion.

“Disappeared in a crowd.”

“Disappeared?” Facilier frowned.

“And the shadows couldn’t find him again.”

She growled and tossed the doll off the table with a flick of her wrist. This was a problem. He could be a real thorn in her side if she left him to himself. Not only did she want to finish her cup collection, but his little blasts were a bit stronger than she was comfortable having run around her territory.

In her frustrated contemplation, a shadow slipped down the window to her side. It hung on the wall patiently. She bit her thumbnail, plans and worries turning in her head. Her attention went to the cup, the brew still steaming from within. “If only ya and your brother had come a few weeks from now. My work is in a delicate phase, and I don’t care much for interruptions,” she told the cup as she lifted it and took a drink. “It ain’t chivalrous like.” She sighed and looked to the other items on her table.

She stared at the map. “’Course the worst of it’s you.” She fingered the old paper. “If ya could show me treasures as strong as this ‘ere little fella, I would have the world rollin’ in my hand ‘fore the ‘gators stir in the mornin’ light.” The shadow hissed on the wall. She turned an eye on it. The shadow looked like a mix between a gargoyle and a bat. It grimaced at her and hissed again.
“Well? Where are they?” Facilier turned a dangerous eye on the being. They flashed a deep purple. The shadow shrank into itself. It clicked and folded its body to show her what happened. There were three figures, two were the boys, and the third had to be that old fool Odie. The shadow showed her the attack. The demon had done something, and Odie had used her accursed magic. The shadow hissed again.

“What do ya mean, ya can’t touch the demon?” She waved a frustrated arm. The shadow ducked under the swing of her shadow’s arm. The being clinked a few more things to her. Facilier sneered. “What good are ya things if you can’t bring me a couple of street rats!” The shadow clicked at her and narrowed the shapes that mocked eyes. Facilier huffed. “I should’a ended that old bat. Banishin’ her to the swamps ain’t nearly far enough.” She spun around, her skirts swishing, and bracelets tinkling as she dropped into her chair. She pulled the cup to her and stirred the straw before lifting it and finishing her brew.

“Do I have ta do everythin’ ‘round here?” she asked the now empty cup. The voodoo woman sat and thought. This wasn’t a huge set back. Those two would come to her now. They had to. She had their map and what they were looking for in the first place. Odie wouldn’t dare return, so it would just be those brats. She may give them something to annoy her, but she was sure she could handle them. That just left that little cup child running around on her streets.

She turned back to the shadow on her wall. It was focused on her shadow with an intensity that would have unsettled others. “Change a plans, suga’.” The shadows attention snapped back to her. “Keep lookin’ for the cup boy. If ya bring ‘im in alive, grand, but if he ain’t havin’ it, kill ‘im.” The shadow grinned, its smile stretching grotesquely and impossibly large for a living being. Facilier felt disgust rise up her throat, but she dismissed it. The empty cup in her hand warmed. “I can’t be havin’ ‘im inta interferin’ when I have those other two here. I need this here map if we is wantin’ to expand.” The shadow bobbed its head. “Now get to it.” The shadow pulled into the dark and disappeared. A moment later there was a howl unlike any living known creature. It was deep, primal sound, full of blood lust and glee. It caused the very soul to shudder in horror and remember the ancient fear from centuries of forgotten struggle against the unimaginable. The cup in her hand heated until it was almost painful.

Facilier put it down. “Well, look at you! Stuck as a dish and still tryin’ ta protect your brother. Most wouldn’ even be conscious! You lads are somethin’ else, suga’! Slippin’ my shadows ain’t an easy feat neither. Real shame ya’l wouldn’ join me.” She tsked and tapped the cup’s rim. “It’s up ta ‘im to come in quiet or put up a fight, but by this reaction I’m guessin’ he ain’t the quiet type. A real shame.”

Facilier suddenly jerked her hand back with a hiss. She looked at the burn on her finger with narrowed eyes. She turned her glare back to the cup. “Well, now. I can’t have that. Better take care a you first. I think a little time in’a chest will cool ya off.” She used her skirt to grab the cup and put it in her chest, then put the map on the other side. “I’ll find somethin’ to keep ya cool for good later. ‘Til then, you sit tight.”

With the chest locked, she turned back to the newspaper and the doll. “Now, back to business. Who’s gonna have a rough week this time?”

“Alright, now. Y’all ready to go?” Odie asked.

“Yes, Mama Odie.” Boris smiled and shouldered his large backpack.

“And ya’ll remember what I told you?” Odie pointed a finger at Bendy.
The demon looked up from his bag and gave the old woman a half smile. “Yes, Mama Odie. We’ll find the guy who can help us, who’s in debt, and offer him a meal to help us.”

“And what else?”

Bendy rolled his eyes, but still held the smile. “And we’ll dig a little deeper.”

“Alright!” She grinned triumphantly and clapped a hand on his back. “Den you boys should be headin’ out.”

“You know you could come with us to help too,” Bendy suggested lightly. “We don’t really understand how this whole voodoo thing works. We might get into trouble.”

“Boy, I already told you.” Odie lifted a finger in warning.

Bendy gave her a stopping motion with his hands. “You aren’t going back. We get it. I’m just saying.”

Odie narrowed her eyes at him. “Oooh, ya are a tricky little devil, you!” She grinned and poked him in the shoulder.

Bendy grinned and shrugged. “Thanks for all the help, anyway.”

“Of course, chil’. That’s what I’m ‘ere for,” she said.

“Take care.” Bendy pulled on his backpack and checked his side bag. He nodded to the snake as he passed. Juju bowed to him and Boris and, if Bendy wasn’t imagining things, he seemed to be smiling at them gratefully.

“Bye, Mama Odie.” Boris waved with a grin. They walked out the door of the boathouse and began walking down the path to the roots of the tree it sat in.

“Ya’ll be good now. Come by if ya’ll’re in the neighborhood!” Odie called after them. The boys waved and walked to the docks.

As the boathouse disappeared behind them, Bendy couldn’t hold back anymore. “That was the weirdest place I’ve ever been in.”

Boris chuckled. “It’s the bee knees! You shoulda seen your face when ya first saw it, bro. Your jaw was hanging to your ankles.”

“Well, I didn’t expect it to be that big! What kinda storm was it that could’ve picked up something like that and thrown it in a tree?” Bendy shook his head, still amazed.

“I liked how she set it up. The glass and rugs made it all bright and homely,” Boris commented.

“Yeah, just be careful of some of the huge holes in the floor.” Bendy shook his head.

“They were only big to you,” Boris said.

“Did you just call me small?” Bendy narrowed his eyes. The wolf’s eyebrows shot up.

“We should get a house like that!” Boris suddenly exclaimed with a laugh.

“What!” Bendy chuckled. “No. Absolutely not! I don’t wanna ever have to clean something that big. You don’t even get your room completely picked up. How would we handle a place like that?”
Bendy pinched the bridge of his nose in fake exasperation.

“Turn an ancient guardian from a temple into a pet friend and have them clean it?” Boris suggested furrowing his brows.

Bendy laughed. “I am not doing that again. One giant, man-eating snake is enough for me.”

Boris snorted and snickered. The two got to the docks and waited for the morning riverboat to swing up and head back to the city. The morning sun was starting to burn off the dew. The air was damp, but pleasant. The swamp glistened in the light, like a jewel. The sound of frogs and birds made everything feel calm, but alive.

The silence continued, each boy lost in thought. Bendy’s mind went back to Odie. She obviously had left some unresolved stuff back in New Orleans. She kept fiddling with that ring, so Bendy couldn’t help but think something happened to a husband…? He hadn’t felt right asking. It wasn’t his business. But still, he wished the crazy woman was going with them. They had been attacked by some terrifying shadow monsters on their way to her crazy house. She had been able to blast them away without a problem.

Bendy had used his Talent when one had grabbed Boris. It hadn’t been too hard to force it to let go, either. It was mostly the same stuff he had ordered around before. They had felt more agitated than he was used to and more…alive? He hadn’t been able to put his finger on the feeling. It was like the shadow monsters had been individual spots instead of one mass of turning…stuff. He couldn’t wrap his head around it. The weirdest thing was feeling their anger toward him for interfering. He’d never had that happen either.

He had shrugged it off at the time because right after they were gone, he’d had an ink attack. Now that he was thinking about it, the whole thing had been disturbing. The more he used his talent, the worse everything got, not to mention how upset Boris had been. It was his worst attack yet and seemed to last forever. Luckily, Odie had an idea on how to soothe him when it was getting too much for even the pain meds.

Bendy sighed mentally. As things stood, Boris had forbidden Bendy from ever using his Talent again…and Bendy was okay with that.

Except…

He might have to. If they wanted to stand a chance against that voodoo woman, he would have to.

“Think this new friend will be strong?” Boris’ question pulled Bendy from his heavy thoughts.

“Uh?” Bendy looked up at the wolf.

“This guy we’re supposed to meet, think he’ll be strong?” Boris asked again. His ears were perked, but his dark eyes seemed troubled.

Bendy threw his hands behind his head. “He better be. If I’m gonna be wasting money on him, he’ll pull his weight.”

Boris smiled and shook his head. The worry in his eyes disappeared. The boat didn’t take long to arrive. The boys had a relaxing ride back into New Orleans. There was a jazz band that played most of the ride, people would come and go to talk and laugh. The riverboat was in light spirits for the parades and parties of the city of mud. Bendy slept lightly, always keeping his senses alert for any of those dark shadows. Odie had warned they could come back, and he didn’t want to take chances. Boris was able to join the band half way through the trip. All in all, it was nice.
They docked midday at the busy streets. The boys decided to go find something to eat before looking for this stranger that would help them. They ended up at a local place that served jumbo. Bendy found he liked the spice dish, not as much as bacon soup of course, but the meat and rice dish did a great job giving him a boost of energy. The crowds at the tables were loud and boisterous. Bendy had to dance around a bit to avoid getting stepped on. He also held his tail close to himself. The place smelled of the spices they cooked with, and the atmosphere was friendly and homely.

It wasn’t until they were ready to leave, full and happy that things took a turn. Someone tripped the busboy and the guy crashed to the ground, breaking glass with a loud crash. The manager was there in a flash, scolding the worker. The boys hadn’t seen it with how crowded the place was, but they sure heard it.

“This will come out of your pay! That’s the third time today! I can’t believe the boss is still letting you work! We should just call the cops on you.”

It wasn’t until the manager got nasty that Bendy couldn’t take it anymore. Sure, employee had messed up, but this guy didn’t deserve the lashing he was getting. It sounded like he was trying to work off the money he owed for a meal. Bendy shared a look with Boris. Bendy raised a brow, and Boris gave him puppy eyes. Bendy shook his head.

“C’mon bro,” Boris begged. “We can help.”

“Or we can pay and leave. It’s none of our business,” Bendy said.

“But Mama Odie said he’d be in debt!” Boris reminded him. Bendy scowled.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” Bendy complained. Boris grinned in triumphant. His fangs gleamed in the restaurant lights. If the poor schmuck couldn’t work off a tab, then they’d led a hand. They understood how it was like more than most. Bendy just didn’t want to draw that much attention to him and his brother. They were still wanted, after all.

Bendy pushed back his inner voice that complained about getting involved and losing money. He stood up and pushed through the crowd to the scene that was unfolding. The poor schmuck had his back to Bendy with his head bent down so Bendy couldn’t see him. He seemed to be picking up the glass in shame. Bendy focused on the portly woman yelling at him instead.

He approached her and pulled the scarf Odie had given him up to his nose. He placed himself between the woman and the guy on his knees. “Hey!” he cut her off mid rant. The woman looked down at him with scrutinizing eyes. She wore a bit too much mascara and her lipstick was very dark. Her form was in a button up and shirt with an apron over it. “The fella messed up. We all get it. You only gotta say it once.”

“’Cuse me? Whad’id’a say kid?” She scowled and leaned over him intimidatingly. “Didn’t your mama teach ya not ta interrupt others?”

Bendy felt his eye twitch with annoyance. “Did yours ever teach you how to treat people with any manners at all?” Her eyes widened, and her face grew blotchy with color. It reminded Bendy of a certain cop back home that he hadn’t thought about in a while.

“Wh-why you-!”

“We’ll pay off his debt!” Boris was suddenly beside Bendy. The woman turned to Boris now. She glared.

“Ya will now, will ya?” she asked suspiciously. It didn’t take a genius to figure out why. Bendy and
Boris still looked worse for wear, despite some additions given to them from Odie. Bendy had a scarf and a new coat that was a little too big for him. Boris had a new shirt, but his pants were still ripped in the leg from the swamp and there were mud stains in their pants and on their packs. They didn’t seem the type to be paying much.

“Yeah lady, we will,” Bendy said impatiently. She snorted. “How much?”

“I’s forty,” she named the price, a bit smug like she didn’t think Bendy had it.

“Nu-uh!” a voice exclaimed from behind them. “I don’t owe that much!”

“Ya broke that many dishes, ya bumbling idjit!” she shouted behind Bendy. Bendy pulled out his wallet, knowing that there were probably people watching him very closely. He hated it, but he could handle some petty pickpockets if they tried anything. He pulled out the bills and shoved them that her. He added their own bill to it, so they could just get away as soon as possible. She startled, having to look back down at him instead of the fella behind him.

“Here. Leave ‘im alone,” Bendy grumbled. He pulled back and slipped his wallet in his jacket inner pocket.

“Golly! You fellas didn’t have to do that for me. You don’t even know me!” the guy said from the floor. He sounded a bit familiar. He wasn’t a local, considering the way he talked. Boris turned to the fella to help him up.

“You don’t have to worry anymore, we-YOU!” Boris suddenly hopped back like the guy had burst into flames. The wolf collided with a table and made the plates rattle. He didn’t even glance back at the disturbed customers. His eyes stayed fixed on the busboy. Bendy spun on his heel.

“You!” Mugs gasped from his kneeling position. “What’re you guys doing here!” He was dressed in a grey short sleeved shirt, his long drawstring pants. He was missing his long scarf and had an apron over his cloths. His eyes were the size of dinner plates. There was a beat of silence between the three. Most of the restaurant had quieted with the tension in the air.

“You!” Bendy looked around for the other one, but didn’t see him. Mugs moved to get up and Bendy had a hand on Boris’ wrist before the mook could blink. “Run!”

“Wait!” Mugs called after them. The boys darted for the exit, dodging people by a hair. “Wait a minute! I just wanna talk!” Mugs shouted. He was pulling off the apron and chasing after them.

“As if!” Bendy ducked under an arm and hit the door running. Boris was right on his tail. Bendy was out on the street and glanced around for an escape. He turned and suddenly was face first in a cloud of smoke before he hit someone. The two toppled over and Bendy landed hard on the other’s ribs. He looked up to apologize, only to come face to face with a wheezing Mugman. He scrambled back, but the fiend grabbed his wrist to stop him. “Please,” he wheezed. “Stop.” Bendy yanked his hand back. Boris helped Bendy back up. Mugs slowly sat up with an arm warped around his chest as he gasped for breath.

“C’mon Boris,” Bendy said urgently. Bendy wasn’t waiting for the second cup guy to show up.

“Hear me out,” Mugs coughed and reached out to them. Bendy tensed and Mugs immediately dropped his hand.

“Why should we? Your pal is just gonna show up and blast us!” Bendy barked. People were stopping in the streets to see what the ruckus was.
“No!” Mugs sat up and dropped his arm. He had caught his breath. He didn’t make a move to get up this time. “I-it’s just me. Please. You guys are, uh, I just, I mean,” he started to stammer. Moisture collected on the side of his head. Was that him sweating? Bendy didn’t trust this for a second. “It’s my brother! He’s in trouble. I don’t have anyone to turn to. Please! I don’t know what to do! Please hear me out!” he begged.

“Let’s go.” Bendy tugged on Boris and turned to leave.

“Wait please!” Mugman pulled himself up on his knees and stayed there. He clasped his hands together. “Please, don’t go!”

“Wait a second, Bendy,” Boris whispered. Bendy turned a dark glare on the wolf. Boris didn’t budge though. He stayed rooted to the spot, staring at Mugman. Tears were sitting at the edge of Mugs’ dull eyes.

“Let’s go, Boris,” Bendy hissed through grit teeth.

“Hold on.” Boris leaned closer to Bendy and said in a low voice. “What if he’s the help Mama Odie was telling us about?”

“What!” Bendy scowled. “No way! No! Cuss no! He can jump off a bridge! Stars! They’ve tried to kill us Boris!”

“I know, but remember what Mama Odie said? Someone in debt?” Boris pointed out.

“I would rather eat my own foot before I buy this star fallen schmuck dinner!” Bendy barked.

“Bendy,” Boris said in a tone that indicated he was being unreasonable.

“I said no!” Bendy had to put his foot down here. This guy was targeting them. “Did you forget that he beat Red and the Warners? They’re in the hospital because of this guy and his brother!”

Boris hesitated and looked back at the sad figure of Mugman. The wolf’s ears were pinned to the side of his head. His dark eyes searched the begging brute’s face. Mugs gazed back with clear desperation and fear. “I’ll do anything.” Mugs’ voice broke.

Bendy snorted. “Anything? How ‘bout you pack up, and we never see ya again?”

“Bendy.” There was an edge to Boris’ voice that surprised the demon so much he looked away from Mugs. Boris was glaring at Bendy with such disapproval that the demon’s heart lurched uncomfortably in his chest.

“What?” he hissed in challenge. “We aren’t doing this.”

The youth turned back to Mugs and offered him a hand. Both Mugs and Bendy were shocked. Mugs couldn’t hold back the tears that slid down his face as he took the offered hand and stood.

“Boris!” Bendy tone was just as sharp as Boris’ had been.

The younger brother ignored him though. “I’ll hear you out. Sounds like you’ve been through a lot. C’mon.”

Mugs was trying to brush away the tears. “Th-thanks,” he sobbed. Bendy was beside himself with fury.

“Boris the wolf, you will get away from that-that-”
“If you were the one in trouble and he was the only one I thought would help, wouldn’t you want them to be good to me?” Boris suddenly turned a look on Bendy.

Bendy’s anger was cut with surprise for a moment. “That’s completely different!”

“No, bro. Let’s hear him out,” Boris said.

“Are you kidding me? He’ll attack us! It’s a trap or a trick, and he’s a bad person!” Bendy growled. “He’s hurt our friends! He might have killed Wilson! He’s one of the reason we’re wanted!”

“Th-that was an accident,” Mugs sniffed as he got control of himself. “We were just supposed to catch him.”

“Whatever! Like that makes a difference!” Bendy turned a glare to Mugs.

“Bro.” Boris sounded exasperated. “Can’t we give him a chance? He hasn’t attacked us yet, and if he’s the one that’ll help us beat the voodoo lady, we need him. ‘Sides, people have said bad things about you, and I still think you’re great.”

Bendy was completely taken aback. “D-don’t compare me to him! I’ve never killed anybody!”

“No, but the first time I saw you, you were hugging a huge hunk of stolen ham,” Boris said flatly. Bendy flushed.

“That’s…completely different!” Bendy grumbled.

“I’m sorry,” Mugs muttered.

“You’d better be,” Bendy snapped.

“Bendy, leave him alone.” Boris crossed his arms.

“Leave? Great idea! Let’s go.” Bendy threw a thumb over his shoulder.

Boris sighed and rolled his eyes. “Did you leave anything back at the restaurant?” he asked Mugs. The guy nodded. “Then, let’s go get your stuff and talk. You have a lot of explaining to do.” Mugs nodded again. Boris turned back to the restaurant, Mugs following.

“Hey! No! You can’t just ignore me, Boris!” Bendy exclaimed after him. “I’m not going! I refuse to be around that guy!” Boris continued to walk away. Mugs was giving Bendy worried glances. “Boris! You hear me! There is no star fallen way I’m gonna go along with this!” The crowd was staring at the them with interest and confusion. Boris was nearly out of sight with the people passing by. “Not in a million years!”

“And after eating, I told them I would work off the bill, but then I was tripped by the cook, and I suddenly owed them more. Every time I argued, they threatened to call the cops on me.” Mugs took a drink of his soda. “I was thinking of just running when you two came in to cover for me.” He looked at Boris and glanced quickly at Bendy, before looking back at the table top. “Thanks again. You fellas are real swell,” he finished explaining.

“Don’t worry about it.” Boris waved a hand.

Bendy glared at the glass of fizz-wizz in front of him. How had he gotten here? What stupid trick did Boris pull? That wolf was too powerful for his own good. Bendy swore he would defeat the influence the pup had over him. Boris couldn’t talk him into these ridiculously dangerous choices
“So, what do you want from us?” Bendy grumbled.

Mugs looked up and glanced away. “I, uh, can’t save Cups alone. I need help.”

“And why would we save a guy that’s been trying to kill us?” Bendy asked flatly.

Mugs ducked his head and shrugged.

“Don’t be like that, Bendy. We need his help to beat her too.” Boris frowned at the demon. Bendy scowled and gulped his soda.

“I’ll pay you fellas back for help! Cup has all our money,” Mugs said quickly.

Bendy scoffed. “We don’t want cash! How about you stop chasing us and leave our friends alone, uh?”

Mugs cringed and winced. “I…don’t know if I can do that.”

“And why not?” Bendy narrowed his eyes.

“It’s…look.” He sighed. “My brother and I wouldn’t be doing this if we didn’t have to, alright?”

“No! Not alright!” Bendy snarled. “You hurt good people. You’ve threatened my brother and I, and if I help you get your brother back I have no guarantee that you won’t turn around and shoot me! So, I ask again, why should I help you?”

Boris pursed his lips and looked to Mugs for an answer. Mugs bit his lip and tapped his nearly empty glass, thoughtfully.

“Okay. You fellas need something from her, right? So, how about I help you get it, and I let you leave? Cups and I won’t go for you right after the fight.” Mugs looked up. “I need him to change back anyway, and who knows what shape he’ll be in when he’s back to normal.”

“A head start. Really? That’s the best offer you’re giving us?” Bendy scoffed.

Mugs shoulders dropped. “It’s the best I got.”

“Really? How about telling us why you’re after us? Why you were after Wilson? Who is the person making the calls, uh?” Bendy banged his fist on the table.

Mugs flinched. “I…don’t think that would be a good idea.”

“How so?”

“Cause worse people than my brother and I might come after you if I say…and, Cups and I would be in a heap of trouble,” Mugs added that last part like it was an afterthought.

“How many of you guys are there!” Bendy leaned back and glanced at an alarmed Boris.

Mugs shrugged again. “Dunno.”

Bendy grumbled again. “Can you at least tell us why?”

Mugs tilted his head and put a hand to his chin. The striped straw shifted to the other side of his head.
Bendy gave it an odd glance before looking back at his face. “Um, well. I guess I can say. I don’t really get it myself, but something about a machine? I don’t know the details.”

“You’re telling me you don’t even fully get why you’re hunting us?” Bendy asked, deadpanned. This was almost insulting. This guy had nearly taken his head off back in Toon Town and the goon didn’t even know why.

“We just do what we’re told. We don’t ask questions, and we don’t make calls on things.” Mugs sighed. There was weight to that statement. Bendy ignored it. This guy didn’t deserve his sympathy. Bendy shared another look with Boris. His ears were down, his eyes wide and imploring. Bendy understood that Boris wanted this to make some kinda sense, but it didn’t seem they would get much from this thug.

“You can’t just disappear after?” Bendy asked. Mugs dropped his arms and shook his head sadly. His eyes stayed on his glass.

“Bendy?” Boris asked. Bendy looked to Boris to see a similar sadness. “Can we talk?” The boys slipped out of their seats and walked a few feet away. Far enough Mugs wouldn’t over hear them.

“I think we should help him,” Boris said.

"Boris-"
“Hear me out first.” Boris lifted a gloved hand to stop Bendy’s protest. The demon fell quiet. “We help him get his brother back, nab the map and doll from the voodoo lady, and jump the first train back to Toon Town.”

“And then what, Boris? These guys show up in Toon Town again and what?” Bendy put his hands on his hips.

“We’ve shaken them twice before, three times if ya count Sillyvision, since they were technically there.” Boris lifted a finger up.

“But then what?” Bendy asked, his brow furrowed and eyes sad and frustrated. “We can shake them, sure, but what about everyone else? Will they go after Red again, or Oddswell? What about Granny Gopher and the squirrel kid, or the cute girl at the university that helped us, or the shop girl Betty, or Alice at the casino? What about them, Boris? They beat the Warners, for heaven’s sake!”

Boris’ ears fell, his widened. “I-I didn’t think of that.”

“Everyone we meet will be in danger with these guys after us Boris,” Bendy pushed.

Boris gulped and nodded. “But then, how are we gonna get the piece and the map?”

Bendy pursed his lips. He didn’t really have an answer there. Odie had warned them about the crazy magic they were going up against. Even if he used his talent to its fullest, Bendy didn’t think he could best her.

Boris’ ears perked. “I-I have an idea.”

“Uh?” Bendy asked, but Boris was already walking back to the table. Mugs had snagged the day’s paper and was reading it with wide eyes.

“Mugs, we’ll make a deal with you,” Boris said, sitting down again. Mugs looked up with wide eyes.
“You and Cups have to come after us, right?” Boris asked. Mugs dropped his head in shame. Boris took that as an answer. “But it’s just us…right?” Mugs looked up at Boris a little confused.

Bris swallowed as Bendy slid into the seat next to him. “So, how ‘bout this. We help you get your brother back, and you guys leave our friends out of this?”

“What?” Bendy asked.

“Uh?” Mugs blinked in surprise.

“I don’t want to hear about how another one of my friends is in the hospital, so whadda say?” Boris lifted his hand. “Do we have a deal?”

Mugs hesitated for a moment. He looked at Boris and his offered hand with an unsure expression. He lifted his gloved hand and shook Boris’ hand. “Deal. As long as they don’t attack us, we won’t touch ‘em.”

“What? Just like that?” Bendy’s jaw dropped a bit.

Mugs nodded. “Just like that.”

Mugs let go of Boris’ hand and pushed the newspaper to the brothers. “And I gotta ask, what’s all this stuff ‘bout you fellas? You’re showing up in the papers more and more, and I got it at first, but now I’m lost.”

Bendy and Boris leaned over to see their wanted posters and a picture of Oddswell on the front of another Toon Town Times. Bendy looked up at the date and gasped.

“What?” Boris asked.

“That date can’t be right!” Bendy yanked the paper off the table.

“What?” Boris leaned over Bendy’s arm to look at it.

“How long were we in the swamp?” Bendy asked with alarm in his eyes.

“Just two days!” Boris said with certainty. “We were in the temple that first night.”

“But this says it’s been five!” Bendy shook his head.

“We only spent one night at Mama Odie’s house! That can’t be right!” Boris brought a hand up to his head in amazement.

Bendy dropped the paper back on the table, his eyes also wide in surprise. His voice quieted in shocked astonishment. “What is going on here?”

Chapter End Notes

(Mercowe)
I have to be honest here. I think this is one of my favorite chapters. I laughed so much at how Boris was able to manipulate Bendy into working with Mugman.
"Bendy was completely taken aback. “D-don’t compare me to him! I’ve never killed
anybody!"

“No, but the first time I saw you, you were hugging a huge hunk of stolen ham,” Boris said flatly.


On another note. When I started breaking out in mad hysterical laughter and Tap was like, "Well, I guess I did a good job?"
When I told her which part I was laughing at, she told me that she hadn't even meant for that part to be funny. It was awesome!

Lastly! Since there weren't any awesome typo puns that I found this chapter I'm going to share a little life pun that happened between me and Tap this morning.

I was getting ready for class when I hear Tap talking in the background. "Oh no...I have to take my life."

I turned around and was like, "What! No! What are you talking about!"

Tap looks at me. "No...," raises a huge textbook with the word *Lifespan* on it, "I have to take my life...It's my heaviest textbook..."

How does stuff like this happen in the real world?

#punsaremylife

See ya'll next week!
TAP and Mercowe out!
The Odd Joke

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

So a cup, a wolf, and a demon walk into a voodoo shop...

Chapter Notes

Hello, hello my lovely readers!
How has your week been? Mine's been grand! I found my ring (WWWOOOOHHHHHOOOOOO!!!!!), and I am working hard on school work and staying on top of it all. I've made fun plans with friends, have good health, and the Meatly has given a tiny hint to chapter 4 of the game, and both their and my story are rolling out like gold. ^^
I am just very pleased with everything in my life right now. It's nice to be happy and have things just work out, and of course to have such wonderful readers as you! I can't believe how awesome you all are! I mean, we've made it to chapter forty for heaven's sake! What! And even if you're shy or too busy to leave a comment, that's fine. I hope you have a wonderful weekend! Enjoy the chapter! ^^

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mugs couldn't believe his luck. He didn't know if he was extremely lucky or unlucky. First, he got kicked out of the boat casino by the frogs, then he couldn't find Chalice no matter how many graveyards or mausoleums he went through. He was so hungry after days without food that he gave an entire day to a restaurant that would have called the cops on him eventually. Then he was saved by the B brothers! Them, of all people! He had been mortified for a half minute. They were the last people he ever thought he'd see there. The last people he'd ever wanted to see him struggling as he was.
And yet...

They had paid for him. They had defended him. Sure, they didn't get it was him, but they were good people. And when they realized it was him, and he realized it was them, the horror that rose in him was terrible.

Then, before he could get his thoughts straightened out they had run. He didn't know what he was going to do, but he had to stop them. He had to talk to them. He didn't know if he wanted to thank them or what. He just...hoped they could help. So, he had swallowed any idea of pride and begged on his knees for them to at least listen.

The demon was having none of it, but the wolf was again kind to him. He couldn't believe it. The wolf had calmed his older brother, and they had gone to get drinks and talk. He couldn't believe it. How could anyone be so forgiving as to even give him the time of day after what they'd seen of him and Cup?
So, it was in the state of awe and shame that Mugs explained his situation and weathered the harsh words Bendy threw at him. And when they went to talk privately, he had spotted their pictures again.

He had been surprised by the article. Sure, he was used to the news being way off the mark. That was partly his and Cup's fault from messing with people’s memory of what happened, the boss’ was keen on them staying secret. But this! This was a mess. That lizard guy was accused of experimenting on people and the B brothers were suspected of working with him and the mob. It has even speculated that the Warners had been going to squeal and the B bros had dealt with them. Mugs shook his head. Some of the stories were over the top. They mentioned spotting Boris and Bendy in Toon Town, Sillyvision, Warnerburg, the Far Far West, Sweetwater, Talentville, Seven Sands, and other places. It seemed the boys were everywhere, or people’s paranoia about them was everywhere. That was probably it.

Then, Boris was back and had made him an offer Mugs couldn’t refuse. It was fair, and Mugs did feel bad over what he’d done. He just hoped Cup would keep the deal too. His bro was going to be so mad.

Mugs showed them the paper and they reacted. They panicked over the date. He didn’t get it. Something about losing track of time. He watched curiously as they talked their way through whatever was going on and calmed down.

They had left the place after that and had a near scare with a cop on the streets. Bendy was able to distract him, and they got away. Once everything had calmed down the trio got down to planning their attack in a shady corner of a local park. Mugs had to describe the attack he and Cups went through a couple more times. They had the bones of a plan, Mugs being the heavy hitter, would have to face the Voodoo Queen directly. Bendy would handle the shadows and other minions. If Mugs and Bendy could distract the woman enough, Boris was gonna slip by and find Cups and their stuff. The two had been disheartened when Mugs told them there had been dozens of dolls that moved about the shop and attacked him with needles. He didn’t quite get why that was an issue, but he didn’t press. He was just happy to finally have help.

“So, that’s it then!” Boris said cheerfully.

“Yep, sounds good.” Mugs smiled. His stomach suddenly growled loudly. Mugs blushed and hunched his shoulders. “Golly, excuse me.” He had been trying to ignore his stomach all day.

Bendy was giving him an unreadable look. Mugs felt uncomfortable with his piercing light eyes gazing at him. It was like he could see straight through him.

“When was the last time you ate?” Bendy suddenly asked.

Mugs blinked in surprise. “Uh.” Did he have to tell them? “Yesterday, I think. I had lunch at that last joint and couldn’t pay.”

“They didn’t feed you anything since then?” Boris asked, surprised.

Mugs shook his head. They offered, but he’d just owe them more. He had wanted outta there as quick as possible. He was still mad that he had let himself get in trouble like that.

Bendy sighed. “Well, it’s nearly supper time anyway. Boris, why don’t you go look for a good place to eat.”

The wolf’s ears stood up and he looked a bit surprised. “By myself?”

“Yeah, why not? I’m tired, and I’ll have Mugsy here with me to keep an eye out,” Bendy said with
Boris narrowed his eyes in suspicion. “Can I really leave you alone with him?”

Bendy frowned. “What? You don’t trust me? We already have an attack set up against that thieving woman. I won’t waste all that effort. He’ll be fine when you come back to show us where we’re eating this evening.”

Boris frowned and pointed to Bendy. “Be nice.” Bendy gave him a smirk that didn’t comfort Mugs. Boris, though, seemed to take it as some kinda sign. He turned on his paws and walked away without his backpack. Mugs watched him disappear behind a corner quickly.

“You sure he’ll be okay? I mean, those shadow things came after you guys too.” Mugs looked over at the demon. Bendy had leaned back on his backpack like it was a pillow. The pack was propped up against a tree. He lifted his hands behind his head and turned his smirk on Mugs. It reminded him a bit of Cup.

“Oh, yeah. He’ll be fine. Boris knows how to use the streets and crowds,” Bendy said. His tone was light and friendly now, but his eyes were as sharp and cold as knives. Mugs didn’t think Bendy’s opinion of him had changed at all. Mugs couldn’t blame him for that, but it left him without a clue of what to do or say. He was already on thin ice with this guy and now his best defense (without violence) had just walked away.

“Ah,” Mugs said and dropped his eyes down to his gloved hands. He fiddled with his scarf. He could still feel Bendy’s eyes on him. The silence continued. Mugs decided he didn’t get these guys. They were way too nice. Even though Bendy hated him, he was still getting him dinner. Or was he just pretending to be nice? Was he expecting Mugs would owe him something? Or maybe Bendy was going to attack him despite what Boris told him. He was little, but Mugs had a feeling that there was more to him then met the eye. Who knew what he was capable of, especially when he was angry. If he was anything like the boss or Black Hat, Mugs could be in hot water real quick. Mugs guessed he had some freaky powers and little care for those he didn’t deem worth his time. But what did he know?

He heard Bendy sigh and shift. He held his breath and mentally prepared for the worst. “Look.” Mugs looked up to see Bendy’s eyes had softened, just a little. He was sitting up with his hands rest on his crossed legs, his tail flicked like a bored cat’s. “It’s nothing against you personally. I just don’t like running around with people that are trying to hurt my brother and me. I can’t relax around you, and I don’t trust you.” He sighed and scratched the back of his head. “I can’t forgive people that endanger my bro.”

Mugs blinked. He could understand that feeling. He was just surprised to hear it from someone like the demon sitting before him. Bendy didn’t seem to type to share his honest feelings. He looked like a fella that would rather come off as slick and tuck his brother away in another room. He got that Bendy wouldn’t forgive him and Cups for what they had done. It only made sense. Maybe Mugs shouldn’t compare this guy to the boss and Mr. Hat after all. They didn’t seem to have anything in common. Mugs shifted uncomfortably under the demon’s gaze. “I got ya,” Mugs muttered. He should be used to this, but he wasn’t. For some reason Bendy was different and answering to him for the things he’d done didn’t make him angry or defensive. He did feel ashamed as usual, but there was a sadness too, like he had just kicked a kitten by accident.

“No, you don’t,” Bendy said coldly. Mugs looked back up to see Bendy was glaring at him. “Let me finish before ya go jumping to conclusions.” Mugs hunched his shoulders and nodded. Boy, that glare was scary. Bendy sighed and his eyes softened again. “So, I can’t forgive people that endanger Boris. Which means I also can’t forgive myself either.” Mugs’ brows furrowed in confusion. Bendy
shifted and pulled a knee up. He rested his arm on his knee and gazed out at the people walking along the park. Couldn’t forgive himself? Now, Mugs knew not to compare him to Mr. Hat or the Devil at all. They never felt ashamed of their actions. Maybe he didn’t have any dark powers either.

A bird sang above them cheerfully. “Ya get what I’m saying?” Bendy said softly. “There are things in this world we can’t help. I can’t leave Boris, but bringing him with me is putting him in danger. I chose this. I let him come because I know he wants to. He wouldn’t stand for me leaving him. I also selfishly don’t want to do this alone. Do ya get it?” Bendy turned his sharp gaze back to Mugs.

Mugs gazed back at the demon with confusion. He wasn’t sure he got it. He blamed himself to bringing Boris along. What did that have to do with Mugs? Bendy raised a brow and Mugs shook his head. Bendy sighed. “What I’m tryin’ to say here is that, well, just because you do something bad doesn’t make you a bad person. And just ‘cause you are a bad person doesn’t mean you can’t change.” He shrugged and fell back on his backpack. He lifted his arms to stretch and relaxed them behind his head, interlacing his fingers. “It all depends on what you choose to do. Who knows what the future holds.”

Mugs blinked and looked down at the grass. He absentmindedly started running his fingers through the grass. Choice, huh? If he could make everything up to everyone back home, would he? In a heartbeat, but he didn’t know how. How can he make that choice if he didn’t even know where to start?

He went back to what Bendy had said. Was he a bad person? Looking back over the past year or so, he couldn’t say he was proud of what he had done with Cups. There was a lot he felt bad about. He gave Bendy a quick glance before looking back down. Bendy was resting with his eyes closed, but Mugs didn’t think he was asleep. He now felt bad for attacking Bendy and Boris too. They had only helped him so far. Sure, Bendy had been mean about it at first, but now…now the guy was even trying to give him advice. This guy was really weird…but in a good way, Mugs guessed.

There was one big problem though. Cups and he didn’t have a choice like Bendy did. He couldn’t just say ‘I quit’ and walk away. The Devil had their souls. If they screwed up enough or openly rebelled, he was sure they’d wind up in hell….or worse. The thought was terrifying, and Mugs had had a number of nightmares about it to back it up. Still…if he was a bad person, could he change that? Could he be good and still work for the Devil? It sounded crazy, but then again, he had never thought of himself or Cuphead as ‘bad people,’ so maybe they could? It’d be tricky, but maybe.

“Don’t,” he swallowed feeling a little nervous, “Don’t you worry you made the wrong choice?”

Bendy opened a curious eye to gaze back at Mugs. “All the time,” he said. “But I have to do something. I can’t let fear get in my way.” Mugs felt his stomach clench. Isn’t that what Mugs was doing? He was afraid of messing up, so he always let Cups make the choice. He always ran away from the responsibility because he didn’t know what to do anymore. Nothing seemed like the right choice, no matter what he and Cups did, it always went so horribly wrong. That wasn’t fair to Cup, though. He had always left it up to his big brother. Sure, Cups was smarter than he was, and Cup always seemed to know what to do, but Mugs shouldn’t put all the responsibility—all the blame on him.

It hadn’t always been like that. There had been times when Mugs had protested, times where he had tried to stop Cup when they were kids, but as the stakes got higher the quieter he had grown. He didn’t like risky, big choices. The last big choice Mugs had made had nearly gotten Cups killed after all…Mugs shuttered at the memory.

If Mugs had even been a few minutes later…
“What’s on your mind?” Bendy interrupted Mugs train of thought.

“W-well,” Mugs startled. He scrambled for something to say and asked the first thing that popped into his mind. “You really love Boris, don’t ya?”

“Of course. He’s my little brother. We’ve been through thick and thin together. There isn’t a better guy in the whole world,” Bendy said like it was obvious.

That was amazing to hear. Again, he was so open about his feelings. Mugs felt a tiny peg of envy. He tried to shake off the feeling. Mugs bit his lip, and decided that in the temporary truce they had it should be okay to ask…maybe. “But are you two really brothers? I mean, since he’s a wolf and you’re a, well, a demon. Doesn’t it get tough or…” Mugs trailed off awkwardly gesturing to him.

Bendy snorted. “We’re brothers in everything that matters. So what if I’m a demon and he’s a wolf? He’s still my brother.”

Mugs felt himself smile. He thought that was swell. Even in the brief time he had spent with them, he could tell they were close. It was a brotherly love that could melt any heart. Just then, Boris came back. If the wolf was surprised at the calm atmosphere around the two, he hid it well.

“I found a pretty swell place that doesn’t seem too expense.” Boris threw his thumb over his shoulder.

“Perfect.” Bendy rolled up into a standing position and grabbed his bags. Boris retrieved his own bag and Mugs stood and brushed off his pants.

As they headed to the spot Boris fell into step with Mugs. “Sorry for my bro’s attitude. He means well.”

Mugs nodded. “I get it. He’s just trying to be safe.” That little talk had been good for Mugs.

Boris sighed. “Yeah, I just wish he’d go about it a bit different, insteada flyin’ off the handle.”

Mugs chuckled. “Cup does the same thing. I think it’s a big brother thing.”

Boris shook his head, his dark eyes alight with humor. “Don’t give them an excuse. They’ll just run with it.”

“I can hear you, ya know,” Bendy grumbled behind them.

“Good, then maybe you’ll work on your manners.” Boris grinned.

“Yeah right, ‘cause manners are important when dealing with people hunting you,” Bendy snarked.

The tone he used had Mugs laughing. Even if it was about him, it was directed at Boris. It was like a parent catching their kid trying to bring in a stray animal.

“Bendy.” Boris rolled his eyes.

“I’m just saying, even if everything works out for all of us now, doesn’t mean it’ll work out next time,” Bendy huffed. That sobered Mugs. It was true that once Mugs had Cup back, it would be back to business. He didn’t know what to do about that right now.

Before the two could really break out into a real argument or Mugs spiral into a pit of worry, they found themselves at the entrance of a quaint little place. The square building was simple, and the round outdoor tables were clean. The windows revealed a humble wooden floor and tables spaced
with care. A few people scattered about, but not the crowd of the last place.

Boris opened the door and the others followed him in. They had just decided on a table when a waiter stepped in front of them. He was a rather thin man, his skin light and hair line receding.

“Sorry, we can’t serve you,” he said nervously. Mugs blinked taken aback. That was odd.

Boris furrowed his brows, one of his ears fell, as did his tail. “Why?”

The waiter glanced at Bendy, then back to Boris. Mugs looked at them. He was fine. Boris had a ripped pant leg, and the two seemed a little dirty, but just as much as any of the field workers around the area.

“Why?” The waiter drew out the word uncertainly. Bendy narrowed his eyes and frowned. The waiter looked at the three with something close to alarm. “Well, you see sir, we, uh-,” the fella’s eyes dropped down, and Mugs thought his shoulders relaxed a touch, “We don’t serve people with no shirt or shoes! It’s a health thing,” he said quickly. Mugs raised a brow skeptically. What was this schmuck on about? They just wanted a meal. Mugs felt annoyance tickle the back of his mind. He looked around the restaurant. Mugs spotted a horse and a goat sitting in the far back corner of the room. Both had their hooves uncovered. Mugs did a quick scan of the rest of room. There was a mix of shoes and bare paws, claws, and hooves scattered about. This guy was full of hot air.

“O-oh, sorry.” Boris’ ears fell, and a flush of embarrassment came to his face as he glanced down at his partly, covered paws. “I didn’t-”

“Don’t apologize to him Boris.” Bendy suddenly pushed in between the two and glared up at the man. Mugs also felt his annoyance shift to frustration like Bendy. “You wanna tell us why you really won’t serve us, pal?” Bendy’s glare was piercing.

The man, Mugs looked at his name tag, Phil, visibly paled.

“’Cause it seems to me that you have no problem with bare feet around here,” Bendy continued. “So, insteada making my brother feel bad, why don’t you spit out the truth?” His voice was ice and Mugs felt a chill in the air.

The man leaned back and muttered something. The other customers were taking notice of the scene. Mugs leaned forward and was able to get the end of his words. It was a prayer. Uh?

Bendy sighed and rolled his eyes. He seemed to understand what was going on with this oddball. “Really? Are you serious? Fella, listen. That doesn’t do anything to me.”

“Ple-Please leave,” the waiter begged. Phil was sweating bullets by now.

“Wait a moment, sir.” Mugs felt a light bulb turn on over his head as he realized what this was about. “He’s a good guy. Don’t kick him out.”

The pale man was shaking his head. Phil said in a shaky tone, “Yo-you’re m-m-m-making a scene. I have t-t-t-t-to ask you t-t-to go.”

Bendy sighed again and shrugged. “It’s not worth it. Let’s go.” His voice was laced with familiar disappointment. There seemed to be a weight on his shoulders. Mugs glanced to Boris to see his tail tucked and head down. Mugs then looked at the curious costumers that were whispering to each other and watching. His frustration went up a few notches.

“Sorry,” Boris mumbled to Bendy and turned to leave with his brother right next to him. The relief in
the waiter’s eyes was the last straw in the cup man. Mugs walked in front of the thin man with a frown and a glare.

“Wait a moment,” Mugs called back to Bendy and Boris. He then focused on the waiter. “You should make it clear to folks that you don’t welcome everyone at your restaurant.” He pointed a chastising finger at Phil. “That way good folks like the ones behind me don’t have to waste time with your, uh, your biased attitudes.” The waiter glanced behind him nervously. Mugs noticed that the customers were falling quiet to hear him. “They’re good men, and you should be ashamed of how you’re treating them. You won’t meet two fellas more willing to help ya out when you’re in a pinch.”

Phil seemed baffled at Mugs defense of the pair. Mugs huffed and turned on his heel with his head raised proudly. He wouldn’t slug the guy, but it was tempting. Bendy and Boris also seemed shocked. They both stared at the cup man with large eyes as he walked past.

“Best to find a kinder place to eat. I’m sure the food there will be better too,” Mugs said as he knocked the door open and walked out. Boris and Bendy followed him after a moment. Once the trio was down the street, Bendy started to snicker.

“Did you see that mook’s face? He was about to cussing wet himself!” Bendy chuckled.

“I was too busy watching the customers. Some of them looked like they were about to clap or get up and leave too,” Boris said.

“Did they?” Bendy glanced behind them.

Boris nodded. “A few.”

Bendy smirked.

“Does that happen to you guys a lot?” Mugs asked. He still felt a bit steamed.

“Eh, occasionally. It’s not too bad. It’s rare when we have to deal with a real stickler.” Bendy waved it off.

Mugs didn’t think that was fair.

It didn’t take them long to find a different place to eat. Before Mugs knew it, they were about to face the Voodoo Queen and get Cuphead back. The nerves danced up and down his spine now that they were walking down the alley.

“You fall back, bro,” Bendy said. Boris nodded grimly.

“Be careful, bro,” Boris said, patting Bendy on the shoulder.

Bendy smirked. “Of course. When am I not?”

“You don’t want me to answer that,” Boris said, taking a few steps back.

“Hey, I’m not the one that invited a thug to join us.” Bendy lifted his head smugly.

“I was following Mama Odie’s advice, Bendy!” Boris shook his head. Bendy chuckled.

“Uh, fellas, her place is right there,” Mugs muttered uncertainly.

“Right, right. Let’s go,” Bendy said, and he and Mugs finished walking down the alley to the door.
“Be ready for anything,” Bendy said, suddenly serious. Mugs nodded and gulped. He readied a blast. It glowed a gentle blue at his fingertip. “Meant to ask about that,” Bendy mumbled looking at his finger. He shrugged. “Too late now.”

The two approached the door cautiously. All was silent, except the rustle of the dying leaves on the great twisted tree.

“We go on three,” Bendy said.

“Okay.” Mugs nodded.

“One,” Bendy put his hand on the doorknob, “Two.”

The door suddenly swung open, and something grabbed Mugman and dragged him in. Mugs let out a shout of surprise as he disappeared through the doorway.

He found himself hanging upside in the creepy shop, held up by his ankle. The Voodoo Queen was laughing as she stood by the table. “Ya’ll really thought I didn’t know you were comin’, suga’? You’re cute.” She was holding the strange bone knife she used on Cup. Mugs grit his teeth and looked around quickly. The crystal ball was on the table, but that was it. The dolls were running and hopping around the room ecstatically. Bones were bouncing on the shelves, and the skulls clanked with grinning glee. The room already held a swirl of green and purple fog. Strange purple symbols pulsed and dance through the dark space. All the candles were out, the only light being the terrible magic Queen Facilier had brought. Mugs took this all in instantly. He twisted up and aimed at his ankle to free himself.

But.

There was nothing to shoot! He was just hanging in midair! What? But he felt the grip around his ankle. Where was it? He twisted about, trying to see what was going on. Facilier laughed. “Havin’ trouble there, boy? Just relax! It’ll all work out. Be good, and I’ll even take ya to your brother.”

Mugs eyes went from searching for his captor to Facilier in a venomous glare. “Where’s Cup?” he demanded in an icy tone. He pointed his blast at her, and she snickered.

“Careful now. Use that, and you’ll never see him again.” Facilier lifted one of her fingers and moved it back and forth in a chastising manner. Mugs scowl deepened, he didn’t move his weapon off her.

“You’ll give me back my brother or I’m gonna make you wish you’d never touched a card in your life,” Mugs threatened. She laughed.

“Mugs now!” Bendy called from somewhere behind him. Mugs reacted and fired. The blue blast hit her wrist and knocked the blade out of her grip. She laughter turned into a shriek of pain. The force that was holding up Mugs suddenly disappeared. Mugs tucked into a roll and sprang up in front of the woman. He nearly caught her, but a mask swung down and knocked him back.

“How dare you interfere!” Queen Facilier shrieked. She cradled her burnt hand to her chest. She glared past Mugs to Bendy. He didn’t have time to glare back, though. The demon was dealing this a mob of dolls, masks, and bones. His eyes were bright red in the darkness as he knocked the items away from him. “You ain’t gettin’ in my way, little man! You’ll be my key to power!” Facilier lifted her unhurt hand and pointed it at him. Bendy’s eyes widened before they glowed brighter and glared back at her. The dolls and bones at his feet seemed to be swept away by an invisible force.

“You think your little shadow pets can do anything to me?” Bendy sneered.
Facilier grunted. Her eye twitched. “Why you little-agh!” She was launched back and hit a wall on the other side of her curtains.

Mugs eyes widened, and he looked back at Bendy. The demon had dropped to a knee, panting. “Don’t…call me…little,” he huffed out. Mugs took a few shots at the masks that tried to close in on Bendy. He easily knocked them away. Bendy gave him a thumbs up in appreciation. Mugs nodded then tried to get to Facilier before she recovered. Mugs spotted her leaning against the wall. He took a step closer, only to have an explosion knock him onto his back. Facilier tossed a little box away from her. She used the wall to stay standing.

“You think you already won?” she snorted. Mugs scrambled up and took several shots at her. Masks dove in front of her as she inched her way along the wall. Mugs growled. Long distance didn’t work on her. He’d have to get in close, but she had already proven she had several tricks up her sleeve. She carefully headed toward the curtains. One miss step could be his end. But he had to stop her so-

Mugs raced at her. He blasted the masks that swung down to get in his way. He dodged in a puff of smoke to stand right before her. Queen Facilier gasped as he grabbed her wrist in a vice grip. “Give up,” he hissed. “Or else.” He put pressure on her wrist, causing her to cry out. He could feel her bones shift under his gloved hand.

“Bite me!” she shrieked back and slashed at him with something in her burnt hand. Mugs jumped back just in time to dodge the sharp end of a blade. He blinked in surprise. How had she gotten that dagger back? He didn’t have time to think about it as she waved her free hand around, the purple and green swirling around her before shooting out in all directions. The strong wind forced him to shut his eyes for a moment.

When he opened them, his heart stopped. He knew this room. Daylight filtered through the round windows. A simple circular rug sat in the middle of the room, a short table stood on it, holding a cup of pens and an old inkwell. A sketchpad lay next to it with a half drawn picture on it. A picture of him and Cups as kids. There was the rocking chair between the old phonograph and the warm furnace with it’s door open. The fire crackled cheerfully on the wood logs. More logs rested on the other side of the furnace, ready to be used. The boys had to carry them in, and Mugs had always complained about how heavy they were until Cup made it a competition. The phonograph that was playing a painfully familiar song, the one about the sword from the old stories Mugs grew up on. Next to it was the map that Mugs had never bothered to look at closely. Now, it was fuzzy and indiscernible. Above that were pictures. Him, Cups, and Elder Kettle. Another of a younger Kettle in armor. One of the boys when they were tiny.

Mugs felt a lump rise in his throat. He looked around some more. The kitchen was the same organized mess of bottles, containers of ingredients and spices. The grandfather clock ticked the same, familiar, unwavering march. The old worn stairs led up to the bedrooms, and the front door had their rain boots waiting beside the umbrella for wet weather. There was the cheery welcome mat, the cushy chairs that he and Cups liked. There was the vase of flowers that Elder Kettle kept fresh on the side table. The boys had broken so many of those vases by accident with their rough housing.

Mugs felt tears prick his eyes. It was all the same, but he was different. Too big. Too weighed down.

“So, this is everythin’ you gave up for your brother.” Mugs spun around to see the Voodoo Queen eyeing the photographs on the wall. Mugs growled at the intruder.

“Calm down suga’ I ain’t gonna do ya harm ‘ere.”

Mugs raised his finger, untrusting. Facilier rolled her eyes and waved a hand. Purple fog spun around Mugs. He gasped and suddenly his prospective changed. He blinked and looked down at himself.
He gasped at his smaller form. His scarf was gone. Actually, his whole wardrobe changed. The room was suddenly seen from the right angle. His stomach turned at the realization. He was a kid again.

“Ya had your childhood stolen from ya.” She sounded sad and turned her eyes toward the window. Mugs followed her line of sight, and his jaw dropped. There Mugs was with Cups. They were kids again, young and carefree. They were laughing and headed toward the path away from the house. “All ‘cause’a your brother’s greed.” The image swirled and showed Cuphead clutching a roll of paper to his chest and a look of fear, guilt, and anger on his face, his eyes bright with unshed tears and mouth turned down in a scowl. Mugs was standing opposite him. He was pointing accusingly and yelling, though the Mugs in the room didn’t hear anything from outside. Cups started arguing back silently.

Mugs knew this moment. The fight they had after Cups had gambled their souls. He didn’t want to see this again. “Stop,” he whispered. The Mugman outside shook his head angrily and threw his hands up in the air.

“If you had just let ‘im walk, then ya might still be ‘ere,” Facilier stated. The boys outside were growing more agitated. “But ya didn’t. You went with him. You helped him hurt so many people in your homeland.” Mugman pushed Cuphead away and the boy stumbled back.

“No! Stop! Don’t!” Mugs couldn’t take his eyes off the two. Maybe if he went outside! Maybe he could stop his past self from making that mistake. A look of hurt shock crossed Cuphead’s face. Cup’s eyes hardened, and he said one last thing before turning and walking away. The Mugman outside shook a fist at him and shouted something at his retreating back.

Mugman turned to the front door. “It won’t do ya any good boy. That out there is the past. Ya can’t go changing that.”

Mugman stopped. That’s right. This couldn’t be real. It had to be some kinda illusion. He spun around on her, his finger bright with a barely restrained blast. “Why are you showing me this?” His voice was icy cold with anger he’d hardly known he’d had.

Facilier eyed his blast warily. “Your brother has made all these choices for ya. He even turned me down for ya, but now I’m askin’ you.”

“I’m not helping you with anything.” Mugs scowled.

Facilier chuckled. “Not even to see him again?” She gestured to the window again. Mugs glanced out, but kept his attack ready. There, Elder Kettle had one of his large hands on the past Mugs’ narrow shoulders as Cup disappeared from view. Mugs felt his stomach drop. “He’s been lookin’ for ya boys ever since ya disappeared. He’s used his friends, finances, old favors, and so on in ‘is search.”

The image shifted again. It wasn’t outside of the home anymore. Facilier approached the window, a green fog dancing around the rim of the image. It was of Elder Kettle, he was walking with purpose towards the casino. “He was so determined that he even went to the Devil.”

Mugs gasped. Elder Kettle’s cane moved rhythmically as he marched into the dark establishment. He stood bravely before a grinning King Dice. “What is he doing!”

“Oh boy, did your boss never tell ya? He tried to trade his soul for yours and your brother’s! It was awhile back, though.” Facilier laughed. The image shifted again, and the determined Kettle was standing opposite the Devil on his terrible throne. The Devil was laughing and pointing at the old kettle man. “Course the Devil didn’t take the deal.” The Devil said something and Elder Kettle
shook his head. The Devil scowled and spoke again. Elder Kettle banged his cane silently against the floor and retorted. The Devil sneered a nasty smile and waved a hand. “That poor old man.” Mugs was choking on his emotions as two of the casino thugs escorted Elder Kettle off the property. He had tried to take their place? Why?

“At this rate that old man ain’t gonna live to see ya two again.” Facilier waved her hand again. The image changed back to the yard of the house. Facilier turned a smirk on him. “You’re breakin’ his heart, boy. You needa get home, and I can help you do that if you’re willin’ to help me.”

Mugs flinched. “N-”

“Oh, don’t tell me suga’.” Facilier pointed behind Mugs. He turned around to see Elder Kettle sitting in the old rocking chair. Mugs’ blood turned to ice in his veins and his heart dropped somewhere by his feet. Elder Kettle was older, more weighed down and duller than Mugs had ever seen him. There was a dent in his side that hadn’t been there before. His eyes were fixed mournfully on an album he held in his lap. “Tell him.”

Chapter End Notes

...Well holy shinipkus!(I have no idea if that's spelled right. I looked the word up and it doesn't exist according to google.) Mugs! No! My heart is slowly being torn out of my chest...!!!

I'll admit, most of the time I’m completely heartless about this. I try to encourage Tap to make the story as difficult for the characters as much as I can, and I have no regrets...but this was painful. Mugs and Cup need to get their souls back!!!

I was too intent on this chapter, if there were any ridiculous pun mistakes herein, I did not register them. I was stuck to the page. I hope all y’all enjoyed it too! Have a good week!

Mercowe and TAP out!
Mugs froze.

Terror overtook his mind for a blinding second. He wasn’t prepared in any way, shape, or form to face his former parental figure. His breathing had jumped up a notch, in his moment of fear. Panic caused him to hyperventilate.

What was he supposed to say! He hadn’t seen Elder Kettle since they had gone past the first island. They had failed him. They had failed everyone! How was Mugs supposed to face him after all of that! After being gone for so long without a word?

Then he remembered. This wasn’t real. It couldn’t be. He couldn’t be on Inkwell Isle, and he couldn’t be a kid again. It was all an illusion. This wasn’t the real Elder Kettle. Mugs forced himself to take a deep, slow breath and let it out through his mouth.

“This isn’t real. It can’t be. This is just another one of your tricks!” Mugs turned to glare at the Voodoo Queen. She smiled.

“Oh, is it? Sure, the past was in the glass, but this ‘ere is as real as you and me.” She grinned and took a step to the side. “I snap my fingers ‘ere and that old man there will see ya. Talk to ya. That’ll be real little cup.”

“I don’t believe you!” Mugs lunged at her. She snapped her fingers and suddenly vanished. “Where’d you go!” Mugs turned his head back and forth, looking for the woman.

“M-Mugman!”

Mugs stiffed.
“Could that really be you?” The deep, yet fragile voice asked in disbelief. Mugs turned back to see the wide, shocked eyes of Elder Kettle. Mugs couldn’t bring himself to even breath when he made eye contact. There was a moment of silence that stretched to eternity for the cup man.

Suddenly, the old kettle stood up and stumbled to him. He dropped the album and flew to his knees. “Elder Kettle!” Mugs gasped and hurried to his side to help the old man. He completely dismissed anymore hesitation or suspicion unthinkingly. Mugs lifted a hand to help Elder Kettle stand again, but the old man grabbed him and pulled him into a tight hug. Mugs froze.

“Is it really you? Am I dreaming again? How did you get here Mugman?” The voice and grip were weaker, shakier than he remembered, but the smell of copper and nickel and smoke, like a campfire, with a touch of something sweet and calming was the same. The warm feeling of security and love was also the same, if not a bit alien to Mugs now. Mugs felt tears prick his eyes and his arms lifted without his permission to return the hug. He couldn’t say anything. He tried. He tried to explain how he was there, to tell Elder Kettle that he was sorry, that Mugs missed him, but all that came out was a sob.

“Shhh, shhh, it’s okay Mugman. I’m here. It’s okay. I-I’ve got you.” Elder Kettle rubbed his back soothingly. Mugs couldn’t stop. All the guilt, all the fear and sorrow just rushed back to him, like it all happened yesterday. He felt like nothing changed, and yet, he was still somehow so different. He didn’t belong anymore, yet, he was home too. It didn’t make sense. The conflicting feelings swirled in him and caused his sobs to rack his body. “Oh Mugman, my b-boy. I-I’ve missed yo-you so much.” Mugs realized that the shaking in Elder Kettle’s voice was from him crying too. The old man was weeping too.

After a time, the two were able to calm themselves. Mugs pulled back to see the tear stained face of Elder Kettle. “Elder Kettle, I’m so sorry!” Mugs voice was rough and cracked.

Kettle smiled at him and shook his head. “None of that now, my boy. It’s alright.” Mugs sniffed and rubbed his round nose. “Besides, I should be the one apologizing.”

“What! No, Elder Kettle! It was Cuphead and I! We-”

“I’ll hear none of it,” Kettle said firmly. Mugs snapped his mouth shut at the stern look Kettle gave him. His face softened into sorrow. “I am sure you and your brother have faced many hardships, and I take full responsibility for that. I was blinded by the memories of my glory days. I shouldn’t have encouraged you boys the way I did. Pain can only bring more pain. I should understand that more than anyone. I believed that if you boys were able to defeat every one of the debtors and collect those contracts, you’d be strong and close enough to handle that despicable demon.” Kettle shook his head. “To put that kind of burden on children.” Kettle shuttered.

He looked Mugs in the eye with so much grief that Mugs heart ached. “Mugman, can you possibly find it in you to ever forgive this foolish old man?”

Tears threatened again. Mugs quickly brushed them away and did his best to swallow the lump in his throat. “You have nothing to apologize for. If Cups and I hadn’t gone to the casino in the first place, if we had only listened to you! -none of this would have happened.”

Kettle pulled him into another hug before the old man finally allowed Mugs to help him stand. Mugs went to fetch his cane when Kettle’s voice followed him. “Tell me, my boy, after all these years. How is it that you look the same as the day you left?” Mugs stopped with the cane in hand. He looked down at himself again, at his shoes, pants, and gloves. He was the same as when he was a kid. He could almost believe that the past years away from Inkwell Isle had been some kinda horrible
nightmare.

He looked up at the inquiring gaze of Elder Kettle. He didn’t look the same as back then. There was
a dent in his side, a dullness to his metal, and added crows’ feet in the corners of his eyes. He wore
the years like a shroud over Mugs memories of him. Mugs swallowed and tightened his grip on the
cane.

“I don’t look like this anymore. I’ve actually grown up quite a bit Elder Kettle,” he said. “This is all
a-” all a trick. Mugs eyes widened. He scanned the room for the threat of the Voodoo Queen, but she
was no where to be seen.

“Is everything alright, Mugman?” Elder Kettle asked. Mugs slowly walked toward him and offered
him the cane cautiously.

“Yeah, I, uh, I just got myself spelled to look like this,” Mugs said slowly.

Elder Kettle’s mustache quirked to one side in question. “Spelled? You spelled yourself?”

“No exactly. It was someone else’s doin’.”

“Ah. Well, would you like to be changed back? I love to see you again, but I can imagine that it’s
rather inconvenient for you to be like this again.” Elder Kettle smiled kindly and tapped his cane on
the floor. “Shall we head to the kitchen, and I can brew you something that could help? After that we
can have dinner and talk about everything you’ve been doing since you left.” He sounded so happy
at the thought.

Mugs stomach tied itself in knots. Yes. He would love to do that. It sounded like a dream come
ture…but.

Cuphead.

This dream wasn’t real.

And even if it was, it couldn’t be complete without Cuphead.

“I’m sorry, Elder Kettle. I can’t stay,” Mugs said. The shock that widened Elder Kettle’s eyes caused
Mugs to pause. The shock quickly turned to grief and sorrow.

“Why not, my boy? Can you not stay in your home with me? Not even for a single night?” Elder
Kettle asked. A gloom overcame the old man. He seemed to age even more in front of the cup man
and Mugs felt his heart plummet to his feet.

“No. I-” Mugs’ voice broke, and he fought to regain control of his emotions. Remember your
brother, Mugsy! Cup deserves to be here as much as you do! “I made you a promise.”

Kettle blinked. Mugs continued. “Remember? It was after that fight I had with Cups after the casino.
He marched off in a huff to get the contracts by himself, and I was too steamed to go with him. You
told me that he needed me, and I didn’t want to hear it. Remember that Elder Kettle?” The old man’s
brows drew together. “Well, you got me to see reason, and I promised you. I promised I’d bring
Cups back safe and sound. That I’d do everything I could to help him.”

Mugs felt conviction come with the memory. “Elder Kettle, I’ve only kept half of that promise so far.
I can’t come back without Cuphead. I’m sorry.”

The grief in the old kettle’s eyes didn’t lighten as Mugs had hoped. “Can I do nothing but watch you
walk out my door a second time, Mugman?”

Mugs straightened his back and lifted his head with resolve. “I have to do this, Elder Kettle.” Mugs pleaded with his eyes.

Kettle shut his eyes as if he were in pain. “You’re only a boy.”

“You can’t blame yourself! Elder Kettle, you have to wait for us. Cup and I will come home. We just have to fix things first.” Mugs swallowed.

Elder Kettle turned away from him. “I,” he sighed, “I don’t know how much longer I have to wait my boy, but I will do all I can. I love you.”

Mugs felt the sting of tears once again and swallowed them back determinedly. “Love you too, old man.”

Elder Kettle chuckled. “You sound like your brother.”

There was a heavy silence after that, like the very room was holding its breath in the face of the inevitable. Mugs almost asked. He wanted to, it all felt so real, but he didn’t dare. Real or fake, it didn’t matter now. Mugman knew his brother needed him.

“Goodbye, Elder Kettle,” Mugs said. He turned and suddenly the room shattered like a mirror. Mugs was faced with a moment of complete darkness, and then he could hear shouting.

“C’mone, ya big palooka! Now’s one hell of a time to take a nap!” Bendy’s voice snapped at him from the darkness. He felt like someone was shaking him before a big crashing sound shook the floor under him. Wait. When had he laid down?

Mugs groaned and cracked his eyes open. He sat up and rubbed a sore spot on the side of his head. “What happened?” Mugs looked around to find himself in the dark shop. A couple shelves had been knocked over. Bones, glass, paper, and liquids and powders and plants littered the floor. There were ripped up dolls, smashed skulls, and destroyed masks.

Bendy was wrestling three dolls, a mask, and a shadow at once. He was being held a couple inches off the ground by the shadow. “What happened! I’ll tell ya what happened! You decided to clock out and leave all the fighting to me numbskull!”

“Sorry! I didn’t-”

“If you were that tired, you shoulda said something! Stars, OW! That hurt you little monster!” Bendy growled. Two dolls were attacking his arms with needles and the other was trying to get at his throat. The mask was pressing against his chest. The demon thrashed and ripped the doll at his throat away before taking the mask and cracking it on his knee.

“Bendy!” Mugs scrambled to stand up.

“Forget me! Stop her!” Bendy pointed behind the cup man. Mugs whirled around to see the Voodoo Queen pulling a huge curtain aside. He lunged toward the villain.

“Friends! I call on your strength! Destroy the cup and capture the demon! Our goals are within our reach!” Facilier said excitedly.

A huge mask opened its glowing green eyes. It had a wooden mouth carved to look like rows of sharp teeth. Two huge, down turned horns rest on its head. Mugs almost had Facilier in his reach,
when the mask’s jaw dropped, and a green, swirling portal revealed itself. Shadowy arms reached out and grabbed Mugs. Mugs let out a shout of alarm as his feet were dragged out from under him. He flipped on his back and took aim at the mask.

His blasts seemed to annoy it more than hurt it. The shadows started to drag him toward the portal. Mugs did not want to go through that portal. Green smoke pooled out of the mask and snaked across the floor. It swirled around the destroyed skulls, dolls, and objects.

“Oh, c’mmon! You’ve gotta be cussing kidding me!” Bendy cursed from somewhere out of Mugs view. The dolls stood up, their ripped limbs sewing themselves back together in the green and purple light. Bones fused to become whole again. Three full skeletons stood up. Two were human and one was a huge alligator. Dozens of shadowy nightmares were revealed in the unearthly glow of the magic dancing and withering on the walls, floor, and ceiling.

Mugs was only a few feet from the portal now. He kicked at his attackers uselessly. “Ah, Bendy! A little help!”

“Kinda busy at the-” There was a loud slamming noise, and Bendy let out a string of curses. “You wanna go, you over grown gecko! A bonehead like you doesn’t scare me!” There were more loud crashes and a scream that Mugs had never heard before. “That’s right! You can’t touch me!”

Mugs grit his teeth. It seemed he had to use his stronger blast. He brought his fists together and in a bright burst of blue the giant mask howled in pain. Mugs was lifted in the air, to his surprise, and thrown across the room.

He crashed into someone and slammed into the wall. Mugs groaned and lifted his hand to feel a chip at the side of his rim. “Ow,” he muttered to himself.

Bendy sat up next to him. “Nice job with the skeleton, but did ya have to take me with you?” He rubbed his head with a groan. There were bones scattered around them. Mugs guessed he had crashed into one of the skeleton minions. It didn’t seem to be trying to fuse together again. Bendy hissed as he found a lump on his head. His goggles sat lop-sided on his head. His shirt had a couple of holes in it and there were small cuts over his face and arms.

“Sor-gah!” Mugs shouted as they were both suddenly trapped to the wall. The tail of the gator pressed sharply into Mugs chest and Bendy’s throat. Mugs arms were pinned to his sides. He lifted his hands to shoot the hissing skeleton reptile, but shadowy claws caught his wrists and forced them down.

“You stupid scale for brai-ack!” Bendy choked as the reptile pressed it’s tail tighter into his throat. Bendy lifted his hands to force it back.

“Oh, ah, ya little spitfire! We can’t have ya makin’ more of a mess!” Facilier waved her hands and bright purple symbols formed in her palms before flying at Bendy. Bendy shrieked in surprise as the symbols wrapped around his limbs and locked them in place. “There we are.” Queen Facilier grinned.

“What did you do to me?” Bendy growled. He tried to move, but to no avail. Mugs tried to move too, but he was as stuck as Bendy.

“I wasn’ born yesterday suga’. I know how ta handle your kind,” she said with a smirk. She turned from the wall next to the giant mask and walked back to the table. “Oh, and what am I gonna do with you?” she seemed to ask the chair.
Suddenly, there was a yip of surprise, and Boris was lifted over the chair by the back of his shirt… or the shadow of the back of his shirt. Mugs looked with wide eyes at the strange shadowy creature that was somehow holding Boris in the air by his shadow. The shadow seemed to laugh at Boris.

“Boris!” Bendy called out. Boris was clenching an old piece of paper, a doll and a-

“Cuphead!” Mugs gasped. The wolf pup hugged the items protectively to his chest, curling into himself as he hung there over the table.

“Let him go, you crazy broad!” Bendy thrashed violently, but still he was completely immobile.

She chuckled. “Well, ain’t I in a pickle.” She approached Boris and looked up at him. “You see, I need ta keep one of you boys alive so I can get my hands on your little angel friend. I was perfectly happy with the demon, but you are so cute!”

“Leave me alone!” Boris said.

She laughed at him. The shadow swung him around a bit and moved him over so Facilier could sit down. “Now, you could be easier to keep an eye on, but the little fella over there will be easier to control in the long run. ‘Course, I’m gonna have to do somethin’ ‘bout that there angel blessing first, but all in good time!” She looked at Boris, but pointed to Bendy. She dropped her hand and turned completely to Boris. “And you’ve already broken into my chest. That’s a big no-can-do ‘round here.” She shook her finger back and forth.

“What in the stars are you talking about?” Bendy demanded. Mugs twisted his arms. The shadows’ grip was like steal. If he could just snap his fingers he could get his green pellets and not need to aim…

“Ain’t it obvious?” Facilier turned a dangerous smirk on him. “I can only keep one, so I’ll have to get rid of one of ya. I have to choose wisely too. I can’t be dealin’ with no handful neither.”

“What!” Boris yipped.

Bendy’s eyes narrowed into a glare as Boris’ widened. “If you touch one hair on Boris’ head, I swear to the stars, moon, and sun, I'll bury you so far down in the earth that the worms won’t be able to find you!” Bendy threatened. His eyes flared red, but nothing happened. Queen Facilier laughed from her chair. Mugs almost had it. Just a little more, he just needed his hand free enough to snap.

“We’ll see, now won’t we?” the woman said, completely unfazed. “Lower him,” she told the shadow. Boris was put back on his feet across the table from the queen. He gulped, but stood with his head up and his ears back.

“Why don’t you put my little trinkets on the table, hon?” Facilier asked with a warm smile.

Boris lifted his muzzle with a determined look. “No. These aren’t yours. This map is mine, and the cup is a… a person! You can’t treat people like this!”

Facilier smile turned predatory. “I can do as I please. Those there are mine because I have claimed them as such. Now, are you gonna put them down or is your skull gonna join my merchandise? Do you even know how well a wolf skull sells, suga’?” Mugs couldn’t be sure from the angle and lighting, but he thought Boris paled.

“Don’t you dare touch my brother!” Bendy shouted at the woman. Boris was shaking his head. He hugged the items closed to himself.
Facilier sighed. “Too bad. I don’t have time to train a dog, no matter how cute.” She lifted a hand as Boris turned and dashed away. “Kill him,” she said lightly to the shadows around her. The shadow monsters shrieked in glee and dove for the wolf. Mugs was able to snap his fingers finally and released a line of green, star-shaped bullets. The first burned the shadows clinging to him, and then methodically went after the next nearest enemies, zapping the alligator skeleton and the symbols on Bendy. It wasn’t going to reach Boris and Cup in time! There were too many enemies around!

“Boris!” Bendy shouted.

“Cup!” Mugs echoed his panic.

The shadows shrieked as Bendy reached out his now free hand, his eyes a bright blood red that chilled Mugs to the bone. The gator hissed, but Mugs gave it a strong kick that knocked it’s skull right off. Boris hunched over the items he had and seemed brace himself. The shadow monster’s claws circled him and frozen with inches of snagging him and his shadow.

“I said. Don’t. Touch. My Brother!” Bendy hissed as the bones dropped the demon back to the floor. He didn’t even blink, his eyes completely focused on the shadow monsters around the wolf pup. The shadows shrunk from him in terror and, it seemed, anger. Like they had no choice but to do what Bendy forced them too.

Mugs didn’t have long to think about that as a blinding golden light flashed through the room. Mugs covered his eyes. He couldn’t hear anything over the horrible, unearthly painful screams of the shadows. When the light disappeared and the ringing in Mugs head quieted, he was able to see that the room was shadow free.

Little balls of light drifted through the air like fairies or stars. Mugs’ jaw dropped at the beautiful sight.

“You!” Facilier shrieked. “How dare you!” Mugs blinked in confusion. Mugs looked around to see what happened. The bones around the room had been blasted to dust. The dolls were limp, and the shadows gone. The only things that remained were the masks that seemed to glare in a certain direction with hatred. Facilier was also looking the same way. Mugs followed their line of sight, past Boris who had lifted his head, to see a round woman standing in the open door.

“Now Facilier, you leaves these little chil’ren alone! They ain’t done nothin’ to ya!” The round woman walked in slowly.

“Mama Odie! You came!” Boris’ eyes lit up happily. Mugs blinked in surprise. Seems a friend of the brothers had come to their aid.

“If you were gonna show up, couldn’t you have come sooner?” Bendy groaned. Mugs glanced at the demon and his eyes widened. Bendy seemed pale and exhausted. He looked like he was going to fall over at any moment.

“Sorry dere. I had a hangin’ up ‘bout comin’, but I couldn’ just leave ya boys to dis woman.” Odie tilted her head toward Bendy in a nod. Bendy grumbled in annoyance, but he was smiling.

“Don’t think ya have any say here! This is my house! I am the queen here! You’re trespassin’, ya old coot!” Queen Facilier stood up.

“Shame on you,” Odie huffed. “All dis show and ya only using it for your own selfish gain. You gonna ruin yourself doin’ dis! Have ya sold your soul for your evil tricks, Facilier? How many contracts ya jugglin’ now?”
“Ha!” Facilier barked a harsh laugh. “Don’t patronize me! You, who has been going blind for years thanks to your little angel gift! What good has all your sacrifice got you? A dead husband and a boat shack in the swamp!”

“What!” Boris gasped. Bendy straightened as well and was watching the argument between the two women.

Mugs leaned toward him. “Who’s your friend?”

“A crazy voodoo lady from the swamp. She’s nice, so you don’t have to worry,” Bendy whispered back. Mugs wasn’t sure he was excited about the appearance of another voodoo woman.

“They seem to know each other pretty well,” Mugs commented. Bendy nodded.

“I have lived with little regret in my own choices. The pains I’ve inflicted have been mistakes of good intentions, and I learned my lessons. You have only grown more selfish and cruel, and I can’t stand for it anymore!” Odie waved her hand and it began to glow gold.

“You don’t stand a chance against me,” Facilier scoffed and lifted her hands. Bright green and purple flashed in her palms. Mugs had to squeeze his eyes shut again from all the bright flashes of light.

Things crashed around them, and Mugs worried that some stray shot would hit him or Boris and Cup.

“This is ridiculous! How are we supposed to do anything if we can’t see?” Bendy hissed.

“If we follow the wall we could sneak up behind the queen and ambush her,” Mugs suggested.

“It’s a good enough plan as any,” Bendy muttered. Mugs tried to squint to see, but the flashes threw spots into his eyes. He had to follow the wall with his hand keep up with Bendy. For a little guy, he was really fast. They nearly tripped on several items and a tipped over shelf. When they reached the curtains, the two ducked behind them, and Mugs could finally open his eyes. Bendy sighed and rubbed his forehead. He did not look good. The lights still flashed wildly between gold, green, and purple.

“Golly, they’re really going at it,” Mugs said.

“No joke,” Bendy huffed. “So, how are we gonna get this broad if we can’t even spot her in all that?”

“She was standin’ next to the table. As long as we reach that quietly, I think we have a chance,” Mugs said.

“This is insane.” Bendy frowned. “Let’s go.”

Mugs nodded determinedly. The two crept around through the cloth and guessed that they were behind the table.

“Ready?” Bendy whispered unnecessarily. Mugs nodded. The two lunged through the hang curtains to grab her and found nothing.

Bendy bumped into the table with a grunt. Mugs almost tripped on the door of an open chest. He caught himself on the chair she had been standing next to.

Sadly, it seemed the boys had gotten her attention.
“What'da you two rats think you’re doing!” Facilier shrieked. “Get away from there!”

Mugs looked up in time to see her throw some purple symbol at them. He dodged in a puff of smoke to the other side of the chair. The wood cracked loudly. Mugs tried to blink the spots out of his eyes.

Bendy lifted his arm to cover his face and stumbled next to the table.

“NO!” Facilier shrieked. She lunged for the table. Odie lifted her hand and tripped the woman.

Bendy’s arm hit the crystal ball that was still on the table. It rolled.

Mugs saw the panic in her eyes as they focused on the green ball. He didn’t really think as he fired green star shaped bullets at it.

“No! Don’t touch it! Don’t break it!” Facilier fought to get up. A line fracture appeared in it’s surface.

“STOP!” Facilier threw her hand at them with a bright blast. Odie waved her hand and seemed to stop it from hitting them. The crack grew. Bendy looked at her and grabbed the orb. He lifted it over his head. “NO!” Bendy glanced up at her. He brought it down with a grunt. The orb shattered on the floor.

“No! It’s not my time! It ain’t supposed to happen yet! I still have thin’s to do! What ‘bout my boy!” Her eyes were huge. Facilier got to her knees and looked up at the masks. “This is not what we agreed! I still have time!”

The masks clattered and seemed to laugh at her. The green smoke from inside the ball swirled around the floor and reached for her. Queen Facilier stumbled to her feet in terror.

“Oh chil’, ya didn’t,” Odie said in quiet horror.

“Shut up! No! You can’t judge me! You were never brave enough!” Facilier hissed at her. Then shrieked as one of the wisps of smoke caught her ankle. “Please, no!” she begged the masks again.

Mugs watched in horror as the smoke pulled her, wrapped around her, and overcame her. He was sure he heard Boris whimper somewhere over the screams. A cold terror shuddered through Mugs. Then the fog sunk down to the ground and spread across the ground like a pool of water. Mugs nearly tripped to back up and not let it touch him. It slowly dissipated and left behind the prone figure of Queen Facilier, laying on the ground completely still.

Bendy slowly stepped around her and hurried to Boris’ side. The wolf was staring at her with wide eyes.

“B-Bendy, i-i-is she-,” Brois gulped. “She ca-ca-can’t be-!”

“No, hon. She’s worse than that,” Odie said sadly. She lifted her hand and a soft glow covered the room. There, floating above the Voodoo Queen, was a shadow. It hissed softly when the light reached it and curled into itself. It had the shape of a woman, with long wisps of hair floating around it’s head. Empty places where eyes should be narrowed into a glare. The mouth was turned down in an open frown, showing the form of four fangs. The shadow swiped a clawed hand at Odie weakly, but didn’t seem to get anywhere near the old woman and her warm glow.

“That’s the Voodoo Queen?” Mugs asked with wide eyes.
Odie shook her head. “No. It’s what’s left of ‘er soul. Seems she made a dangerous contract, if she couldn’ pay up, she’d become a shadow.”

The shadow woman hissed at Odie. “She prolly don’t even ‘member that she was once ‘uman. She doomed ‘erself to a half existence as a shadow, never able to be a part o’ dis world again, and never free to rest on the Otherside as souls should when dey ready to move on.”

Mugs shivered as goosebumps raised up his arms. “Does th-that mean all those shadows were once people!”

“She was gonna kill you, and you want to help her.” Bendy pinched the bridge of his nose. “Stars, what am I gonna do with you?”

“Bu-But she said something about ‘her boy’. What did she mean?” Boris asked. There was a weighted silence that followed his question. Bendy didn’t remove his hand from his face. Odie pursed her lips. Mugs felt a cold lump form in his stomach. Oh stars, it didn’t mean what he thought it did…did it?

“Y’all don’t need ta worry about that none. Mama Odie will take care of dat.” The shadow suddenly lunged for the boys. Odie lifted her hand and the light flared bright. “Ah nah, none of dat from you. You go to da place you belong now!” She waved her hand and the shadow shrieked as it suddenly turned around and dove from the biggest mask.

In all the commotion, Mugs hadn’t noticed that the mask still had its huge mouth open and the swirling portal in it. The shadow dove into the portal and the mask slowly closed its mouth. He gulped and took several steps back from the table and some masks that seemed to be watching him with interest.

“Dar now. Ya’ll fellas can move along! Nothin’ for ya’ll ‘ere anymore. Go on, shoo!” Odie waved her hands at the masks like they were annoying birds. The largest mask chuckled at her. The others rattled.

“What dis? What do ya mean, da boy!” Odie gasped. “Facilier, you fool!” Odie said it like it was a curse. “Well, ya’ll can’t have him!”

The masks rattled at her again. She huffed. “Stars fallen contracts and choices! He’s too young for dis mess!” The masks laughed. Odie huffed. “Oh! Shush!”

She turned to the three stunned boys. “Never mind dem, I’ll handle everythin’ ‘ere. Ya’ll have a quest to be gettin’ to!” For the first time Mugs noticed that Odie’s dark eyes weren’t focused on them. They seemed to be gazing at them emptily.

Boris stood up and gazed at her. “Mama Odie, is it true you're blind? Did you go blind because you came here to help us?” He looked heartbroken at the thought.

Odie smiled warmly. “It was gonna ‘appен one way or another hon. Don’t ya get low over it.”

Boris nodded sadly. Then realized she wouldn’t see that and said, “Okay.”

“I’m sorry.” Bendy stepped up beside Boris. Mugs stood off to the side uncomfortably. He felt like
he was a stranger here.

“Nothin’ to be sorry ‘bout! Ya’ll are so sweet!” She stepped up and hugged the boys. Bendy seemed a little uncomfortable, but hugged her back anyway. “Now, ya’ll better hop-a-long! Ya ain’t done questin’ yet!” Boris nodded tearfully.

“Yes, Mama Odie,” Boris said. He handed the doll and cup over to Bendy and folded the paper and stuck it in a vest pocket. Mugs guessed that was the map they had. Bendy turned the cup over in his hands and gave it a thoughtful look.

"Bendy don’t!" Boris frowned. Mugs froze, arms partially raised and ready to dive in case Bendy dropped the cup. There was a look of terror on his face.

"What! I wasn't gonna do anything!" Bendy said, sounding offended.

"I saw that look in your eyes. Leave him alone. Mugs helped us after all." Boris shook his head at the demon. Bendy rolled his eyes and walked over to Mugs.

“So,” he trailed off awkwardly and grimaced. “Sorry about your brother?” He offered the cup to Mugs, who took it carefully, giving him a wary look. He gazed down at the little tea cup and felt tears prick his eyes. He had hoped with the voodoo lady defeated, Cups would just poof back to normal. It was just their luck that he didn’t. Mugs had no idea what to do. Would King Dice know how to fix this, or the boss? Would they help if he asked or would they think this was just another screw up and laugh like the frog brothers had laughed at him.

He felt a hand on his shoulder and looked over to Boris, who still looked glassy eyed himself. “I’m sorry, Mugs. I’m sure we can find a way to turn your brother back to normal.” Mugs felt his heart twist at the kind gesture. He gave Boris a watery smile.

“What’s dis now?” Odie cut in before Mugs could say anything.

“That fellas’ brother was turned into a tea cup by Facilier,” Bendy stated coolly.

“Oh! Dat’s an easy fix. Give it ‘ere. Mama Odie will take care o’ dis a licky-split.” The old woman smiled.

Mugs looked down at the cup and up to the proffered wrinkly hand of Mama Odie. He hesitated a breath before placing his brother in the woman’s hand. She held the cup carefully and felt around it with a focused look on her face.

“Hey Odie, quick question,” Bendy said.

“Mama Odie,” she corrected.

“Where’s your snake?” Bendy asked.

“Left Juju outside. Didn’t want him caught up in all the voodoo and hoodoo and everythin’ flyin’ around in ‘ere,” Odie said as her hands started to glow gently. “Ya’ll could be dears an’ let him in.”

“Sure. C’mon bro, we can get our bags too,” Bendy said. The brothers walked to the door and opened it. A large snake slithered past them, paused to…bow at them? Then continued until it sat at Odie’s feet. The glow grew brighter and little sparks started to form and spiral around the cup.

“Ouch!” Bendy yelped. Mugs was so focused on the cup that he nearly jumped a foot in the air at the unexpected sound.
“Bendy, are you okay?” Boris asked.

“Yeah, I guess there must be a needle or something in this doll. Felt like it practically bit me!” Bendy grumbled. “We sure this is the right thing?”

“I guess. It was the only other thing in that chest. Where else could it be?” Boris said.

“That woman already tricked us once, is all I’m saying.” Bendy sighed. “We better not have to come back here a third time.”

Mugs couldn’t focus on the rest of what they were saying. He was too busy watching the golden light grow brighter and bigger, until he couldn’t look at it directly anymore. He shut his eyes and waited with his nerves on edge for the light to die down. As soon as the brightness on the other side of his eyelids vanished, he snapped his eyes open.

Sitting on the ground, with a stunned and dazed look on his face, was Cuphead.

“Cup!” Mugs threw himself at his brother and hugged him.

“Mugs?” Cup muttered. He gasped. “I can talk again!” Mugs drew back to look at Cups. He blinked and looked at Mugs, then up at Odie. “I can see too! Stars, I missed being able to see!”

He lifted his hands and looked at them. “I have my body back! Sun and moon, I can move again!”

The grinned turned into a smirk. “About cussing time! What were you doing all this time? Did you go off on holiday or something? Do you have any idea how boring it is sitting in a chest all day, huh?”

“Sorry.” Mugs grinned. He knew Cups had been scared. He had been too. He was just happy to have his brother back, safe, and in one piece. The brothers shared another quick hug before pulling back.

“Who’s the old dame?” Cups whispered.

“I am the one dat turned ya back, hotshot,” Odie said. “Ya’ll is welcome.”

“Thanks, Mama Odie.” Mugs smiled up at her. He fought back tears of relief. Cups must have noticed the snake circling her legs, because he suddenly jumped up and moved a few feet away from her.

“Damn lady! You know you have a snake at your feet?” Cups growled, looking down at the reptile unnerved.

Mama Odie chuckled. “Ain’t nothin’ scary ‘bout sweet little Juju.”

Bendy snorted by the door. “Oh yeah, nothin’ scary at all.” His voice dripped with sarcasm.

“Bendy.” Boris frowned lightly at the demon.

“He tried to eat us once. Don’t give me that look!” Bendy shook a finger at Boris.

Cups turned around and made eye contact with Bendy. Suddenly, the room was filled with a tense silence. Mugs could have sworn he could hear the dust settling on the floor. Mugs felt his stomach tie itself into a knot. He gulped and stood up to explain. He opened his mouth, but Cup already fired a shot.
Bendy yelped in alarm. He ducked under the blast. “Run!” He grabbed Boris.

Cup aimed again.

“Wait!” Mugs grabbed Cups’ arm and yanked it up. The bullet hit the ceiling, and the B bros disappeared out the open door.

“What the hell are you doing Mugs!” Cup growled and shoved him off. “They’re getting away!”

“I promised we’d let them go this time for helping me save you!” Mugs explained quickly before Cups could go after them. Mugs put himself between his older brother and the door.

“What!” Cup glared at him. “Are you an idiot! He threatened to drop me!”

“Oh, you heard that...” Mugs shook his head. “It’s just this once! ‘Sides, we got the voodoo lady like Dice wanted, so we should be fine. Right?” Mugs said.

Cup smacked his forehead. “Is there anything else I should know about? Did ya also adopt a puppy while you were at it? Maybe you joined the church too or sank a boat we gotta pay for?”

“W-well…” Mugs looked down at his hands. He tapped his pointer fingers together.

“*Oh my stars, are you kidding me Mugs!”* Cup hissed and grabbed Mugs scarf, yanking him closer.

Mugs was forced to look his brother in the eye. “What did you do?”

Mugs cleared his throat. “Ah, we-well you see, bro. Si-since we were trapped and all, I had to g-get help. I co-couldn’t beat her alone, ya know. So, the-they helped me save ya,” Mugs rambled.

Cup shook him. “Mugs!”

“Okay! I promised we wouldn’t fight or attack their friends, either!” Mugs squeezed his eyes shut.

Cup dropped him…and didn’t say anything.

Mugs opened his eyes to see the taken aback look his brother was giving him. His silence made Mugs uncomfortable. “It was the only way to get you back! I had to bro! An-and we’re good enough that we shouldn’t have to involve anyone else anyway, right? They were real swell fellas, Cup, really! The least we can do is leave their pals alone. Please? I promised.”

Cups glanced at the woman behind them. She was…well, not watching…but listening to them with a small frown. “So, accordin’ to you, I can’t do anything to her?”

Mugs clenched his fists. His mind went back to Elder Kettle and how he had already had to stand up to one family member. “Not if you want to keep the promise that saved your life.”

Cup scowled and sighed. He stuck one hand in his jacket pocket and started walking toward the door. “Are ya mad, Cup?”

Cup looped a finger in Mugs handle and yanked him toward the door. “Ow, ow, ow, ow.”

“If we can’t go after them today, thanks to your stupidity, we better go find something else to do,” Cup grumbled and let go of him. Mugs rubbed his handle gently. “I don’t know about you, but I’m starved. I haven’t eaten in days,” Cups said and stepped out of the building.

Mugs grinned and followed. “Alright! I know a couple good places!” Cup was putting up a front, but he was grateful. At least Mugs thought he was. After everything he had been through and the
shock, Mugs didn’t expect him to be in a good mood. Still, he had taken the news better than Mugs had hoped, and it seemed he would honor the promise. Guess being stuck as a cup forever was a worse thought than restraining himself from going after Bendy and Boris right now. The brothers made their way to the narrow alley out of the alcove.

Mugs glanced behind him to see that the old woman was at the door. “I don’t think I’ve ever met two that needed to dig deeper than dem, Juju,” he thought he heard her say. Mugs blinked in confusion.

“Hurry up!” Cups called behind him. “If ya won’t show me where the foods at I’m just going to head to the frogs’ boat.”

Mugs smiled and rushed to catch up. “Actually, about the frogs, bro…”

Chapter End Notes

Mercowe:
So, I’m pretty sure this is my favorite chapter yet. Bendy was so spicy. And Elder Kettle made my heart ache...

In other news...Me and Tap think she’s cursed, which is funny because she’s a ghost.

So, we all know she lost her engagement ring, right? Then she found it again, but before that her fiance got her two backup rings that they hoped would fit her finger better. Well...after about a week she went out to the car and lost one of them, and then a couple days after that her fiance went to squeeze her hand and the second one cracked and broke...leaving her with the one that’s a little large that she lost and found originally. Now, she won’t wear it because she’s too afraid to loose it.

Poor cursed ghost.

Tap:
Also Twinfeather has been hard at work again! Go check out the beautiful fanart over on the tumblr!


Also, also, Tap never explained how Mugs found Cup after their fight when they were kids and I wonder if it went something like this...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1jfDvborus&pbjreload=10

Thanks for dropping by and we'll see you next week!
TAP and Mercowe out!
Chapter Summary

Bendy and Boris hop on a train back to Toon Town. It should be an easy going trip. Now he just needs to be sure about this doll...

Chapter Notes

Hello lovelies! Sorry I disappeared on you! My fiance and friend took me out of town last weekend, then midterms happened. I'm so busy! XD T-T Still I didn't just drop the ball. It was drop-kicked off a cliff edge. My bad. On a different note, did you know I've written a novel? OwO Inky Mystery is longer than any of the Lord of the Ring books and all the Harry Potter books except Order of the Phoenix (and it won't take long for Bendy to pass that up too) It floored me. Mercowe says by the time I finish this it should be the length of a complete series. =+= Mmmmmmmmkay. No more staling. Here's the chapter!

Bendy didn’t stop running until they reached the train station. The boys stopped in front of the building, gasping for breath. Bendy put his hands on his knees as he drank in as much oxygen as he could.

Boris leaned against the wall, panting with his tongue lolled out of his mouth. “You could’ve- pant-waited for two- huff-minutes so Mugs coulda'- pant-explained.”

“I wasn’t gonna- huff-wait for our- pant-heads to get blown off!” Bendy answered. The two of them were sweating in the cool air. Several people glanced at them as they walked by. Bendy worried they’d be recognized any moment and have the cops called on them. They only stayed long enough to catch their breath. Bendy had them quickly move inside.

“Sides, with the voodoo nut gone and Mugs' brother returned, the truce was over. I wasn’t gonna test the loyalty a single meal would buy us from that guy,” Bendy said, now that he could breathe easily.

Boris frowned. “Mugs was nice, though.” The two found the line for the train tickets and stepped in. Again, they got a couple of glances, probably for their muddy shoes/paws and the rips in Bendy’s shirt, not to mention the cuts on his arms and face. They would have to clean up and change as soon as they could.

Bendy rolled his eyes and shook his head. “We need to sit down and have serious discussion about the difference between ‘nice’ and ‘trustworthy’, bro. You keep this up and we are gonna get
mugged, or kidnapped, or killed before we can ever hope to get the machine fixed and running.”

Boris’ ears fell.

“How can I help you?” The ticket agent asked in a monotone voice. He had a large hooked nose and greasy hair brushed back. He didn’t even look at Bendy when he spoke, just focused on the papers on the counter in front of him.

“Two tickets for Toon Town.”

“That’s a two-day trip, sir. Do you want private suites or public?” the agent said.

“Private.”

The fella got the tickets and finally looked out…and then down at Bendy. He paused in the motion of handing over the tickets, looking Bendy up and down. Bendy raised a brow, daring the man to say anything.

The man paled and gulped. “Y-your tickets, sir.” He put them at the edge of the table. Bendy rolled his light eyes and slapped the cash next the tickets.

“Cussing coward,” Bendy hissed as he snatched the tickets away and marched toward the train. The man flinched back as if Bendy had slapped him.

Boris glanced back at the ticket agent before focusing on Bendy again. “Bendy, I think we’d better clean up and change before we get on the train. That guy smelled like trouble.”

Bendy nodded and the two slipped into the public restrooms to change and clean up the best they could.

“What I wouldn’t do for a shower,” Bendy sighed. He adjusted the goggles back on his head after having washed them in the sink. Boris nodded, wrung out his bandana as best he could, and brushed his fingers through his tail a couple more times before putting his gloves back on.

“If the cops show up, we spit up and don’t meet at the room until the trains starts moving.” Bendy handed him one of the tickets.

“Right.” Boris checked that they still had the map and then the two headed out.

Once outside the two saw policemen being led train security and ticket man who had helped them. Bendy and Boris instantly parted without a word and blended seamlessly with the busy crowd. Whispers of the feared B brothers were hissed around different clusters of people as Bendy weaved his way through. He put his head down, keeping his body completely loose and relaxed. He and Boris had years of practice disappearing in a crowd from when they’d lived on the streets. They were used to being unnoticed and acting invisible. It was easy as long as one didn’t panic.

Bendy eventually made a beeline to the train they would be leaving on. He casually avoided any police or security and focused on the whispered rumors as he passed.

*I heard they’re in the city,* one voice said.

*Some sort of mob trade-* another whispered and then cut themselves off.

*I heard they came to silence the mayor! It's because of his new policy to crack down on the dock* cri-Bendy moved on.
"Can’t believe things have come to this.

But they’re so young! Can’t they really be that dangerous?

-I a bunch o’ cuss! Told ya demons ain’t ta be messed with!

-Uge politically ploy to get that man back in office.

Bendy sighed. It was never ending, it seemed. No matter where he went, there were always crazy rumors. Next, he’d be leading a cult. There’d be insane followers trying to offer him sacrifices or something.

Bendy peeked at the door to the train cars. There were men waiting at every door, asking for tickets. Bendy pursed his lips. It was them combing through the people for him and Boris. Bendy raised a brow as he looked around. He was sure he could slip in, he just needed an opening. He slowly circled the train, looking for his chance. After nearly hitting the end of the train, Bendy spotted the luggage car. With a smirk, the little demon easily slipped by the chests and bags that were still waiting to be loaded. He hopped up the stairs and found a dark little corner between two chests and a pile of crates. He silently chuckled to himself over how easy it was. The room was deem and smelled of old leather, moist wood, and metal.

Then footsteps started to come towards him. Bendy froze. Stars. He had spoken too soon. The steps grew closer. Bendy held his breath. If he got caught now, it was all over. He had cornered himself there.

“Where should I put dis one?” a man grunted.

“Don’t ask me! Anywhere, I guess,” another sighed. “The dame that was rattling off at us just wouldn’t stop. I tuned her out. She can get the annoying yapper when she gets off.”

Bendy saw a pair of shoes walk towards him, a covered cage in tow. The guy lowered the large cage and pushed it toward him. Bendy pushed himself against the wall as far as he could go. The cage stopped short of his boots. The caged at the worker.

“That should be good enough. C’mon, we’re running behind thanks to all this hubbub,” the second guy said.

“Oh, golly. The thought of thugs like that ‘round gives me the willies,” the guy in front of Bendy said. “Murderin’ and causin’ all kinds a havoc.”

The second fella scoffed as they moved away. “It’s a load of rubbish. The whole nation claimed they’ve been seen here or there anywhere from the coast ta the border! Ridiculous! ‘Sides, they’re just a couple boys!”

“But didn’t you hear? The little one is...” Their voices disappeared into the wash of noise outside the car. Bendy let out a sigh of relief. That had been too close. He was just about to move when the cage started to growl at him. Bendy quirked a brow and raised a foot to take a step. The cage barked at him now, loud and angry. Bendy flinched and looked around. No one was coming. He lifted a corner of the blanket that covered the cage. It was a very unhappy poodle. Bendy scoffed and hopped on top of the cage.

“Chill out. At least you didn’t have to sneak on the train,” Bendy muttered and slipped off the other side. The dog barked and threw itself against the cage causing it to rattle. “Gee, do ya wanna get me caught?” Bendy frowned. He found a new corner and hunkered down until the whistle sounded. The train workers didn’t come near him again...well, except one time when they passed him and one of
them stepped on his tail with their heavy work boots. Bendy had to bite a knuckle to stop himself from cursing and going after the guy.

As the train rolled out of the station, Bendy nursed his tail. He was so sick of stuff happening to his tail. Maybe he should always wrap it around himself like a belt. This was getting ridiculous. Bendy eventually got out of the luggage car and casually made his way to the front of the train and their room. He passed through a dining car, rows of seats mostly full of people. There was an empty seat every so often. Bendy guessed most of these people would be getting off before the day was over.

He didn’t spot Boris at all. He wasn’t worried. They were supposed to meet at the room. No one really looked at him, which was nice. He was able to make his way quickly to the front of the train. He checked the ticket for the room number. He had just figured it out when a hand landed on his shoulder and pulled him into a room. Bendy nearly took a swing at the person.

“Hey, bro.” Boris smiled. “Sorry to give you a start.”

“Boris? What the cuss are you doing? I nearly decked you!” Bendy growled. Boris smiled.

“One moment.” Boris snatched the ticket out of Bendy’s hand and disappeared back out into the narrow corridor. Bendy leaned out of the compartment to watch him knock on a door. A man with a handlebar mustache opened the door. He smiled at Boris. The wolf offered him the ticket and the man took it gratefully.

Bendy looked around the room. There were two narrow beds, bunk bed style, practically fitted into the wall. A simple wood ladder lead up to the top bunk. A small table with two chairs sat by the large window. On one wall was shelves with glasses and an ice box. Other than that there was one tiny closet, a trash can, and a sink in the other wall with a mirror and cabinet over it. There was another door. Bendy peeked in to see a toilet. In a word, the place was tiny and cramped. He didn’t know what he’d expected with it being on a train and all. The walls were simple wood panels and a stiff rug floor.

Boris reentered the room. “What was that all about?” Bendy asked him.

“I traded rooms with someone. Hopefully, that will help confuse any workers that are keeping an eye out for us.” Boris shrugged. “I think as long as we hide you when they come knocking, we should be fine.”

“Me?”

“They’re looking for a wolf and a demon. Which is more common in public?” Boris asked.

Bendy huffed, but didn’t deny it. He had only ever seen one other demon besides himself. “So, how did you get on the train?”

“There was a large family of dogs getting on. I just kept close with my head down and followed them on like I was one of the family,” Boris said unpacking his bag on the top bunk. “What about you?”

“I got on with a dog too.” Bendy smirked and worked on unpacking. He put his toothbrush by the sink. He caught Boris giving him a look, but the pup didn’t ask for more information. Guess he wasn’t in the mood for Bendy's jokes.

Bendy pulled out the doll and froze. “Uh, Boris.” His bro looked over the edge of his bed.

“Yeah?”
“I think we got the right doll,” Bendy gulped. Boris tilted his head with one ear raised when Bendy lifted the doll to show him. Boris gasped. Instead of a random looking man in a suit, the doll now resembled Bendy. It had on crude goggles, a simple shirt and vest, pants and boots. His tail was loose and thin. The stitched eyes seemed to be looking back at them.

“How in the world did this happen?” Boris asked in awe. “It looks just like you!”

“I know,” Bendy said, turning the doll this way and that to give it a look over. “Didn’t that paper say something about an imprint or whatever?”

Boris dug up the translated page again and they looked over the description for the doll.

*With the application of the doll, differing sizes, ages, and families will no longer matter. The treatment will be applicable to all living beings.*

One will have to beware the singular use of the doll. The connection it can have with the form it takes is as real as the doll being an extension of the individual.

*To use the doll as a singular function is to give it a physical part of the individual where the doll will imprint and change shape to reflect the one it has part of. It is as simple as a drop of blood, a hair, or claw and so forth.*

*With the doll in the form of the individual, one can enact their will over the imprinted individual. Pain and damage to the doll will give the same pain and damage to the imprinted. Yet, fixing the doll will also fix the imprinted, as long as the individual is alive. There is a limit, and it will only fix physical damage, not illness. This is not the intended use.*

*I n application with the machine, the doll will change to the form of the individual without the use of the part of the individual. Thus, the danger of an effective full imprint is diminished. The doll will remove the problem with application to the treatment. The individual’s body will accept the treatment no matter the species of the individual.*

“A physical part…so when this dumb thing bit me?” Bendy asked.

“What does it mean ‘one can enact their will over the imprinted individual?’ That sounds a bit scary.” Boris looked over at Bendy with worry in his dark eyes.

“Dunno. Think we should test it?” Bendy asked, looking down at the doll again.

“How?” Boris tilted his head. Bendy offered the doll to him and Boris blinked at it.

“Take it and try something,” Bendy said with a shrug. Boris lifted his eyes to Bendy with a look of apprehension.

“Are you sure?” Boris asked as he gingerly took the doll.

“I trust ya.” Bendy nodded.

Boris looked at the little doll, his brows furrowed in concentration. He pursed his lips and pinched the dolls side. Bendy flinched. Boris’ eyes flew to him. Bendy’s eyes were huge. He had felt that. Like a giant invisible force had just grabbed him. “Sorry!”

Bendy shook his head. “It’s fine. You didn’t hurt me, bro. That was just really weird.” Boris still looked at him worried. “Try something else.”
Boris looked back down at the doll. “Like what?”

“I don’t know. Put it in the sunlight.” Bendy shrugged. Boris put the doll on the table. For a while it seemed nothing happened as the waning rays of sun from the window landed on the doll. Boris kept watching him and then the doll. After a bit of time, Bendy started to feel a bit hot.

“You’re sweating and flushed. Are you okay bro?” Boris said. Bendy brushed at his forehead to feel it was damp.

“I feel hot,” Bendy said. Boris shook his head in amazement and pulled the doll into the shade.

“I don’t know if we should keep messing with this.” Boris said as he shifted uncomfortably. Bendy pursed his lips and got up to grab the doll. Boris watched with wary eyes.

“We gotta know what this thing did to me…or is doing to me.” Bendy took one of the arms and circled it gently. He didn’t really feel anything. He tugged on the arm and suddenly he felt the tug, even though his own arm didn’t move. He pulled a little harder to the point it just barely hurting then let go. Bendy hummed. Could this thing break his bones even if it didn’t have any bones of its own? If it got bent the wrong way, would his arm or leg just snap? He couldn’t really afford a broken arm to test that.

He did bend the arm a little, but didn’t feel anything.

“Bendy?” The demon looked up to see the worrying wolf. “Are you okay? What should we do about this?”

Bendy shrugged. “Be careful with the doll? If messing with it messes with me, we’ll have to keep it safe until we can hide it in Oddswell’s house somewhere.”

“Think there’s a way to stop it?” Boris asked. Bendy shrugged again. He put the doll on his bed. Boris eyed it for a moment.

“It’s fine Boris. I’m fine. We’ll, uh, figure something out.” Bendy smiled. “Sides, this means we got the right doll, right? We really did it!”

Boris’ eyes went over to Bendy and widened. “Yeah!” he agreed with awe and a small smile. “You’re right. We did get the part we wanted!”

Bendy looked at the doll. “Though, I have no idea how this thing is supposed to work in a machine.”

“Like you said, bro, we’ll figure it out,” Boris said with a determined grinned. Bendy nodded. Boris’ hopeful smile dropped a little.

“Uh, Bendy, about what happened at the shop.” Boris rubbed his arm and looked at the ground. “Sorry I got caught. I almost ruined everything.”

Bendy blinked and stared at Boris in surprise. “No, you didn’t. Mugs and I got caught too. Don’t apologize. We were all in over our heads there.”

Boris sighed, his ears drooped, and his tail tucked. “I just keep thinking…maybe if I had done something different, then maybe she wouldn’t have been turned into that thing.”

“Hey, that wasn’t on you. Mugs and I broke that orb. We did that, bro, not you.” Bendy frowned and put a hand on Boris’ arm. “Odie even made it sound like it was that lady’s fault in the first place. She had the dangerous orb there, after all.”
“Yeah,” Boris agreed weakly.

Bendy narrowed his eyes. “You’re not feeling bad for her, are you? Boris, she tried to kill you!”

“I know,” Boris said just as weakly. He looked away from Bendy.

“She almost killed me!” Bendy lifted a hand.

“I know,” Boris stated a bit louder.

“And Mugman!” Bendy waved his arm.

“I know Be-“

“And you remember what she did to that other cup guy!” Bendy continued. “She was not a good person, bro. You can’t be nice to everyone and hope-”

“I know Bendy! Would you shut your trap for a second and let me explain?” Boris barked. Bendy’s eyes widened, and he nodded. It was rare that Boris looked at him with such a serious glint in his dark eyes. “It’s not that I pity her. It’s that I worry. I don’t want people to die because of us.”

“Boris-”

“Not done!” Boris raised a finger in warning. Bendy snapped his mouth shut.

“I don’t want my brother to kill. It’s,” Boris seemed to struggle for the words. “It’s not right. We could easily become the people the newspapers make us out to be.” Bendy pursed his lips in order to not speak up. “And I know she didn’t technically die, but Mama Odie said she didn’t remember being human. And then…” Boris trailed off and got a far away haunted look in his eyes. “Then Mama Odie had mentioned something about a boy. I mean, she might have a kid, or at least a family member! And I don’t think it’ll matter much to him if she had died or became that thing and can never be a person again. To that boy, she’s gone. And we did that, Bendy.” Boris looked at Bendy with pain in his eyes. They seemed glassy with unshed tears. “I don’t want people to get hurt!”

Bendy felt his own brows knit together in concern. He hadn’t thought about that. No, he had purposefully blocked it out. She had attacked them. She had what they needed. He had done what he had too. End of story. Black and white…but the world didn’t work that way, did it? He just had to think about how people looked at him, judged him, and knew how unfair reality was.

“Boris,” Bendy said gently. “I understand that. I don’t want to hurt anyone either, but we have to do this. We have to get those parts, it’s the only way we’re gonna get a cure. We can’t just run away from the bad guys like when we were kids on the street. We have to stand and fight now…and that means people will get hurt. If you don’t fight, they’ll kill you, bro.” Bendy let some of his worry show. He fell quiet to let his words sink in. He didn’t want to tell his brother this, but Boris had to defend himself. Bendy couldn’t live with himself if anything happened to Boris. His brother had to stand up for himself. Boris took a deep breath and nodded with a bit more energy this time.

“Life is hard, but you have to get up and-”

“And keep moving forward,” Boris finished. “I know.”

“Where’s my happy widdle wolf?” Bendy smiled.

Boris’ smile came automatically. “Here I am.”
“Good. We have a long ride now, and I think we have earned some down time.” Bendy stretched his arms over his head. Boris smiled and agreed.

The boys enjoyed a calm evening as the sun was setting through the window. Bendy was finally able to pull out his book again. After going through his own terrifying temple experience, he saw Felix’s story in a new light. Boris took a nap.

It was nice. There was a minimum of stress compared to what they had just come from. Probably stress free, compared to where they were going. Bendy put down his book to look out the window and think. The crescent moon glowed softly in the night sky. Stars twinkled around it in their usual patterns. The shadowy landscape slipped away into darkness seamlessly. The shadows were calm, hardly a whisper to Bendy.

He guessed they’d head back to the casino outside of town again. He couldn’t really think of anywhere else to go in that city without them getting caught. He wanted to go find the Warners and Red, just to make sure they were okay. It had been week, maybe they were all out the hospital. It would be pretty hard to find them in that city if that was true. They could still be there, but that would mean that the Cups had done a real number on them. Bendy frowned.

He didn’t really know what to think about those guys now…well, at least Mugman. The guy seemed okay, if a bit weighed down. It had probably just been worry for his brother. He hadn’t come off as the big, tough thug Bendy had originally imagined him to be. Sure, he was still force to reckon with in a fight, but he wasn’t a cold, bloodthirsty villain. Maybe…what happened to Wilson had really been an accident? But then, what about Wilson’s team? The owl had been framed for those deaths the way he and Boris were framed. Then, there had been that fire at the other town before the owl showed up in Sillyvision…and the fire at the garage.

Did Mugs do all that? Him and Cup?

At first, Bendy had no doubt, but after meeting the guy, fighting along side him…Bendy wasn’t so sure anymore. Bendy’s mind turned it over and over. Was he being too trusting? If he dropped his guard, that would put him and Boris in danger. It shouldn’t matter. Their truce was over. The next time he saw those two, their magic bullets would be aimed for him. End of story…right? He remembered Mugs yanking Cups shot away. Maybe…

There was a knock on their door. Bendy jerked his head up. “Excuse me?” a man’s voice asked. Bendy dove up the ladder and shook Boris.

“Wake up! Someone is at the door,” Bendy whispered.

“Mmmmmuh?” Boris groaned. The was another knock.

“If I have to stay out of sight, then you gotta open the door, bro,” Bendy said and slid down the ladder. He hopped into the closet. He heard Boris trip down the ladder and make his way to the door. Bendy peeked through the door. Boris opened it just as the man was knocking again. He almost clunked Boris on the forehead.

“Oh! Terribly sorry, sir,” The man said drawing back. “I am here to inform you that the diner is about to be closed. We haven’t seen you in the dining car. Is everything alright?”

“Oh?” Boris mumbled blurredly. “Ah, uh. Yeah. I have just been tired all day and turned in early. I didn’t really think about food.”

Bendy bit his knuckle to stifle a cough and narrowed his light eyes as he tried to listen. He attempted
to silently clear his throat, but the cough turned into a fit. Bendy turned away from the door. He didn't have much room to move. Bendy hunched over and choked silently into his clenched fist. He couldn't make a noise without his hiding place being found. If that happened they'd be in cuffs faster than Bendy could finish a bowl of bacon soup.

It wasn’t until a burning feeling rose up his throat that Bendy realized this wasn’t just a cough. He cursed to himself as he bit his lip and his mouth filled with the disgusting taste of ink. He sank to his knees as he spat it onto the floor, hunching over he watched the black liquid drip thickly onto the wooden floor of the dim closet. The taste was acidic and made him want to gag more. He ran his tongue over his teeth and spat again. Disgusting. He held back a groan of pain as his stomach twisted. Not now. Bendy didn't think he could stay silent through an attack.

Bendy could still hear Boris talking to the train worker, reminding him that he couldn’t make a noise. Hell, even with the guy gone, Bendy still wouldn’t be able to make a sound. The walls weren’t sound proof. If he cried out, they would know. They couldn’t get caught. They couldn’t! They had to get the other parts and find that machine.

Bendy fought the urge to look through the slit of the door. He wrapped his arms around his chest like he could hold himself together. The little demon pushed himself to the far wall of the closet. On the floor it didn't make any difference, but he didn't want to watch as the growing puddle of black spread across the wood sluggishly.

Seconds started to turn into hours as the pain in Bendy grew. All he could do was bite down and curl in tighter-try to hold himself together somehow-as the inner fire became an inferno. His body felt like it was being torn apart, atom by atom, from the inside out. It felt like his lungs were shrinking, stomach and heart were turning into lava. Bendy silently whimpered. His throat closed up and he leaned over to spit up another gush of the foul ink. His breath left his throat in a shaky wheeze and returned in a pained gasp. The demon's tears mingled with the ink that was dripped from his head, running down his face, staining the collar of his shirt and joining the mess before him in the cramped space.

Suddenly the closet brightened. A shadow crossed over him. “Bendy!”

Bendy looked up to see Boris, his mouth hanging open and a look of horror widening his eyes and dropping his ears. He reached down to touch the demon and Bendy tensed. If he moved, he’d break. Bendy was sure of it. The fire would burst out of him if touched. The wolf must have seen that in Bendy's anguished eyes, because he froze, turned, and left. Ink dripped down Bendy’s face. He was panting for air that didn’t seem to reach his lungs. Did he still even have lungs? The ink puddle in front of him swam and wavered. He couldn’t focus, his eyes stung from the ink. His hand wiped at them numbly and came away stained and smeared with ink. His ears roared like a continuous tidal wave. Bendy’s scattered mind wondered if it was ink or blood that raced through his veins at this moment. The heat was so intense. A sun must be growing in his chest. Burning away his lungs and heart.

“Here, take it.” Boris was suddenly in front of him with pills and a glass of water. Bendy lifted a shaky hand and took the medicine. Bendy tried to drink, but choked. Another wave of ink and acid rose from his stomach. He hissed and spatured. He hadn't been ready. Ink and water rushed up his nose. He coughed, his nose burning, and spat. Boris patted his back gently. It was cool to the touch, but felt a hundred miles away at the same time. “It’s okay. You’ll be okay.” His voice was steady, but there was an edge to it like he was begging Bendy for it to be true. Suddenly, there was another knock on the door. “Cuss! Not right now!” Boris hissed. Boris glanced at the door tensely, angrily even. Bendy felt himself sinking down to the floor, uncaring of the mess, completely overcome with pain. He lifted one of his hands from the death grip he had on his shirt and chest to grab Boris’ sleeve
before he could pull away.

“Too hot.” He was able to cough out. It sounded horse and rough, barely audible. It was the only way he could hold back the shriek that sat at the back of his throat. It hurt to breathe. The pain was coursing through every inch of him. He had to be dying. Had to be.

“Okay, Bendy. Ju-just give me a moment,” Boris gulped and stared at him with watery eyes before he stood up. Bendy thought he saw ink on Boris’ gloves and sleeve where Bendy had grabbed him. His vision swam again, and he was sure his heart was going to burst at any moment. He thought he heard Boris gasp at something, but he couldn’t be sure. It was all drifting in and out of focus with the waves of pain. The knocking came again, more forcefully. Bendy’s stomach rolled and another gush of ink left him. If he lost consciousness completely, would he ever wake up?

“O-one minute!” Boris said, his voice cracking. Bendy heard Boris shift around and suddenly a cool sensation came over him. The knocking became demanding. Boris came back to the closet. “I put the doll in the ice box,” he whispered quickly before shutting the door with a grimace. “I’m sorry, bro.”

Bendy couldn’t hold back the tiniest whimper. No, he couldn’t do that! He lifted his right hand to his mouth. He bit down on his hand and squeezed his eyes shut. The cool feeling became cold, the icy sensation on his skin contrasting the fire from within. Oddly they didn’t seem to mingle or relieve each other. He felt like there should be some sense of relief, but there wasn’t. He began to shiver. How could this get worse? How could he be freezing and burning at the same time? He forced himself to suck in a breath around his hand. What was happening to Boris? Bendy tried to think through the agony, to hear what was going on outside. It was so hard to focus through the pounding of his heart, the suffocation, the burning, the cold. It was all too much. He couldn't take anymore. How long was this going to last? He's stomach clenched again. Bendy had to move his hand. He spat out more ink into the floor of the closet. He quickly refastened his teeth to his hand. The scream was a muffled moaned that Bendy could only hope wasn't loud. He wanted to wail, to curse, to thrash, and not to ever move again.

“S-sorry, sir! I’ve never seen them before! I’m going to T-Toon Town to visit my sister. Boy, my family has been shocked with how much I look like that one fellow. They've been heckling me about running around with that demon non-stop. It's gotten ridiculous, I tell you. I've had three cops call on me the past week alone! If I ever see them, I'd be the first to turn them in.” Boris' nervous voice spoke loudly and broke through to Bendy. Bendy used every ounce of his concentration to listen, to think of something other than the ink, the taste, the pain, the fact that he was dying, melting, shivering, how sticky his shirt had become, the now slick floor covered in black. The cramped, dim tomb that was this closet.

“Are you sure?” a rough man's voice demanded.

“Yes, sir! Those brothers have been all over the papers. Do you really think they could be on the train?” Boris sounded really nervous.

“There is a chance. Don’t worry son, we won’t let anything happen to the train or you.”

“G-golly gee, I h-hope not!” Boris said. "I'll keep my eyes and ears open."

“Sorry to have trouble you. Have a good evening,” the man said.

“You too officer,” Boris said, and after another heartbeat the door clicked close. Bendy squirmed and shuddered on the floor. How long had this been going on? Shouldn't this be over?

The closet door opened. “Ben-Oh my stars!”
Bendy looked up and could barely make out the horror on Boris’ face. “I’m sorry!” The wolf knelt and gently picked Bendy up. Bendy whimpered and moaned. His stomach tensed, but nothing came.


“You’ll be okay,” Boris muttered. He placed Bendy by the sink and got the doll from the ice box. Boris came back and got a cloth damp and began cleaning Bendy’s face off. The pain was beginning to finally ebb away. It seemed to take forever, though. Bendy focused on breathing, on the feeling of Boris washing the ink away, on the warmth in the room. Why was it taking so long? He’d never had an attack last this long. It had been a few minutes. The worst had lasted maybe a minute even, but this had gone on and on. Were they getting worse?

He glanced over at the table to see the doll, half melted and slowly reforming. What in the world? Bendy stared wide eyed at the strange sight. It seemed to barely shift as it reshaped itself. Bendy narrowed his eyes. Was that it? Was the doll stretching it out? The page had said it didn’t help with the illness and it hadn’t. The cold hadn’t done anything to relieve him... could it be making it worse? Was the attack lingering because of the doll? Why was it like this? Had it been melting with him? Bendy shuttered.

“Are you okay Bendy?” Boris asked. He offered Bendy a tissue.

Bendy gulped and nodded. He blew loudly and the tissue came away black. The pain in his chest had turned into a dull ache around his lungs. He was still a bit nauseous, but it was manageable.

“Could I have some water?” Bendy croaked. Boris got him another glass. Bendy washed out the horrible taste in his mouth. As he put the glass down, Boris grabbed his wrist.

“Bendy! Your hand!” Boris gasped. Bendy looked down to see blood. He had really sunk his fangs in, apparently. “What did you do?” Boris got up to get bandages.

“I couldn’t make a noise. I had to stay quiet somehow,” Bendy muttered, looking at the wounds. He hadn’t felt it at all during the attack.

“What was all that about anyway?” Bendy asked, gesturing to the door. Boris glanced over and then sat next to him with bandages.

“The first guy was just explaining the train’s schedule. The second was a cop that was looking for us,” Boris said as he started to clean up Bendy’s hand. Bendy startled.

“Hey! Don’t move!” Boris ordered.

“Looking for us? He didn’t recognize you?” Bendy asked.

“I may have thrown on your scarf since you left it on the bed,” Boris shrugged. “He seemed suspicious, but with it only being me and no sign of a demon on board, he didn’t sound too convinced that the scary brothers had gone through with their plan.”

Bendy snorted. “Pro’lly thinks we bought tickets for one train and then snuck on another.”

“That’s actually really clever. Can we do that next time?” Boris asked.

Bendy smirked. The two fell quiet for a minute as Boris finished with his hand. The wolf started to clean up the floor with the ink stained towel. Bendy attempted to help, but Boris wouldn’t let him. Bendy gave up and went to the bed instead. He stopped when he spotted a puddle of congealing ink staining the blankets and pillow.
“What happened?” Bendy asked.

Boris looked up and frowned uneasily. “That’s from the doll.” He answered quietly. Bendy raised his brows.

“The doll?” Bendy asked slowly.

Boris hesitated and glanced at the table before looking at Bendy again. He started to wring the towel. “I-it started to melt. I sorta panicked when I saw it?” Boris turned his back to Bendy and washed the towel off in the sink before getting back to work on the floor. Bendy frowned and watched Boris work in silence. “I didn’t know what to do about it and when you said you were hot, I thought maybe the ice box would stop it from getting worse.” Boris’ voice sounded brittle.

“Sorry, bro.” Bendy looked out the window. This little thing was freaking them both out, but Bendy needed to be brave. A little guilt tugged at his heart. He didn’t want to put Boris through this too.

“I’m just happy it stopped. I don’t want to know what would’ve happen if the doll completely…uh.” Boris’ ears fell and he swallowed.

“Yeah, we’d lose a piece of the ink machine! All that work for nothing! No sir, we can’t stand for that, I fought too many reptiles for that stupid thing to lose it,” Bendy tried to cover up the unspoken thought. He huffed and walked up to the table. The doll was completely fine now. Bendy could have sworn it smirked at him. He noticed there was a tear in the doll’s arm. Bendy blinked. He picked it up and looked at it. The tear was at the end of the stumpy arm and it almost looked like…

Bendy glanced at his bandaged hand and then back at the doll. A thought came to mind. That page had said it worked on injuries, right? “Hey Boris, do you have a sewing needle and some thread?”

His little brother tilted his head to the side.

“Uh, yeah, but it’s pretty late Bendy. Don’t you think you should get some rest?” Boris asked.

“I will after I try something. ‘Sides my beds a mess.” Bendy waved his hand toward the ink puddle. Boris finished cleaning up the floor and went to get his little patch kit. Bendy looked at the closet, silently thankful that it was wood and not rug like the rest of the compartment.

In a few short minutes, Bendy had a threaded needle in his hand and a very nervous Boris at his shoulder. “Whatever you are thinking, bro, I don’t like it.”

“Noted. I want to try something.” Bendy said. He took the sharp end of the needle and placed it beside the first hole in the arm. He and Boris knew how to patch a shirt or pants, but he had never tried to work a doll before. For a second the unnerving image of him messing up and disfiguring his hand via stitch work crossed his mind, but he shook that thought away.


“You don’t have to watch,” Bendy said. He refocused on the needle. He placed the two torn edges close to each other and pressed the needle into the first edge. He hissed as his hand stung.

“Bendy stop!” Boris reached for the doll, and Bendy leaned away.

“Bro, just trust me for a moment here.” Bendy frowned and shrugged him away. “Go do something else if you’re just gonna get in the way.”

“But you’re hurting yourself!” Boris growled.
Bendy gave him a look. “If I am right, it’ll only hurt for a moment. Just let me do this.”

Boris scowled, not happy with this at all. “We don’t know that. We don’t know how it works!”

“Exactly! We need to figure this out if we want this machine to work and make a cure,” Bendy said. The brothers stared off for a few tense seconds before Boris huffed and stomped away. The edge of Bendy’s mouth quirked, but he didn’t allow it to become a smile.

He went back to slowly stitching together the tear. Now that he knew to brace for pain, he didn’t flinch or hesitate. This was a tickle compared to the ink attack earlier. It was strange to feel the needle and tugging, but to not have is hand move from the tugging. He carefully finished the stitches and snipped the thread. There was a weird tingling feeling in his injured hand. Bendy paused on the second tear and put down the doll. He unwound the bandage and gasped.

Half his injury was gone. All that was left was a shadow of it with a stitch pattern over it…and even that was fading quickly.

“What?” Boris was pushing Bendy’s ruined sheets to the door. He dropped it to see what Bendy was staring at. “Woah! How did you do that?” Boris looked at his hand closely.

“It was the doll, bro. I was right.” Bendy smiled. “I’m gonna do the other one.” He grabbed the doll and needle again. Bendy saw Boris’ ears drop from the corner of his eye, but the wolf took the other seat to watch. Bendy worked just as carefully as the first time, trying not to show any sign of pain.

“Bendy look!” Boris’ shocked voice broke through his concentration. Bendy glanced at his hand see the shadow of the stitches pulling and weaving in his skin. Bendy blinked. He looked back at the doll and kept working until he snipped the thread with his teeth.

Again, the tingling feeling came to his hand. This time he watched as the stitches seemed shifted and wiggle under his skin, pulling his torn skin together neatly and filling in the space until there was only a shadow of the fang marks there.

Boris watched speechless.

Bendy flexed his hand. It was like the injury was never there. “Well, at least it's good for something.”

Chapter End Notes

So, I did find a pretty funny typo this week.

When Bendy gets trapped between the wall and the dog cage there's a moment when he looks inside and originally it said, "It was an unhappy puddle..."

This is what I found. And it's exactly the sort of unhappy expression I imagined. :D https://drive.google.com/file/d/11xm_pMz1gXh3NLfDBFiZsWjRX2FSEP5A/view

Also, on another note. Tap says the gosh darn funniest things sometimes.
So, Tap nearly got into a couple accidents in the past, so when people act stupid on the road she doesn't like it.
Yesterday we were driving home when there was this car in front of us that was tailgating a bus and wouldn't stop at stop signs. It was making her very nervous and upset, so when that car finally pulled into an apartment complex she narrowed her eyes and said, "If I see you doing this again, I'm gonna find where you live...and crayola crayon your car!"

Anyways, I hope you enjoyed the chapter and thought those things were as funny as I did. Have a good week!
Book Three: The Trial - A Monkey Suit

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Bendy just wanted a good drink and to tell that bartender hi. Was that really too much to ask for?

Chapter Notes

Boo! XD
Tap, you say, what is this?!
Surprise reader! I just wanted to post another chapter XP So, I did! ^^ Hehehe. So there!
Mercowe hasn't even been able to look this over. I just wanna get it out. So enjoy and have an awesome weekend!

(Update: The Trial is also known as ‘Die evil weasel snitch man Mr. Winky, Die’)

Besides the doll, everything else was normal for the rest of the train ride toward Toon Town. Boris got him new sheets and the boys were so wiped from the day’s events that they both were out before their heads hit the pillows. They laid low the next day, mostly hanging around the room. Bendy was able to finish his book. It was amazing, Felix was never disappointing. He and Boris talked and played some simple travel games they knew that didn’t involve cards, a board, or dice. Boris played his clarinet a little. A person dropped by to compliment him on his playing, which equally embarrassed and pleased him. Boris also went out to bring them back meals.

The boys realized they had to jump ship when they hit the station Toon Town. The chance of the police ambushing them was just too risky. If they wanted to avoid the cops, the chance of someone following them to the casino and having to sneak around the city they had to leave a little earlier than they planned. This resulted in a day on foot.

Even on foot, it was a relatively easy trip. They followed the road and hid when cars passed by. The weather stayed pleasant enough, if not a bit cold when the sun had set. The leaves had changed, and the smell of fall was in the air. The boys talked about their plans as they walked.

They had no idea if the cops were watching Oddswell’s house or even worse, his people. They tried to figure out a way to get around in public without being noticed. Scarfs and hats had worked so far, but Bendy worried that it wouldn’t be enough. They both knew that the Toon Town cops would have their eyes peeled for them.

They also tried to figure out where they were gonna hide the doll. Bendy suggested they keep it with them. He thought that it was useful, since it took care of his injury. Boris disagreed, reminding Bendy of how often they'd had to run for their lives and the time Bendy's bag had been stolen. The
thought of the doll being stolen or lost during one of those mad dashes for safety made both boys shudder. It was just too dangerous.

Neither boy could think up a good place to put it off the top of their heads. They also had no sure way of contacting anyone they knew in the city. Their only possible connections were the Warners and Red, and that was if they were still in the hospital. If Red wasn't at the hospital, Bendy was sure the cops would have taken her already, and who knew where the Warners could have disappeared to.

After talking themselves into circles, they spent the night in the woods. At one point Bendy's book squished the doll, causing him to fear he was having another ink attack. It had took them quite some time to figure out what was going on while Bendy struggled to breathe. Both brothers were shaken up that night. The doll seemed more sinister the longer the boys dealt with it. It just seemed to endanger Bendy so easily. The demon was beginning to suspect it was fixed on ending him. If a doll could have an agenda that is...

After the restless night, they reached the casino early the next day. Bendy and Boris happily booked a room, immediately took showers and had a filled themselves up at the casino’s buffet.

It was when they were heading back to the room that Boris stopped Bendy. There, on the poster board, was an advertisement for a familiar circus.

“Bendy, can we go? Please!” Boris grinned at his older brother.

Bendy looked at the poster. “It says they’ll be here next week.” He thought about it. “I guess if we don’t have to leave and aren’t arrested by then.” Bendy shrugged. Boris snorted. Bendy looked at the other advertisements and stopped at another board. This one was for the casino.

*With the Voice of an Angel,*

*Come see The Black Hat Casino’s very own*

*Alice*

Bendy blinked. There on the poster was the curvy image of Alice in a tasteful black dress and long gloves. She was standing on a stage with the light glinting off her dark, loose hair. It curled around her face and shoulders. Bendy was amazed at how different she seemed with this one simple change. The lighting made her dark eyes sparkle and her full, dark lips were curved up in a smile.

Huh, he knew she would be pretty with her hair down. He wondered how the bartender had gotten a show. Maybe he should go check it out. Bendy took a step closer to check the time when she would perform.

Boris noticed his interest. “Really, bro?” The wolf rolled his eyes when he saw the poster.

“Hey, you have your circus, I have singing girls.” Bendy smirked at his little brother. Boris snorted. “And anyway, that’s the bartender dame I told you about.” Boris’ lifted an ear and raised a brow. He stepped next to Bendy to get a better look.

“If she’s a bartender, why is she singing?” Boris asked.

Bendy shrugged. “Dunno. Wanna go find out?”

Boris huffed a little. “I already know what your flirting looks like, thanks.”
“Ah, c’mon bro. Just say hi. She’ll prolly like you better anyway.”


“When’s the last time we’ve sat and had a fizz-wizz together?” Bendy suggested. Boris quirked his mouth. “C’mon, bro. Let’s treat ourselves with something familiar.”

Boris thought about it and after a moment nodded. “Alright. Fine. Just don’t be gross,” Boris said with a helpless shrug.

The boys turned around and headed to the bar and pool table. There were a few people around the table. A scatter of folks at tables murmured quietly to each other. Bendy sat at the bar with Boris right behind him. There were two other men there in suits a few seats down from them. They were sipping on drinks and chuckling. They didn’t pay the boys any attention. There wasn’t any sign of a bartender.

“What if she doesn’t work the bar anymore, Bendy?” Boris asked, looking up and down the bar. “I mean, she is singing on a stage now. Maybe she quit this job or got promoted.”

Bendy pursed his lips thoughtfully. He hadn’t thought of that. He guessed she was working earlier since her singing was in the evening when he had seen her here…but there was a good chance Boris was right. She might not work here at all anymore. “Then we enjoy our drinks and go tonight.”

The boys waited a couple more minutes when the kitchen swung open. Bendy looked over to see a thin crane in a kitchen uniform.  “You gentlemen still good?” he asked the two other men.

“As good as we can be ‘til that cutie shows up again,” one of them said.

The crane turned to Boris and Bendy. “Can I help you?”

“Yeah, does Alice still work here at the bar?” Bendy asked. The bird narrowed his eyes suspiciously. “I just wanted to tell her hi and congrats on the stage show,” Bendy added quickly.

The crane didn’t change his expression. An awkward silence fell between him and the boys. Bendy felt his annoyance rise a notch. What was this beak brain’s problem?

“We want two fizz-wizzes too, please.” Boris spoke up. The crane’s sharp look slid over to Boris and the bird moved over to the drinks silently.

“Give me a vanilla,” Boris said.

“Cherry,” Bendy growled, his mood ruined by the suspicious glance the bird kept giving him. With the drinks made, the bird brain slipped back into the kitchen without another word.

“Well…that could have gone better,” Bendy muttered, tasting the tangy flavor of the carbonated drink.

“Yeah, but it could have been worse Bendy.” Boris took a gulp of his drink and hummed with satisfaction.

“Hey, you two. Do ya know the cutie that works back there?” One of the men called to them. Bendy looked them over. They were dressed in sharp, clean suits, nice ties, gold watches, and bright cuff links. They had a sharp look in their eyes that glinted with humor and cunning. They smelled of expensive foreign cigars, cologne, and trouble.
“Maybe, why?” Bendy asked.

“We been tryin’ to get her to spill when she gets off work. Wanna take her out to a night on the town, ya know? Have a little razzle dazzle and such.” The second guy chuckled. His suit was darker than the first guy. He was a couple inches shorter, but a bit broader in the shoulders. His voice was also lower. “The dame won’t give us the time of day though.”

The first guy grinned and winked. “Playin’ hard to get and all. You know how they like to play us fellas.”

Bendy felt his eye twitch. “Oh, yeah?” Definitely trouble. Bendy did not like these guys.

“Yeah, it’d be great if ya could help a pal out. If we know when she’s free, then ol’ Rob here has time to snag some flowers and charms. A pair of gams like that deserves some fun after work and all,” the bulky guy said, patting the first guy on the back. They shared a crude laugh. Bendy grit his teeth. He was all for the chase, he loved ladies, but then there were scum bags like these. They never really had any respect for the girl they were eyeing. They were the worst of the worst in Bendy’s opinion. A girl should always be treated with class.

Bendy felt Boris shift behind him. He glanced back to see his brother frowning at Bendy. The message was clear. Don’t. Fight. Bendy didn’t realize he was clutching his glass tightly until then. Why was he steamed? It was one crude joke. Alice, if it was even Alice they were talking about, had obviously told them no. She could handle herself. She had told Bendy so last time he’d poked his nose into her business. He loosened his grip and took a drink to buy him some time to cool down. It wasn’t like these mooks were talking about Sasha or any dame he was close to either. Hell, Sasha would be a riot to watch as she teared into these schmucks and spit them out on the crib…bet Alice would be a show to watch too. She didn’t seem to be the kinda gal that would just sit there and take it.

“If ya get that tramp we saw back on thirty-first we could do a double night and really go wild, Tom.” Rob poked his friend in the shoulder.

Alice had security here. She didn’t need him to do her any favors, Bendy reminded himself adamantly. He wanted to tell them to take a hike. Stars, she’d been mad at him the last time he acted to protect her! He didn’t really know her anyway. It would only lead to a fight. He should stay out of it. She hated what he was, judged him to be the worse thing to walk the earth. She was cold…but then she had laughed. She’d helped him to his room. She was respectable.

With his inner conflict crowding his mind, he didn’t notice the two men calling to him.

“Hey. Hey! Is that a no? C’mon bud. Let a fella have a fun night,” Rob said.

“You aren’t an item with ‘er are ya?” Tom asked.


“Good. Then ya don’t mind helpin’ us out,” Rob figured. Over Bendy’s dead body.

Bendy sighed and turned back to his drink. “Look ‘pal’,” he said, a touch sarcastic, “We all have to play the game. I don’t think I should help you cheat, even if I could.” Leave him alone.

“You mean ya don’t know?” Tom asked.

“Nope~,” Bendy popped the ‘p’ and took another drink. “If she’s interested, find out from her.”
The two grumbled to each other. “Cussing waste of time,” Tom muttered.

“Ya just want those gams for yourself. Girl like that don’t give street trash a second look though,” Rob said bitingly. Bendy grit his teeth. Did he just-

“Bendy.” Boris’ tone rang with warning.

“I know, bro.” Bendy sighed and took another drink. This had been a mistake. It seemed every time he went over here, his mood was ruined and for what? A girl that didn’t want to give him the time of day. He should just get up and go, get back to the room and relax before they had to go play cops and falsely-accused-robbers. He was sure it’d be the craziest game of cat and mouse he would ever be a part of.

“Hold up, did ya just say ‘Bendy’? As in the B Brothers Bendy?” Tom asked. Bendy stiffened. Boris’ eyes widened in surprise. The two looked over at the men that were staring at them intently now.

“Yeah, yeah. I see it! You’s really are them, aren’t ya?” Rob said with an excited edge in his voice.

Boris and Bendy shared a nervous glance.

“Boy, you two have caused quite a stir.” Tom chuckled. It didn’t sound pleasant. “The bosses are even talkin’ ‘bout you. You boys put a real dent in that whole area ‘round Warnerburg. Never seen somethin’ so nuts.”

“Right! Right! I’d never thought to see you fellas here,” Rob added. He leaned over on his stool now, his eyes hungry. “Hey, what chu in town for? Do ya work for anyone in particular or are you just out to trip every boss in the underworld?”

“Uuuuuh.” Boris shifted in his seat, ready to bolt away if need be.

“I don’t really see how it’s any of your business.” Bendy’s voice was ice.

The thug straightened up. “Oh, is that so? I dunno.” Rob shrugged. “I think our boss would be interested in meetin’ ya.”

“Not interested,” Bendy said instantly. He turned from them dismissively and took another drink. His fizz-wizz was almost gone. This had been a huge waste of time...and a mistake. Now it was taking a turn for the dangerous. He shot Boris an apologetic look. This was the last time he would ever go out of his way for a random dame. Putting Boris in danger was never worth it.

“C’mon now. I’m sure my boss would make it worth your while.” Tom, the meathead, tried to sound like a salesman giving them the deal of a lifetime.

“Nope,” Bendy said simply.

“Is there no way we could convince you?” Rob asked.

“Nu-uh.” Bendy shook his head. They needed to get out. Now.

Tom sighed.

“Well, can I ask ya a question?” Rob asked cheerfully. He seemed completely undeterred.

“You just did,” Bendy stated flatly. Geez, these guys couldn’t take a hint. Rob leaned closer again.
“Are you two really pals of that crazy doc? What was he working on, uh?”

Bendy frowned and gave the guy an annoyed glance. Like hell he was going to tell this guy-

“He was studying ink illness,” Boris suddenly said. Bendy whipped his head around in astonishment.

“Boris!” Bendy growled in surprise.

“What? We don’t want it to be a secret right?” Boris shrugged and gave Bendy an exasperated glance. “He asked.”

“Woah, woah now. Ink what now?” Tom lifted his hands.

“None of your beez wax!” Bendy snapped.

“Bendy.” Boris’ tone was flat.

“Yeah, yeah,” Bendy huffed. He patted his pocket. “Hey, bro, do me a favor. Get in the room and grab my wallet. I left it up there.”

Boris’ ears fell. His raised brow was easy to understand. ‘I know you’re just trying to get rid of me’ were what he was saying with his unamused dark eyes. He glanced at the two men, obviously worried.

“Please? I wanna pay for the drinks and get outta here,” Bendy said, begging Boris to get away. Pack the bags. Be ready for anything.

“Now, now. I’m tryin’ to be friendly here,” Tom said. Boris and Bendy didn’t break eye contact. Bendy tapped his chin with three fingers twice. Six minutes. Boris sighed. Bendy knew he understood.

“Alright, fine.” Boris slid off his stool. Boris tugged his ear. He’d come back when the bags were packed.

“Ah, don’t go little bud. We’ll pay for your drinks,” Rob offered with a beckoning hand.

“No, thanks,” Boris said while he walked away, giving Bendy a sharp look. Bendy smiled at him warmly. Boris was such a cool bro.

“Too bad, we really can be good friends. Nothing wrong with making friends and getting girls out on the town, right?” the meathead asked with a smirk.

“Yeah, right.” Bendy’s voice dripped with sarcasm. Now that Boris was away, Bendy didn’t have to be so careful.

“No need to get nasty. Trust me, little fella, you don’t want us to get mean.” Rob’s smirk wasn’t friendly.

“Don’t call me. Little.” Bendy narrowed his eyes.

Rob smirk became an amused grin, and he raised a brow. “Ya got a bit of a short fuse there, little buddy?”

Bendy grit his teeth again. Oh, fella. He was pushing his luck.
“No need to get upset, it was just a tiny misunderstanding.” He snickered. “We can still work something out between us. I’m sure we could offer you something that interests ya.”

Bendy was sure his eyes flashed red.

They got interrupted by a throat being cleared. All four turned to see a familiar woman and a bulky gorilla in a tux uniform. Alice was only focusing on the two mobsters.

“Hey’a cutie, good to see ya again. I missed you.” Rob instantly played it smooth. Bendy rolled his eyes.

“These are the guys, Jen.” Alice sighed. The gorilla nodded.

“Ah, so this is Jen. I was sure I would see another dame as cute as you with that name,” Tom said. Both casino employees frowned at this.

“It’s short for Jenkins, and Alice is the only one allowed to call me that,” the gorilla growled. He was massive. A good eight or nine feet tall and as wide as Boris was tall. Two fangs barely protruded from his lower jaw. His voice was so low that Bendy could feel the rumble of it in his chest. Alice gave the gorilla a little smile before frowning back at the mobsters. “And you two are done for today. I’m here to escort you out.”

“Ah, no need for that. We were just getting comfy with our pal here.” Rob gestured to Bendy a couple seats down. Alice gave him a quick glance and then snapped her head back to face Bendy with surprise.

“You!” Her eyes widened with surprise, then narrowed. “You know these guys?”

Bendy waved and shook his head. “Nope.”

“Wait, so you really do know her?” Rob asked Bendy.

“Unfortunately,” Alice grit out. Bendy smirked.

“Stars, man!” Rob frowned at Bendy. Bendy raised a brow tauntingly.

“Does he need to go too, Miss Alice?” Jenkins asked. That erased his smile quick. He looked over at Alice.

Alice looked him up and down and sighed. “No, no. Just these.”

Rob put his hand to his chest. “You wound me, sweetie. We’ve just started to get to know each other.”

The gorilla stepped up. “C’mon Romeo. You’re done.”

Rob snorted. “I’ll move when I’m ready.” Something changed in his tone. “And that’s not right now.” There was a threat there. A little flag raised in the back of Bendy’s mind.

“We can either do this the nice way, or the not so nice way. It’s up to you fella,” Jenkins said.

“Go eat a banana, monkey boy. We aren’t done here. We got some business to do,” Tom said. The gorilla looked unamused. Alice stepped out of the way. Jenkins grabbed Tom’s upper arm.

Tom shoved him and pulled his arm free. The gorilla hardly moved, but let the guy go. “Get your
filthy paws off my threads! Try that again and you’ll be out with the daisies.” The meathead straightened his jacket. The gorilla growled and reached for the brute again.

Rob stood up and stepped out of the way and behind Jenkins. Tom started to struggle and argue with the gorilla. Rob reached inside his coat. Bendy narrowed his eyes. “He said back off, monkey man! You don’t know who you’re messing with!” Rob started to pull something from his coat. Bendy saw a glint of metal the same time Alice did. Her eyes widened, and her hands flew to her mouth.

“Young man!” she cried. Bendy was already on his feet. He was sure Rob didn’t see him coming. One minute the thug had a gun out, the next Bendy’s boot connected with his chest and pushed the guy to the ground. Bendy landed on top of him and heard the schmuck’s breath leave him in a whoosh. The gun clattered across the ground.

It only took a half minute for several more employees to appear and deal with the two. Rob made eye contact with Bendy when they hoisted him from the floor. Rob scowled.

Bendy smirked. “Who’s laughing now? That’s what you get for calling me short and being an all-around-mook.” Rob spat at him, but it didn’t faze Bendy in the least. He simply brushed it off.

It took a moment for things to calm down. They took the gun with them, Jenkins thanked Bendy for helping him, and Bendy waved off the praise. When all was done and over, Bendy took his seat back. It was all over in five minutes.

“Hey, doll.” Bendy greeted the bartender with a small wave.

Alice didn’t say a word to him. She walked behind the bar and frowned at him. Bendy finished his drink and gave her a glance. It wasn’t a hateful frown or the annoyed frown Bendy had gotten used to seeing on her. Her thin brows were drawn together in confusion. Bendy quirked his mouth.

“What? Should I’ve not gotten in the way again? I didn’t think the guy was drunk enough for an excuse. He was pullin’ a gun on your pal,” Bendy said and tapped the rim on his empty glass. Alice’s frown deepened. “Not talking? C’mon doll, did I spark your anger again?”

She took a deep breath and dropped her shoulders. She stepped up to the opposite side of him. “Would you like another drink?” That warm, calm feeling came with her, like a gentle sunrise. It completely contradicted her tone of voice.

Bendy sighed at the cold shoulder. Yep, a complete waste of time to come here.

“Sure,” he mumbled. What was he doing here?

“What can I get you?” Alice turned her large eyes down to the glasses under the counter.

“A chocolate fizz-wizz.” Bendy smirked. Alice glanced up at him. Bendy could have sworn he saw a glint of humor in her dark eyes before she turned around to make it. She worked in silence, and Bendy glanced around the room. Most people had cleared out after the show.

“I don’t get you,” she said to the wall suddenly. Bendy blinked.

“Uh?” Bendy tilted his head back toward her.

She turned back around, set his new drink down and took the empty glass. “I don’t get you,” she repeated. “You’re just…odd.”

Bendy’s eyes widened in confusion. “Excuse me? Odd?”
“I don’t know.” She waved a hand at him helplessly. “Sometimes you act like a demon and other times you don’t at all.” Alice frowned. “I can’t make heads or tails of you. I can’t figure out if you are just messing with me or being honest.”

Bendy tilted his head and furrowed his brow. She looked truly perplexed and guarded. “Like, why have you shown up again after disappearing? I thought you were gone for good. Where did you even come from? Why did you save Jen? What’s your motive?”

“Woah, woah.” Bendy lifted a hand to stop her. “Last time we traded questions fairly.” Alice pursed her lips and a look of familiar annoyance entered her eyes. “But I’ll answer a couple of yours.” The annoyance calmed a bit. Bendy took a cautious drink. Good, it was chocolate. “First off, doll, I enjoy honestly messing with you.” Alice scowled and opened her mouth, but Bendy didn’t give her the chance. “And I told you before, I came from a town in the middle of nowhere’s woods.”

Alice huffed and put her fist on her hip. “That’s not what I meant.”

Bendy raised a brow. “Oh?”

“What I mean is what are you-”

“Bendy! What in the world happened!” Boris shouted at the demon from the other side of the room.

Bendy turned around to see the wolf pup rushing up to him with quick steps. “Those guys are making a huge scene at the doors. They’re threatening to call the cops! What did you do?”

“Me? Why do you assume I did anything? They were getting kicked out anyway.” Bendy waved a dismissive hand.

“So, you did do something.” Boris fold his arms when he reached his old brother.

“I stopped the schmuck from hurting a security guy. That’s all, bro. Promise.” Bendy smiled. Boris let out a huff of air from his snout.

“I shouldn’t have left you. Every time I leave you alone at a bar, you end up in a fight!” Boris waved his hands in vexation.

“Not every time.” Bendy pouted. “I’m not that bad. It’s more like...once a month.”

“Ooooh, that’s such an improvement,” Boris said sarcastically. His mouth pulled down in an exasperated frown.

Bendy chuckled and turned back to the bar. He glanced back at Alice to see her staring at Boris with her mouth hanging open. Bendy blinked and looked back at his brother. Boris hopped back on his seat and looked over at her. Bendy turned back to the girl. She looked like she’d seen a ghost.

“Is this her, Bendy?” Boris asked raising a brow.

Bendy reflected his brother’s curious look. “Yeah, bro.” Alice blinked and shook her head. “Boris, meet Alice, the charming bartender. Alice, this is my brother, Boris.”

“B-b-b.” Alice swallowed and raised a hand to her cheek.

Boris turned his head in a way only a k-9 could. “Hi, Alice. It’s nice to meet you. Sorry for my brother. He’s actually a good fella. He’s just a bit ridiculous.”

“Boris.” Bendy frowned with good humor. “Don’t tell the lady that.”
“And congrats on the show. We saw the poster and decided to see if you were still here,” Boris added, completely ignoring Bendy.

“Yeah, congrats. I didn’t know if you’d still be here if you had another act working for you,” Bendy added.

“Brothers!” Alice suddenly shrieked. The boys jumped. “How in the world are you two brothers! That can’t be right! What! But I-and you-and it-then I-but that can’t-why did-when did you-brothers!” She made jerky hand gestures between the three of them to show her confusion.

She looked from Bendy to Boris. The boys watched her in slight alarm. Both leaned back on their stools. She slammed her hands on the counter and leaned forward. “How!”

The boys shared a look before turning back to her. “W-well.” Boris spoke up. “We, uh, we aren’t related by blood.”

“But that doesn’t matter,” Bendy said.

“We’re brothers in every other sense.” Boris gave her an unsure smile.

“Got a problem with that, angel?” Bendy frowned. He already knew she had a thing against demons. He really hoped things didn’t turn ugly now. He had just started getting her to relax around him a little.


“I said, do ya got a problem with that?” Bendy narrowed his eyes. She blinked and looked back at Boris.

“So, wait. He’s the brother you mentioned?” Alice pointed to Boris. Bendy nodded. “Okay,” she said hesitantly. Her brows knit together. She looked like she wanted to ask something, but she didn’t speak up. “’kay…”

“You doing okay there?” Bendy waved his hand in front of her. Alice blinked and then frowned.

“You aren’t messing with me again, are you?” Alice demanded.

“Doll, this would be a great prank, but no; he really is my brother.” Bendy gave her a lopsided grin. Alice shook her head. “How?” she whispered in amazement.

“Have you ever heard of adoption?” Boris suggested. She nodded. “Well, Bendy and I met when we were kids. We’ve stuck together ever since. Bendy is my family and I’m his. He’s my big brother.”

Alice blinked and lifted a finger to her chin. “Big brother?”

Bendy scowled at the implication. “Yes, big brother,” he said annoyed. Alice looked to him. She seemed to take in his annoyance and then giggled. Bendy gave her a half-lidded glare and drank his fizz-wizz.

“I’m sorry. I just didn’t expect that,” Alice said.

“Yeah, you were making assumptions again,” Bendy huffed and dropped his chin into his palm.

Alice flushed and looked away.
“Bendy.” Boris frowned.

“No, no. He’s right. I haven’t been very kind to your brother. I’ve jumped to a lot of conclusions about him,” Alice said.

Bendy perked up, his eyes widened. “Careful there, doll. That almost sounded like a compliment.” Alice pouted her dark lips and half-lidded her eyes to give him an annoyed glance. “Yeah…well.” She shrugged. “It’s true.”

“So, what? You’re apologizing?” Bendy asked curiously. He smiled and leaned forward.

Alice sighed like this pained her. “I guess. Sorry for treating you poorly, and thanks for helping Jen.” Bendy grinned. “Sure thing! See, not so bad to be friendly.” Alice rolled her eyes. “Now you just sound like those guys from earlier.” Bendy mocked a gasp. “Me? No way. They could never stack up to a guy like me.” Alice snorted. “Was that a height joke?” Bendy’s jaw dropped and his face darkened.

“No! Stars no!” This only made Alice laugh.

“They couldn’t measure up?” Alice laughed. Bendy frowned. Boris couldn’t hold back a chuckle.

“Haha. You’re a real comedian,” Bendy said dryly and took another drink.

“C’mon Bendy. That was a good one,” Boris said.

“Quiet traitor…Wait, I thought you said you hated puns,” Bendy said and raised a brow.

“No. I hate your puns,” Boris said and finished his drink. “It’s completely different.” Bendy snorted.

“My jokes are great!” Bendy argued and pointed a thumb at Boris while looking at Alice. He raised his brow silently asking, ‘can you believe this guy?’ with his eyes. Alice’s mouth quirked into an entertained smile.

“You tell jokes, eh?” Alice leaned forward a bit. She wore an easy smile on her face.


“What about you, Miss Alice? Do you tell jokes?” Boris asked her. Alice stopped laughing and blushed.

“W-well, a little,” Alice admitted and picked up Boris’ empty glass.

“No need to be shy,” Bendy said. “Nothing to be embarrassed about around us.”

“There, Bendy has us covered for that.” Boris smiled.

“Hey!” Bendy turned on Boris. The wolf pup and bartender snickered.

“I take back earlier. I can definitely see you two are brothers,” Alice said.

“Good!” Bendy huffed. “’Cause I don’t let just anybody get away with that act.” Bendy gave Boris
an annoyed look. Boris gave him a smug smile. “We need to go over your manners.”

“Oh no, I think that’s you, bro,” Boris said lightly and looked to Alice again. “By the way, I can’t shake the feeling that I’ve met you before. Have we run into each other at some point?”

Alice blinked with surprise. “Uh, n-no. I don’t think so.”

“Huh, weird.” Boris scratched behind his ear.

“Oh? I’m not the only one chatting to dames lately? What’s this about, bro?” Bendy asked, wiggling his brows and leaning toward Boris.

Boris snorted again. “I’m not like you. She just…feels familiar or something. Doesn’t matter, it’s just in my head.” He pushed the demon away.

“One of these days your gonna go head-over-heels.” Bendy chuckled.

“Stars, no. You’d never let me live it down. You’d be embarrassing me constantly.” Boris shook his head.

“That’s what big bros are for.” Bendy smiled warmly.

Chapter End Notes

They are so precious.
I wanted to give the boys something close to a break after all the craziness, drama, and worry. I mean, of course they couldn’t get through without a tiny bit of crazy, but nothing compared to what they came from or where they’re heading. Poor boys.
This is the start of the next arc! Look forward to Alice next time!
TAP out! (Sorry, Mercowe. I was excited. I know you’ll have your revenge) ^w^ (*Mercowe finally getting to editing this chapter* And I will...mwahaha.)
A Swinging Night

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Alice sings.
All hell breaks loose.
A normal day for the B-Bros.

Chapter Notes

Hiya! Sorry this is a day late lovelies. I was so tired yesterday. XP
But hey! It's here!
Alice is here! XD
Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Alice was getting ready for her performance in a daze. Had that afternoon really happened? The young wolf pup’s brother had been the demon. They were brothers. The demon and the wolf. She had given a miracle to the pup…She had indirectly given a miracle to a demon! Oooh, if she thought her family would be mad at her before!

And yet…

They had spent hours just hanging out at the bar, chatting away to each other and her. Alice found herself relaxing with the easy-going atmosphere between them. It was almost easy to forget that Bendy was a demon with him acting this way. Even his cool, dark essence was dismissed in the camaraderie of the brothers. They talked like her brothers did. They teased each other, laughed, and argued. It was nice. Alice was dragged into it occasionally with questions or jokes. She had even dared to shoot off a few puns. Bendy seemed entertained, even delighted, and Boris hid his smile from Bendy. It was the most relaxed she'd ever had here at the casino.

Then reality crashed in--in the form of Demencia. She dropped from the ceiling, grabbed her, and shrieked about getting dazzled up for the show. Alice had been carried off before she could say good bye. Their startled faces had been funny though. She wished she'd had a camera.

Now she was getting makeup on and her hair brushed and styled with a crazy thought in her head. She liked those two. She really liked them. They were funny and kind and maybe not carefree, but at least…hopeful. It was a pleasant change from the day to day drudgery of the staff and the drunken laughs of the customers. She sighed. Was she so low that a little demon could brighten her day, or was she missing something here?

Polly and Willen would be horrified. Even as fallen angels, they upheld the honor of their kind. Alice chewed on her lip. Had she made a horrible mistake? If she thought of everyone back home, of her culture, the answer was obvious…but after the few encounters she'd had with Bendy, she had grown
confused. On his side, he was unjustly branded for his species. He'd never known another demon and felt offended to be compared to one or any tale of his kind. He claimed the Surface as his home and culture, not hell. He was ambitious, violent, a troublemaker, and a flirt, but he was also kind, considerate, and compassionate. There was no doubt in Alice’s mind that Bendy loved his little brother. Even that went against what the elders said! He wasn’t supposed to care! Everyone was meant to be a means to an end, a tool for the demon’s selfish goals. They weren’t supposed to feel things like compassion and love.

Alice had been sure it was all an act…Or at least, she had convinced herself later that it was an act, that Bendy was just trying to get to her, use her, manipulate her with a sob story about judging a book by it’s cover. She had been able to fall back on the warnings every parent gave their child. Never trust a demon. They only care for themselves and their goals. They’ll do anything to get what they want. Anything. Now, though…

She couldn’t deny it. Not now. Not after seeing him with Boris. The little demon loved him. It was as plain as day. As pure as the clouds of the Upper, those two were family, and they’d do anything for the other.

Alice bit her thumbnail. So, where did that leave her? It would mean the elders were wrong, that people like Bendy had humanity, emotions, hearts, and so much more. They may have souls. Did that apply to her boss too? What was she supposed to do about-

“You’re on in fifteen, Alice!” Came one of the bands member’s voices through the door. Alice’s train of thought shattered.

“O-oh right! Be there in a second!” She looked at herself in the mirror. She had put a braid on either side of her head, just to keep it out of her face. The rest was loose and trailed down her back. Her makeup seemed too heavy for the near mirror, but if it wasn’t this heavy her face would be washed out by the bright stage lights. Her eyes were darkly framed, and her lips were painted dark. Alice gave the reflection a smile. She seemed so strange like this. The dark black dress with the v-neckline complimented her figure. She had a white ribbon around her waist that had a bow in the back. The pearls around her neck were cool and beautiful. It was amazing how different she felt since that first day on the Surface. She wondered if her family would even recognize her. What would granny say?

“Five minutes!” the voice barked on the other side of the door.

“Coming.” Alice bumped her knee on the vanity in the tiny dressing room in her rush to get out. She hissed and stumbled to the door. “Sorry,” she said sheepishly as she opened the door. “I have a lot on my mind.” The short man, Jim, snorted dismissively. He walked down the hall, his trumpet case by his side as he went to get ready.

Alice took a deep breath and followed. Her hair brushed her shoulders, and the pearls felt heavy on her neck. She tugged at the long-sleeved gloves nervously. It didn’t matter how many times she went out on stage or preformed in public, she always got pre-performance jitters. She felt a cold sweat on her neck as she peeked out at the stage. It was a half stage. The back end was hidden behind the curtains, while the front half hung out into the dance floor.

She took another deep breath as she took her position at center stage. The band was to her right. They were tuning the instruments and not paying attention to her in the least.

She went through the songs in her head. She had this down, no reason to get nervous. The stage light was so bright that she couldn’t really see the audience anyway, not unless she stepped out, right to the edge. They wouldn’t turn up the lights until the dance songs started. She had nothing to worry about. It would go as smooth as the others before it had. Oh! Why did she always get nervous!
Before she knew it, she and the band were being announced and the curtain was being drawn back. The band was starting up and the light on her washed out the room into darkness.

(song)

As the beat continued Alice allowed the music to sweep through her and take over. Soon she was able to relax completely and let herself enjoy it. She grinned teasingly to the hidden crowd as she sang the love song. She heard some wolf whistles and shouts from men. She had to fight from rolling her eyes. What was it with Surface men? That’s not fair, her mind automatically rebuked, you’ve met perfectly good gentlemen on the Surface. Just not many in this casino, that’s all.

The woman began to walk up the stage to the front stage. Besides, her mind whispered, you met Boris and Bendy here, and they’ve been kind to you. She nearly tripped on her heels. What in the world was that thought, Alice? Focus!

She continued on and let her voice carry her through to the end. The was a string of excited applause then the band started up again.

(sing it Alice)

The lights changed so everyone could see the dance floor, and Alice could make out the crowd. There were more tonight than last night, not a full house, but she had noticed a steady increase every evening. She wasn’t sure if she should be happy about that since this was a casino. The energy quickly spread throughout the room. More people came to the dance floor as couples showed what they had. She and the band had practiced and practiced this. She really loved this.

Alice added her voice and the dancers really started to move. Alice tapped and twirled a bit on stage, but mostly she focused on her voice and the music. She could enjoy the skill of some of the couples and their moves. They were a good lot with their feet, so she was surprised when some of them moved out of the way for one pair. She had to narrow her eyes a touch to see them. They were small and fast. She nearly choked when she recognized Bendy. He was dancing with a tiny girl in one of those dazzle flapper dresses, the skirts swishing and flaring out as he spun her. They put their whole bodies into it. Alice was taken aback with this. She hadn’t expected Bendy to be a dancer, a really good one at that. He made it seem so effortless and fun. She wondered who the girl was. She looked like some kind of cat or dog, her ears were pinned up by a flower pin like they were hair. Alice couldn’t make her out very well in this lighting. She wondered if Boris was here too. She scanned the room, but didn’t see him.

Her eyes went back to Bendy. He could really put on a show, the lifts and spins the girl was going through looked amazing. He glanced at her, and they made eye contact. Bendy smiled and winked at her. Alice felt her brows furrow a touch in confusion, but she hesitantly returned the smile.

Alice and the band continued like this for a time until it was curtains. Bendy and the unknown girl would come and go. It seemed the girl kept dragging him onto the dance floor. He went with a look of annoyance, but his face would relax whenever he started moving.

At the close of the curtains a few flowers were thrown at her feet. She picked one up and did her best to smile warmly at the cheering crowd before she was cut off from them. She sighed and dropped her shoulders. These shoes were killing her. She thanked the band for all the hard work.

After, she made her way around to the exit the stage and go out onto open dance floor. She wanted to tell Bendy his dancing was great. She hadn’t ever seen anything like that. She was stopped for congratulations and niceties, but didn’t allow herself to be held up for too long. Finally, she got to the door and pushed it opened cautiously. The room was still pretty crowded with milling people. She
stepped out and scanned the room for the little demon.

Several people recognized her and stopped her to talk and compliment her. She tried to be a patient and kind as possible. Several ‘gentlemen’ asked if she was free now or if she’d like a drink and so on. She was only half listening and quick to turn them down. She got half way through the room before she saw them. Boris approached her first.

(here's some background music I enjoy listening to)

“Alice! That was great! You have an amazing singing voice.” Boris grinned at her. He was wearing a vest and coat over a button up. He had dress slacks and a simple bow tie. He looked adorable with his large eyes gleaming and pointed ears standing up. His tail was wagging, and Alice had to stop herself from cooing or petting his head. He was so sweet.

“Thank you. I’m glad you liked it. Do you like music, Boris?” Alice asked, smiling.

“I love it!” Boris said. His tail went faster.

“He’s good too.” Bendy suddenly was beside the wolf. He was smiling, but something looked different with him. “He can play anything.”

“Oh, really?” Alice looked back to Boris. He suddenly turned bashful and scratched the back of his head.

“Well, yeah. It’s my talent.” He smiled.

“I should get you to play for me sometime,” Alice said.

Boris’ face lit up. “Okay! I’d love to! If you think it’s okay, that is.” Alice giggled.

She looked to Bendy again. He was in a nice pinstripe vest over a button up. The top button was undone, and the sleeves were rolled up to his elbows. He also had dress slacks and polished shoes. Alice noticed Boris wasn’t wearing any shoes at all. Didn’t he usually have something on though? She had never noticed. Was it because he didn’t own any dress shoes, or because he didn’t like them?

Before Alice could lose herself to her musing Bendy spoke. “That was a wonderful show. I figured you had a good voice.”

Alice blinked. “Oh?”

“Yeah,” he shrugged, “I thou-“


“Dot, knock it off!” Bendy growled. The blur was the little lady that he had been dancing with earlier. “And don’t ever call me that again.” The girl pouted, but didn’t release his arm.

“Awww, okay. Then we should go get a drink!” she said.

“I thought that’s where you were headed anyway.” Bendy sighed and rolled his eyes.

“You have to come with me!” She tugged on him.

“Why?” Bendy growled and pulled his arm free rather forcefully. Alice was surprised he would act
this way. Dot grinned, completely unfazed.

"’Cause you’re my date!” Dot exclaimed.

“I agreed to dance with you, nothing else.” Bendy pointed a finger at her and glared.

“Then how about a kiss?” Dot dove for him with her lips puckered. Bendy acted quickly and caught her. He held her at arm’s length with a grimace.

Alice gave Boris a questioning look. He shrugged and smiled. “She’s a friend of ours.”

“Yeah, don’t worry about it. Those two love birds are always like that,” a voice said next to her. She jumped again and looked over to see a boy. He looked like Dot, but taller. He wore a suit that was a touch too big for him. He had a fedora that matched the suit perfectly and a long tie. The fella was smirking at Bendy in amusement. Looking between him and Dot, Alice guessed they were related.

“We aren’t love birds!” Bendy barked at him, still struggling with Dot. The new fella turned to her, not giving Bendy any mind.

“And my name is Yakko, gorgeous. Lovely voice, Lovelier face.” He took her hand and kissed the back of it.

Alice was used to this, so she was unfazed. But watching Bendy added a whole new spin on things.

“Would you not?” Bendy said and tossed Dot away, before walking up to them again. “She already has to deal with enough of that daily.” Alice blinked. Yakko pulled back and smirked.

“Oh?” Yakko asked. “Sure you aren’t jealous there, pal?” Bendy made a noise in the back of his throat.

“Ah! Uh, what? No!” Bendy frowned.

Boris chuckled next to Alice.

“Is this normal?” Alice asked him. She watched Bendy get more and more steamed as he and Yakko talked.

“Yeah, don’t worry. Yakko and Dot really are friends. They’re odd, but not bad.” Boris smiled. “They just like messing with people.”

“And who are you?” Dot was suddenly in front of Alice. The angel had to take a moment to answer. The girl was looking her up and down with a critical eye. “What’s your deal?”

“I-I’m Alice. It’s nice to meet you,” Alice said. “You danced beautifully earlier.” That seemed to soften the strange girl a bit. She smiled and lifted her nose in the air.

“You saw that? Bendy and I did great, uh? We are a perfect match,” she gushed. “My mailman is the best!”

“Ma-mailman?” Alice asked. Was that his job? Had he told her his occupation before? She didn’t remember.

“I’m. Not. A. Mailman.” Bendy stepped up to Boris’ other side and crossed his arms. “Stop telling people that.” He sounded really annoyed and a bit tired. At least that answered Alice’s question.

“You danced wonderfully too, Bendy,” Alice said, hoping to cut off these odd arguments. Bendy
dropped his glare when he turned to her. He smiled at her.

“Thanks. I’d be happy to dance with you sometime,” Bendy said. Alice finally realized why he looked odd to her. He wasn’t wearing his goggles.

“I call dancing first!” Yakko said next to her. This time she didn’t jump. Bendy frowned. She glanced at Boris, who was laughing. Alice giggled. This group was full of character, that was for sure.

Bendy stepped in front of Yakko. “You can’t just-”

Suddenly the doors burst open and a group of men appeared. The room fell quiet as all the heads turned toward the new arrivals. It was a group of six men, all nicely dressed in sharp suits. Alice noticed they still had on hats and coats.

“All, listen up! We’re here to see Bendy and Boris. Everyone knows ‘em as the B-Brothers!” the middle man said. Alice narrowed her eyes. Wasn’t that one of the fellas they had thrown out earlier that day? Bob? No, Rob! That’s right! The room vibrated with whispers and voices of shock.

“These pals of yours?” Yakko asked a he tilted his hat down. The smile on his face hadn’t changed. Shouldn’t he be worried?

“Yeah, right. You know how fellas like these are.” Bendy didn’t turn his glare away from the men.

“See the Genovese have some business with ‘em. They should be here tonight.” That was the other man. Tom, Alice thought. Was this really over what happened earlier today? It didn’t sound like it. Were Bendy and Boris more caught up in the dark corners of the world than Alice had begun to believe? She felt her heart twist in dismay. The murmurs that fluttered around the room sounded as unsettled as Alice felt. People were beginning to look around.

Yakko snorted a laugh. “It’s never a dull moment! Would ya like our help Bendy, ol’ buddy?”

Bendy rolled his eyes. “Well, I’m not gonna stop ya if that’s what you’re asking.”

Dot grinned and clapped her hands. “You’re the best, hun!”

“Get. Off me.” Bendy was forced to keep his voice down.

“What’s going on?” Alice demanded. “What does he mean by the ‘B-Brothers’?”

“I don’t know,” Boris said worried. “It’s just newspaper rumors.”

“They said they wanted us to meet their boss earlier. We turned them down, then you showed up and kicked them out,” Bendy explained quickly. “Apparently, they’re not used to ‘no’ and are back.”

Alice grit her teeth. Well, what was she going do? Yeah, she knew people like that. So, what was she going to do about it? These guys were after the demon and his brother. They didn’t look friendly. Bendy and Boris were in the papers? For what? If the Genovese mob was after them, it couldn’t be anything good. She wasn’t supposed to involve herself in trouble. She was on a mission, and she couldn’t expose herself. If she got in the middle of this, there was a chance she could end up in the paper too. But…these boys had been nothing but kind to her. “Let me take care of this.”

The other four turned to her in surprise. “Alice, no! They’re dangerous!” Bendy said.

Alice frowned. Yeah, they were, but she was an angel. She would be okay. The group around her
wouldn’t be. Maybe Bendy would be fine, he was a demon after all. But if he did something, Boris would probably be right behind him. Alice didn’t want to see someone so young and pure in danger.

She forced herself to smirk. “I know, but I’m an employee here, and the boss doesn’t stand for chaos in his buildings.” Unless he caused the chaos of course…

Boris lifted a hand as if to stop her. “But-”

“Get out before people start to make a ruckus.” Alice smiled and winked. “I’ll catch up.”

Alice pushed her way toward the men before anyone could stop her. They stuck together, scanning the room for the boys. Alice put on her best scowl. She listed the emergency procedures for rough housing costumers in her head and looked for the nearest security guard. Be calm and authoritative. Don’t make a scene. If violence ensues, don’t allow there to be destruction of property. Alert other employees and security. Deal with them. Don’t bother the boss. Fill out all the necessary documents and turn them in.

She huffed at herself. It was so sad she was so practiced in this now. She knew the moment Rob and Tom noticed her because the hard line of their frowns turned to grins.

“Babe! Don’t you look fabulous!” Rob took a step toward her. She frowned at the pet name. Babe? Really? Who did he think he was? She wasn’t his babe. “Listen. I need that kid you know, then I can treat you to a wonderful time. It’s not too late for some fun in the city lights.” Rob grinned and grabbed her hand to kiss it. Alice yanked her hand out of his.

“Leave now,” she commanded, “Before I have security throw you out a second time.”

“We haven’t done a thing,” a third man protested.

“Threatening other costumers is against policy here. This is a grey area,” Alice said.

“We haven’t threatened a soul!” the same fella argued.

“Who says it’s a safe place?” a fourth spoke up.

“The owner!” Alice lifted her head and straightened her shoulders. They didn’t intimidate her.

A couple of the guys started to laugh, but Tom growled. “Shut your traps.”

“I’m sure your boss wouldn’t like losing his rights for business here,” Alice said. She hated doing this. She really, really hated it. This was not a place for angels. This wasn’t something an angel should be saying, but she didn’t have much of a choice. She was here and people needed her help.

That seemed to unsettle half the group. Guess they had done dealings with other groups here before. They knew that the casino made sure there wouldn’t be any shoot outs or violence here (unless Black Hat was violent) and it was good on keeping…confidential business private.

She raised a brow in challenge. Rob cleared his throat. “We aren’t gonna do anythin’ nasty, sweets. We just need them to come with us to talk.”

Alice huffed. “If they were interested, they’d do something about it. Bendy didn’t stand up for you earlier, and I’m sure he hasn’t changed his mind. If they’re even still here.”

Rob clicked his tongue. “Is that so?”

“Yes,” Alice said.
“You and him sound close,” Tom said. That had Alice falter.

“N-not really.” Alice’s eyes widened. Her? Close with Bendy? Her mind went back to the two times he’d defended her. If anything, she was just paying him back.

“How ‘bout we take the dame?” one of the other goons offered. A chill went down Alice’s spine. She frowned and took a step back.

“The dame can hear you, and she says no,” Alice stated dryly.

“Yeah, bet they’d show up if we had their lady here,” another said, like she hadn’t spoken up. Alice swallowed and readied herself for a fight. She may not have her halo, and she wasn’t a good fighter, but she knew how to pack a punch at least.

“Hey, boooooys!” a high-pitched voice called out to them. Alice looked next to her to see Dot standing there. When had she appeared? “Don’t ya know it’s rude to talk about a lady in front of her,” Dot tsked. She glanced at Alice and winked. Alice was so flabbergasted to see her that she couldn’t respond.

“And who are you, kid?” Tom narrowed his eyes.

Dot sighed and rolled her eyes like it should be obvious. “I’m Bendy’s girl.” Eyebrows raised in shock. Tom looked at Alice as if she would explain. “And my mailman ain’t interested in your little group. You’re a small fry.”

That got some scowls. Alice looked at Dot nervously. She seemed completely at ease with the situation. She even looked eager. Alice couldn’t wrap her mind around this. It was so strange.

“The boss wants to see ‘em. He don’t take no for an answer,” one of the goons said.

Dot sighed like they were troublesome children. “How ‘bout a game? You catch me and the boys will meet with your pop. I win, you scram.”

Alice’s eyes widened. Six huge gangster against her? This tiny kid? Was she insane! The men laughed.

“You’re cute. Get out of the way, little girl. We have grownup things to do.” Rob smirked. Suddenly Rob’s hat vanished from atop his head. He startled, and his hand flew to his head. Dot was sitting on Tom’s shoulder, twirling a gleaming pocket knife and wearing his hat.

“Nice knife! Razer sharp, and is this oak or cherry wood in the handle?” Dot chirped. Tom moved to grab her, but she was next to Alice again. Alice jumped. That wasn’t normal. Who was this girl?

“You boys can’t even touch me! What makes you think you have a right to see the B-Bros if you can’t even handle an amazing, cute ‘little girl’?” Dot winked and tossed the knife up and caught it. The men’s faces hardened.

Rob growled. “You’re gonna regret this, little lady.” Should Alice stop this? She made a move, but a hand grabbed her wrist and pulled her away before she could do or say anything. She looked over at the person, about to snap at them to let her go. It was Yakko.

“Wait! Your sister-” Alice tried to slow him down.

“She’s fine. Don’t you worry, beautiful. You help the guys get outta here. Dot and I got these mooks.” Yakko grinned. “Sides, it’s been a while since we had some fun like this.”
Fun?

He pulled her out into the hall. “They should be on the second floor.”

“But what about-”

“We’ll be fine. This is fun for us. Don’t worry, no one will get hur-wait…it’s okay if those schmucks get a little roughed up, right?” Yakko suddenly asked. He leaned against the doormframe.

“I’d rather you not, but if you have too. I need to get security,” Alice said.

Yakko snorted. “Don’t. Those fellas are packin’ heat. Any security is gonna get shot.”

“They have guns!” Alice’s eyes widened.

“We got this doll,” Yakko said again. “You go tell the boys you’re fine.” With that Yakko turned.

“Wait! Why are you doing all this? Why does everyone keep calling them the B-Brothers?” Alice demanded.

Yakko raised a brow and an amused smile spread across his face. “We always help out our pals and Bendy and Boris have been great pals so far. We have a lot of fun with them.” Yakko winked. “And any friend of theirs’ is a friend of ours.” Alice pursed her lips. That sounded like a mob tie. They weren’t. They couldn’t be. Boris was so young and innocent. “And you obviously don’t read the papers. Those two have been getting slandered for a while. They are a hot topic right now. Everyone acts like they’re big bad guys, but don’t worry, they’re just good at getting into trouble. They aren’t bad.”

Alice blinked. It was like he had read her mind. “Now, get out of here toots. It’s getting loud.” Yakko disappeared before she could say anything else. Alice stood there in a daze.

Getting into trouble? Big bad guys? They certainly seemed to have a reputation. She thought back on every meeting with the brothers. It did always seem to get rather wild around them. Whether it was a drunk, a miracle, or a pair of mobsters, those two seemed to get tangled up in one thing or another. And here she was jumping in this mess without any thought.

Her father would tell her to step back. She didn’t even know where she stood with all this. Polly and Willen would say to leave it entirely. Nothing good came out of trouble like this. She knew that was true. She couldn’t put her mission at risk. But…her mind went back to Bendy saving Jen. She owed them and they were good people. She was still hesitant with Bendy, but he had proven himself time and again with her. She could at least make sure they got out of this building safely. Then she’d need to go get the boss. If guns started to go off in here, it’d be hell to pay. She didn’t even want to imagine what Black Hat would do.

She hurried to the grande wrap around stairs. She stopped at the front desk to tell them the situation first. Sarah the weasel rushed off to tell the boss. Alice gulped. Then she headed upstairs, looking around the landing for the boys. She didn’t see them. She started down the hall when Boris jumped out from behind a corner.

“They didn’t do anything to you?” Bendy asked worried.

“No. I’m fine. Your friends distracted them,” Alice said.
Bendy snorted. “They’re nuts. A little over a week in the hospital, and then they just want to get in trouble again.” He shook his head.

“They what!” Alice squeaked.

Bendy tilted his head and looked at her in understanding. Boris said, “They got into a tussle a while back and lost. Their brother is still there, apparently.”

“Will they be okay?” Alice asked. They acted so sure of themselves.

The three of them started walking down the hallway. “Yeah,” Bendy answered. “They were dealing with some tough fellas before. In comparison these guys will be easy.”

“But they have guns!” Alice argued.

“They’ll be fine. I’m sure of it,” Bendy said.

“Maybe we should help them,” Alice said.

“They wouldn’t let us.” Boris’ ears drooped. “They said we need to disappear.”

“Why?”

“We’re expecting the cops at any second.” Bendy’s brows knit together angrily. “And we can’t get caught by them.”

“Why are the police after you?” Alice asked. They shared a look between them. It was one that held a silent conversation.

“We-ugh!” Bendy suddenly dropped to his knees. He wrapped his arms around his chest.

“Bendy!” Boris knelt next to him. He put a hand on his shoulder. Alice knelt too.

“Are you okay?” she asked with concern. What was going on? Was he hurt? Sick? Bendy grit his teeth. Her mind raced. Suddenly a memory came to her.

Please, I don’t know what to do! His sickness got worse!

She looked over to Boris, his eyes were big with concern, ears down. The whole point of her miracle had been to help Boris’ sick brother find a cure. She looked at Bendy again. He was sick? She would have never guessed.

“No! It’s not that! Boris, the doll!” Bendy looked up at Boris. “S-ah! Someone has the doll!”

Chapter End Notes

I am so sorry! I didn't mean for this cliffy. It was just the best place to stop! It wasn't meant to be two chapters! AAAAHHHHHH! XD Dangit. My bad. Hehehehe. You can wait a week right? If you can't, come yell at me over on tumblr, or check out the beautiful fanart over there!
Thanks for reading! See ya next week!
Tap out!
(Sorry again Mercowe XP I am impatient to post.)

*Mercowe walks in a week late and looks around.* "My being late to the party is starting to become a habit." *Pants as she desperately tried to catch up in editing the chapters...Continues onto chapter 45.*
A Casino Run

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

The Warners are on the lose and messing with guys with guns!
Bendy’s in pain.
Alice’s confused.
Boris is worried.
And of course the most important question:
WHO HAS THE DOLL?!

Chapter Notes

Hello lovelies!
Happy Weekend! Here’s a Boris chapter for you! Enjoy!

Mercowe has been patting my head in pity lately. She says, “It’s pity patter.” And acts like it’s raining on me. =_= This is what I get for posting before she could edit...twice...heh.

ALSO, ROUGE IS POSTING AGAIN! The bbros are back! Go to tumblr and see the amazing comic that inspired this story! I will put the url in the end note! Okay enough of this. Enjoy the chapter!

*Mercowe shows up and looks around.* "Well! I finally caught up." *Wipes her forehead.* "Are you guys ready to find out who has the doll? Lets get going!!!"

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“No! It’s not that! Boris the doll!” Bendy looked up at Boris. “S-ah! Someone has the doll!”

Boris’ mouth made a little ‘o’ before he was on his paws in a flash. The wolf raced down the hall.

“Wait!” Alice called. Boris didn’t have time to wait for her. He had to get to that doll. How did they find it? Who was it? The Cupbros? Those mob guys? Someone else? He rounded the corner and nearly slipped on the carpet. He bolted on toward the room. He saw the door to their room sitting ajar. Boris didn’t slow down. He rammed into the door, shoving it open. Their room was entirely trashed. Papers, clothes, cans, everything, all the things they had left in the world were thrown about. The mattresses were flipped and the closet torn open. No one was there. Boris quickly checked a couple of places someone could be hiding. Nothing. The room was empty of life. Boris had to bite back a growl. He started digging through the things scattered about. Maybe it was just buried and squishing Bendy like his book did in the woods. As the moments went on with no sign of the doll, Boris felt panic start to take over and choke him.

Why? His heart twisted, and a weight landed in his stomach. Why was this happening? Why
couldn’t they get through a day without having to run for their lives? Why did Bendy have to hurt every single day! Couldn’t they get a break? Just one?

Boris swallowed a sob. He had to be strong. Bendy needed him. He couldn’t get overwhelmed now. He had to find that doll so they could fix the machine and cure Bendy.

Alice rushed in. “Bor-Oh my!” Alice gasped.

She was panting and bare foot. Boris made eye contact with her, and Boris guessed that was enough for Alice to understand that they were too late. She made her way into the room carefully, so she wouldn’t step on anything.

“Is it here?” she asked. Her eyes swam with concern and confusion.

Boris shook his head. Alice narrowed her eyes and bit her lip.

“Where’s Bendy?” Boris asked.

“He told me to help you.” She glanced at him. Boris huffed. Of course he did. The last thing Bendy wanted was to look weak in front of a girl. Boris turned to go back and check on Bendy. “W-wait! I think I can help.” Alice put a hand on his arm. She sounded unsure, but when Boris glanced back at her there was determination in her eyes. “But I want answers after this. The whole story. Okay?” Boris paused. Was that a smart choice? What if she called the cops or was a spy or something? She might be working with the Cup brothers. Alice pulled her hand back and looked around the room. “What does it look like?”

“I-it looks like Bendy,” Boris muttered. It didn’t matter, he guessed. If they didn’t have the doll, they couldn’t mix the ink machine. They had to get it. Alice raised a brow, but didn’t say anything.

She took a step away from Boris and nodded. She lifted her arms in front of her, palms up, and took a deep breath. “Alright, Alice. A simple summons. You can do this,” she said. Boris tilted his head to the side and dropped one of his ears in confusion. Alice said something in a different language and shut her eyes. Boris couldn’t understand it. The room suddenly felt warmer. Boris felt the anxiety in his chest loosen. The scent of meadow flowers, fresh spring water, and ozone tickled his snout. There was something familiar about the scent and feeling. He couldn’t put his finger on it. He knew that it was at least some kinda magic. After a moment Alice repeated the phrase. Boris barely breathed as he waited for something more to happen. Alice’s brows knit together. She frowned and with a heavy breath dropped her arms.

She opened her eyes to look at Boris apologetically. “I’m sorry. I can’t find it. I-I don’t know what I did wrong. There was nothing for me to-Ah, well, I’m sorry.” She looked frustrated.

“It’s okay Alice. Thanks for trying.” Boris responded automatically. It wasn’t okay. He had to get that doll. Who knew what it was doing to his big brother. He had questions too. Was Alice a witch or something? How did she have magic? Was it her talent like Bendy, or something like Mama Odie?

Bendy.

He turned again to go get Bendy when a new smell crossed his nose. Among all the sweet and fresh scents that Alice had created, there was a stench of burning wood mixed with rotting eggs. Sulfur. Boris pricked his ears. He followed the scent to the door and out into the hall. This wasn’t Bendy or him, or any of the people that had been to their room. Boris’ heart raced as he realized he had a lead to follow.
“Boris?” Alice had followed him into the hall.

“I got him!” Boris raced down the hall after the smell. “Get Bendy!” He called behind him. “I’ll meet you at the front.” He didn’t wait to see if she listened to him. He raced throw the maze of halls. The scent darted from shadowy corner to shadowy corner. The person’s smell was behind vases and curtains. This guy was hiding. Boris had to stop at a few corners to make sure which way the smell went. He lost it three times and had to wander and backtrack until he had it again. Every moment he had to pause or take a step back, his anxiety would claw at him like a starving, caged beast with food in sight, but out of reach.

The sulfur smell led to a small staircase that he figured was for employees. It lacked the nice décor the rest of the hotel and casino had. It was simple, uncarpeted wood stairs. Boris went down two stairs at a time. He was panting hard. His tongue lolled out of his mouth as he gasped for oxygen. He nearly fell, but caught himself on the rail. He reached the bottom and looked around the hall. It was empty, basic, not meant for visitors, but the workers. He continued to follow the scent.

Occasionally a corridor veered off, and Boris would have to pause and check which way the smell went. His lungs burned, and his legs ached, but the image of Bendy in pain pushed him onward. How big was the stupid place? It was becoming a maze. A left here, a right there, another left. Did this crook know he was being tailed or was he just lost? There was a moment that Boris got confused because the scent went two ways. It took him a few minutes to realize that the thief had gone in a circle. He was so focused on the scent that he hadn’t noticed the screams and shouts ahead of him. He came through an “employees only” door and slammed into a woman in a glittery gown so hard that he fell back and landed on his tail.

“Ah!” he grunted. “Sorry, miss! I didn’t see you,” Boris apologized from the ground with gritted teeth. He rubbed the base of his tail and squeezed his eyes shut for a second to hold back tears. That had hurt!

“Ah! Oh!” The woman sounded half hysterical. Boris opened his eyes and took in his surroundings. He had entered one of the open gambling halls. There were crowds of nicely dressed people pressed against the walls. There was sounds of crashing wood, poker chips, cursing, and gun fire. “Here!” Boris looked up to the woman. She was a touch round and in a classy sequin dress with a feather headband. She wasn’t looking at Boris though, she was shouting to the center of the room. “He’s over here!” She waved an arm to get whoever’s attention she was shouting for.

“Uh?” Boris pushed himself up and looked toward where she was shouting. There was Dot hopping from playing table to playing table as bullets ripped them to shreds. Poker clips and cards were flying as Dot trapezed her way through the chaos of bullets. When there was a pause, the three men shooting would lunge to grab her, only for the girl to vanish or hop out of the way. One man was unconscious on the floor with a giant hammer laying next to him and a large lump on his head. On a second glance of the room, Boris realized that people weren’t standing against the walls. They were scrambling for exits.

“The guy you want is here! Stop shooting!” The woman shrieked. Boris looked at the lady in shock. He didn’t have time to think about her obvious dismissal of his life for hers as two of the goons turned to her screams and locked eyes on him. Boris’ ears dropped, and his tail tucked between his legs. His eyes widened to dinner plates. This wasn’t good. The men’s smiles reminded Boris of the time when he and Bendy were in the warehouse in Warnerburg. They were just as unpleasant.

“Heya, Boris! What’s up pup?” Dot appeared next to him, a little breathless, and with a big grin on her face. He wasn’t given the chance to answer her, though.

“Well, well, well. If it isn’t the wolf brother. We’ve been lookin’ for ya, kiddo,” Tom’s deep voice
said. The man had lost his hat and coat. His dark hair was a mess that was swept out of his sweaty face. “You’re coming with us.” Tom aimed his gun and cocked it. “Or else.”

“Don’t shoot! You have him now! Don’t shoot!” The woman that ratted him out shrieked with alarm. “For hevens sake! You’ll hit us too!”

“Pipe it down!” Tom growled at her. She squeaked and sunk into herself. She tried to edge around Boris and into the corridor he had come barreling down, only for the goon next to Tom to turn a gun on her. She froze.

Dot snorted. Boris felt his heart climb into his throat. “We can take them,” Dot whispered.

“What!” Boris gasped at her.

“Just duck when I say.” Dot winked.

“Shut your trap!” Goon three ordered her.

“So are ya coming quietly, sonny, or is this gonna get rough?” Tom asked. Boris glanced at Dot. She smiled and shrugged.

“I’ll co-come quietly,” Boris said. He lifted his hands to show he didn’t have anything in them and took a step forward.

“Smart choice kid.” Tom smirked. “Now, where’s your brother.”

“I don’t know,” Boris said.

“He in the building?” Tom inquired.

Boris shrugged. “Where are you taking me? What do you want with us?” Dot stayed next to him. The guy next to Tom took aim with a bloodthirsty look in his eyes, but Boris stepped in front of her without really thinking about what he was doing. Tom knocked the mook’s gun down with a scowl.

“The boss wants a word with cha’. Something about his competitors in tha west. He also wants in on what you two are doin’ here in Toon Town,” Tom said. “Wants a scoop in this ‘ink illness’ stuff.”

Boris blinked. He…didn’t know if he believed that. “Then, why did you bring guns?” Tom raised his brows with a look of surprise.

“Have you heard the rumors about you two? Any man with half a mind would stay armed with you around,” Tom said, then narrowed his eyes. “I didn’t believe them until you sicced your little pet on us.” Tom indicated Dot. She grinned up at him sweetly.

“Aww, you charmer.” Dot waved a hand and looked pleased with herself. Tom grimaced. The men circled around the two and lead them to the far exit on the other side of the room.

“Why we lettin’ her live Tom? Billy is out ‘cause a her. We should be puttin’ her down,” the second goon growled. He still looked angry.

Tom waved him off. “We can’t have a good partnership with blood runnin’ now can we?”

“But Billy!”

“Enough Sternson!” Tom hissed. Boris frowned. Didn’t stop them from shooting earlier. The three men escorted them through the room. To Boris’ dismay he couldn’t catch the sulfur smell, it was
buried under the smell of wood and gunpowder. He didn’t have time for this. He needed to get the
guy that had the doll. How could he slip away? Tom wasn’t taking his eyes off Boris. The wolf
 glanced at Dot with a questioning look. She lifted her chin in a ‘go ahead’ fashion before winking at
Sternson, who grimaced with rage. They went out into a hall and turned to walk down the carpeted
and decorated length. Boris was so turned around that he had no idea which part of the casino they
were headed toward.

Dot cleared her throat. Boris glanced down to her. She gave him a meaningful look.

What? Was he supposed to be a distraction? How?!

“Uh.” Boris turned back to Tom and cleared his throat. “So, what rumors have you heard? I’m pretty
sure I can clear up any wild stories.” It was the only thing he could think of.

“Is it true that you trashed the trade warehouse?” Goon three asked. “Lotta fellas ended up in the
slammer and the hospital!” Tom scowled at him.

“Yeah, we did. We also took a car to escape.” Boris shrugged. It had all been in a mad panic
though…

“Are you guys really hit men?” Tom asked.

“Nope!” Boris shook his head.

“So, that murder on you guys?”

“I don’t know what happened. I wasn’t there. Bendy said it was an accident, but he also said he
wasn’t sure,” Boris said. Tom hummed. They turned and entered another gambling room. This one
was empty, card tables and slot machines sat about the room, but the mess of abandoned cards, chips
and knocked over chairs indicated that the people ran in a hurry.

“So, are ya thieves or something?” Sternson asked.

“Or something,” Boris said quickly. The only things they had ever taken was food or pick-pocketed
wallets from jerks. That cash then got them food or clothes. It had all changed when Bendy and
Boris were able to get actual work. Of course, they had taken the doll…but Boris didn’t think that
had been theft…or had it? He didn’t have time to think about that.

“Uh. I expected something bigger than that,” Goon two said.

“Well, we have been running from the cops and hitmen out to get us,” Boris said. That’s what the
Cupbros were, right? Hitmen? It was weird to think of Mugman that way after spending an afternoon
with him.

“Hitmen?” Tom said with surprise.

“Yeah, we think it has something to do with ink illness,” Boris said.

“What is the in-”

“Duck!” Dot shrieked. Boris dropped and felt something swing over his head. Sternson was knocked
to the other side of the room. He landed on a table with a painful thud and slid off it and out of view.
“Outta the ball park!” Dot lifted a hand like she was gazing into the distance. She had a comically
large baseball sitting on her shoulder.
“Boris! Use this! Point it away from you.” Dot dropped a box in Boris’ gloved hands. The box had a crank on it that was slowly turning. A metallic song was playing from it. “A jack-in-the-box?” Boris looked over to see Dot going after Tom with the ridiculously large baseball bat.

“Don’t question, just do!” she said. “And you! Stop moving!” Boris looked to goon three and pointed the box toward him. The guy was taking aim at Dot and just before he pulled the trigger, the box went off. A cream pie was launched out of the box and slammed the guy in the face. Boris blinked in surprise. The pie tin fell to reveal a brick hidden in the pie. Goon three toppled over with little stars circling his head.

Boris shook his head. “Wha-”

“Gotta love the classics,” Dot said. She was having a tough time with Tom. For a big guy, he was pretty agile. Tables split from Dot’s hits, but Tom weaved through them.

“I don’t wanna fire on girl, but you’re making this hard!” Tom said.

“Good! Nothing fun comes easy.” Dot grinned. Tom tried to aim, but every time he got close Dot took another swing, and he had to dodge away. Boris watched the dangerous game of cat and mouse with amazement. He didn’t know if he could step in to help Dot without getting hit himself. Should he just slip away and leave this to her? But what if Tom shot her! Boris looked around for something to use. The moment he took his eyes off the pair, an arm wrapped around his neck and lifted him off his paws. Boris gasped. Tom had him in a one arm choke hold. Fear had Boris lock up.

“Hold it! Or I shoot the kid!” Tom hissed turning the gun on Boris. Dot froze with the bat half raised.

“You wouldn’t dare,” Dot said.

Tom chuckled. “You’d be surprised. I’ve done some crazy things before. There’s a reason I’m known as the Wild Tom in the Genovese.” The barrel of the gun jabbed into Boris’ jaw. He was shaking, his feet dangled uselessly in the air. His hands gripped at the large steal-like forearm that was choking him. What were they going to do? Was Tom really going to kill him? He wouldn’t! Boris felt tears prick at his eyes. He couldn’t die now. Not here. Not like this.

“Now, put down the bat,” Tom ordered. Dot scowled.

“You cheater,” she growled and dropped the bat with a clatter.

Tom laughed. “Hasn’t anyone ever told you life isn’t fair, little lady? Now, hold still.” Tom lowered the gun to point it at Dot. Boris gasped in horror. If he didn’t do something Dot would be-! Boris thrashed. Tom grunted, but hardly moved. Boris twisted his head and sunk his fangs into the man’s arm. Tom cried out in pain. There was a loud thump! Tom stopped screaming and fell over, completely limp. Boris scrambled away, spitting as he went. He scrubbed at his tongue and spat, trying not to think about what that taste was.

A gentle hand touched his shoulder. Boris flinched. “Are you okay!” Boris looked up to see Alice. She dropped the stone bust she had been holding to the floor. “He didn’t hurt you, did he?” she asked, her eyes full of concern.

Boris shook his head. “I’m okay.”

“Ya sure?” Dot asked with her brows knit in concern.

“Yeah,” Boris answered quietly.
“Alright, I’ll tied up these schmucks then,” Dot said. She reached behind her back and pulled out wrapping paper and ribbons. “I’ll make them into presents for the police!” She grinned and headed over to Tom. She pushed the gun away with her foot.

“Did you find the doll?” Alice asked.

Boris shook his head. “These guys nabbed me while I was chasing the lead. I need to find the trail again. I think I’m close.” Boris glared at the unconscious thug before looking back at Alice with worry in his eyes. “Where’s Bendy?”

“He’s on a bench in the front lobby. We heard the ruckus in here, and I decided to come check on it.” Alice smiled. “That other friend of yours and security took care of the other fellas already.”

“Is he okay?” Boris asked.

“Yeah. Yakko was his name, correct? He was joking with Jen and the others before he spotted us. I left Bendy with him. Bendy is still acting like he’s in pain, though,” Alice said. Boris nodded and started for the door the thugs had led him through. “Wait! I’ll come with you,” Alice said. “Bendy was really worried. I bet he’d feel better if you weren’t alone.”

“What’s going on?” Dot asked. She was sticking a big bow on top of the third goon after wrapping him in wrapping paper with little teddy bears and clouds all over.

“Sorry! Don’t have time to explain. Bendy’s in the lounge with Yakko!” Boris said as he rushed to the door.

“MY MAILMAN!” Dot squealed with excitement.

“Keep him safe, okay? We be back as soon as possible,” Boris said, pushing the door open.

Dot salute. “Aye, aye, captain!” Her eyes turned into hearts. “You go on! I’ll finish with these presents. You can trust me with your brother.”

Boris and Alice headed for the hall. It was quiet now that the people were all gone, and the goons were taken care of.

“Is she Bendy’s girlfriend?” Alice asked suddenly. “She’s a child. I don’t think-”

Boris sputtered in surprise. He imagined Bendy having a real date with Dot and couldn’t hold back the laughter. Bendy would be horrified. Alice watched him for a moment before giving him a questioning smile.

“It’s a one-sided crush, and that’s if Dot’s serious,” Boris said after getting his breath back.

“You don’t think she is?” Alice asked.

Boris thought back to Warnerburg. “It’s hard to say with her.”

“And he’s okay with it?” Alice looked at Boris with curious eyes.

Boris furrowed his eyes. “What do you mean?” Was she interested in Bendy? From what Bendy had described as their first meeting, Boris wouldn’t think so.

“Well, he didn’t seem to enjoy the attention. Why doesn’t he just make her stop?” Alice shrugged.

Boris snorted. “He’s told her off a dozen times. It doesn’t faze her.”
Alice pursed her lips. “And that’s all he’s done to stop her?”

Boris raised a brow and his smile dropped a little. “Whadda ya mean?”

Alice furrowed her brows with a thoughtful frown. “Well, I mean…I mean…I guess…I don’t know. If there’s something or someone my boss doesn’t like he uses…force? Intimidation?” Alice looked away, her face flushing. “Ahhhh, never mind.”

Boris’ ears dropped. He blinked and shook his head. “Your…boss?” he asked slowly. “What does that have to do with Bendy?”

Alice shook her head, looking at the ground in embarrassment. “It’s nothing. I just stuck my foot in my mouth. Sorry.”

Boris blinked in befuddlement. What was up with her? Her boss and Bendy? Using force? “You’ve lost me,” the wolf confessed.

Alice sighed and dropped her shoulders. “Sorry.” She lifted her hands in a stopping motion. “Okay, I’ll explain. So,” she cringed as her eyes found Boris’, “My boss is a demon…”

Boris let that sink in for a moment. They had reached the door that the thugs had taken him through. He stopped in front of it. The sulfur scent was here. He sniffed about before he found the trail he had been following. It went further down the hall.

So, Alice was comparing Bendy to this other demon? Boris had never seen another demon. Wait, hadn’t Bendy told him that he had bumped into a demon here? So that was Alice’s boss? It had unnerved his brother. It was weird. Bendy usually wasn’t intimidated by a single guy. Was this other demon that scary?

Boris glanced at Alice. She had wrapped an arm around herself and grabbed her other elbow. She looked uncomfortable as she stared holes at the carpet. This other guy used force and intimidation. So, Alice was scared of him? And he was a demon…and Bendy was a demon. Ah. Boris got it. Now the things Bendy had said about this woman made more sense. She seemed so nice, Boris hadn’t been able to see how she could be the same person Bendy complained about.

Boris needed to say something. “Look B-”

“I’m sor-,” Alice said at the same time. They cut off their words and looked at each other.

“You have something to say?” Boris asked.

“No! No!” She shook her head. “You first.”

“No, you. It’s okay.” Boris smiled at her reassuringly.

Alice bit her bottom lip. “It’s just.” Alice frowned sadly and sighed. “I’m sorry. I really messed up. I didn’t mean that. I don’t think your brother would do something like that to that girl. Though he does act a bit…” Her brows creased with concern and she dropped her eyes back down. They turned at corner. This part of the casino looked almost familiar.

“Energetic?” Boris offered. Alice glanced back over to him. “It’s alright. Dot’s been the forceful one. Bendy just does what he has to. It’s the only way he can shake her off. Sometimes literally,” Boris muttered. “He’d never hurt her. My brother is a good person.” Boris said with absolute certainty. Then the memory of Bendy tossing Dot over the railing back in Warnerburg came to mind. Well…they were closer friends now. That wouldn’t happen again…right? “Sure, he can be a bit rough
around the edges sometimes, but Bendy is the best. I don’t know what your boss is like, but Bendy would never hurt someone unless they really deserved it.”

Alice blinked and flushed. “Yeah,” she agreed after a moment. “Yeah, I know…or I think so, at least. I didn’t mean to…well.”

“It’s okay.” Boris smiled at her. “I get it. Your boss is scary and Bendy…” Boris shrugged. “Well, he’s had to deal with it before.” Alice seemed to deflate at that.

“But he hasn’t done anything,” Alice said. She pouted. “I should apologize.”

Boris chuckled. “You already did, remember?”

“But-”

“Don’t worry about it. You already said sorry.” Boris recognized the door to the dance room. The sulfur smell went right to the center. Whoever it was, wasn’t hiding in corners anymore. “Knowing my bro, he’s forgiven you and put it all behind him.”

“Really?” Alice raised a brow.

Boris grinned. “Yeah, like I said, Bendy is the best.” But a huge flirt too. Boris mentally rolled his eyes. The wolf pushed the door open and peered inside. The room was now empty and dim. There wasn’t a sign of life anywhere. Boris and Alice waited at the doorway. They shared a look before quietly entering the large room.

“Do you see anything?” Alice whispered.

“I don’t-” There was a small sound, something rattled as it bumped into something else. Boris perked his ear and fell quiet. Alice noticed him tense and froze. It was coming from the stage. Boris clenched his teeth in determination and silently approached the stage. The closed curtain didn’t shift at all.

“This way.”

Boris turned to see Alice opening a door on the side of the stage. She gave him an encouraging look. The two crept up the couple of steps and into the dark back stage. They gingerly walked around props, chairs, tables, and boxes.

“Where is he?” Alice asked.


“Okay, stay close.” Alice’s voice took on a level of command he hadn’t heard before. Boris gulped and nodded. Alice made her way down a narrow hall that was lined with costumes and props and cleaning equipment. There was a rattle of wood on wood. Someone hit a box. Boris almost jumped out of his fur. Alice lifted a hand and pointed down the dark hall. The hall opened up to a storeroom full of boxes and more theater equipment. She took a deep breath. “Okay. We know you’re here! Come out and you won’t get hurt!” Boris looked at Alice in surprise. Why did she give away their element of surprise!

There was movement from the corner of Boris’ eye. He turned to see a small, hunched over figure by the back wall. “Don’t move!” Alice said. The figure’s head turned toward them and hissed. The white of his eyes glowed an unsettling yellow as he fixed a glare at them. Boris narrowed his eyes to
see it better over Alice’s shoulder. Alice tensed and muttered something under her breath that Boris didn’t catch.

The figure lifted a hand and put it on the wall. There was a flare of red so bright that Boris had to squint to see. In the light he could make out the other person clearly. He was small, with a long tail that had a spike at the end like Bendy’s. He had a round, bald head with two sharp horns, pointed ears, and a large nose that bent downward. He hunched over his gloved hand...which clutched the doll. No wonder Bendy was having a hard time breathing.

“Hey! Give that back!” Boris shouted at him. The being glanced at Boris and smirked. His eyes seemed to glow brighter in malice as he lifted the doll and shook it at Boris tauntingly. He laughed at Boris, causing the wolf to growl.

“Return the doll, imp, or face my power!” Alice commanded. The imp’s yellow eyes went back to Alice. His toothy grin fell into a scowl, and his fist tightened around the doll, squeezing it. Boris’ heart twisted.

“S-stop it!” Boris cried out. The red on the wall swirled and slid to the floor.

Alice lifted her hand. “This is your last warning!”

The imp blew a raspberry at her. The red light made him look menacing as it grew brighter and swirled faster at his feet. The center of it suddenly turned dark. A black void opened like a mouth.

Alice said something quickly in a language Boris couldn’t understand. Her hand lit up in gold light. At the same time, the imp lunged for the growing darkness in the middle of the red swirl. Some instinct in Boris told him that if the creature got to it, he would lose the doll forever. Boris couldn’t let that happen! He had to save his brother! He ducked under Alice’s arm and dove to stop the imp.

“Boris!” Alice cried in surprise and alarm. The wolf crashed into the imp. There was a flash of bright golden light. It blinded Boris as he tumbled on the floor. He flailed around, trying to get his bearings. He blinked his eyes rapidly to clear the spots from his vision. He didn’t feel the imp anywhere around him. He was sure he’d had the guy. Where did he go?

Slowly Boris’ sight came back. The imp was no where to be seen. Panic froze the blood in Boris’ veins. “Wh-where’d he go?” The wolf scrambled to stand and look around. The red swirl was gone, and so was the gold. There was only a couple of burn marks on the wall and floor. The smell of charred wood and paint had Boris wrinkle his snout. Alice was on her knees panting. He quickly went over to her and knelt beside her.

“Alice? Are you okay?” Boris asked, worried.

“Ye-yeah. That just to-took a lot out of me,” Alice panted and sat back. “Did I do it? Is it gone?”

“I don’t see him anywhere. What did you do?” Boris asked. A little of his terror slipped into his voice.

“Ha! It worked!” She looked confused. “How did it work? It shouldn’t have…” Alice blinked.

“Alice, what did you do?” Boris repeated the question. Did the magic mess with her head? Did it do something to her like with Mama Odie’s eyes? Boris really hoped not. He’d feel terrible if something bad happened to this nice woman because of him.

“I, ah, I banished it. Wh-where’s the doll?” Alice asked and looked around. She brushed her hair from her face.
Boris got up and looked all along the back wall. “I don’t see it!” he exclaimed.

“It has to be around here somewhere,” Alice said. She pushed herself up with a groan.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Boris glanced at her.

“Just tired. I feel like I ran a marathon.” She smiled reassuringly. She brushed some sweat from her brow and helped Boris look around the cluttered space. Boris kept an eye on her as he looked. She stumbled a couple of times, but seemed okay.

Boris pushed aside boxes, costumes, stage sets, and lights with growing apprehension. The door to the dance floor slammed open so loudly that Boris yelped.

“Hello?” Dot called out. It echoed around the room. “Is anyone here?”

“Boris?” Bendy called out.

“We’re back here!” Boris shouted toward the stage. He heard footsteps coming toward them. Dot was suddenly on his head.

“Hey ya! What cha lookin’ for?” she asked in greeting. Boris looked up and opened his mouth to answer, but was interrupted by Yakko.

“Isn’t it obvious sis? He finally found his calling in the show biz.” Yakko smirked.

Dot gasped. “Really! Congrats Boris! You’ll remember us when you’re famous, right? What am I saying? Of course you will! How could you forget someone as cute as me?” Dot jumped off the top of his head and landed on the edges of the open box Boris had been looking behind. Before Boris could explain what he was hunting for Bendy showed up.

“Boris!” Bendy said as he rushed up to the pup.

“Bendy!” Boris took a few hurried steps to meet him. They grabbed each other’s forearms.

“Are you okay?” They both asked at the same time, looking each other over. Bendy spat a laugh. Boris chuckled too. The little demon seemed tired and a little bruised. He moved carefully, but otherwise he looked okay.

“I’m fine,” Bendy assured. Boris nodded.

“Me too.” Boris looked back at the Warners and the mess he and Alice had been making. His ears dropped. “But I haven’t foun-”

“OOOOh! Look at this hottie!” Dot exclaimed. Boris turned to see Dot holding up the doll. Where had it been? Then he sighed in relief. They had it back. Boris glanced back at Bendy to see his big brother’s face pale.

“Dot! Hand that over now,” Bendy ordered. Dot blinked in confusion at Bendy’s serious tone. She looked at him and back at the doll. Boris smelled trouble and could practically see the gears turning in Dot’s head so he wasn’t surprised when the girl grinned mischievously.

“I don’t know you liked dolls, Bendy-boo. What will you give me for it?” Dot asked. Hugging the doll to herself.

Bendy growled. “Dot.” His voice was full of warning.
“Maybe I’ll just keep it,” Dot teased.

“Please be gentle,” Boris requested. “That doll is connected to Bendy.” He didn’t want Bendy to get hurt more than he already was. “What you do to it, you will do to him.”

Dot’s, Yakko’s, and Alice’s eyes all widened in surprise.

“So, that’s what happened?” Alice whispered. “Then, if we hadn’t…”

Dot giggled. “Oh, my.” She kissed the top of the dolls head. “It’s my mini mailman!”

“Who knew he could come in an even smaller package,” Yakko said in amazement.

Bendy made a choking sound in the back of his throat. His face was twisted into a scowl. “Shut it! Don’t you dare call me small!” he snapped at Yakko. “And you,” he pointed a finger at Dot. “Stop calling me a mailman! And don’t do that!”

Dot giggled again. “What? This?” She peppered the doll in kisses.

“Argh!” Bendy went to grab the doll. Dot hopped up the boxes, laughing.

“I will love it and hug it and cuddle it and never let it go!” Dot cackled in glee. Bendy was right behind her as she ran down the hall toward the stage. “Catch me if you can!”

“Get back here!” Bendy shook a fist at her. Yakko laughed. Boris smiled. Thank heavens everything turned out okay.

Alice came up beside Boris. He looked over at her. “Hey, thanks for helping.”

Alice looked over at him then smiled. “Glad I could help stitch up the situation.”

Boris snorted.

“There’s just one thing that’s bothering me,” Alice said.

“What’s that, gorgeous?” Yakko asked. The three started to make their way back to the stage, following the chaos of Dot and Bendy.

“Why would an imp be after that doll?” She looked at Boris questioningly.

Boris felt his ears drop a bit. “I…don’t know. Where did he even come from?”

Alice hesitated for a moment. She glanced to the closed curtain. Dot ducked under it, with Bendy close behind. “Imps are usually lesser creatures from hell.” She gave Boris another look.

“Hell?” Yakko questioned turning his head to the side.

“But, how did he even know we had it? Why would he be after it? Or us? We haven’t run into…” Boris trailed off. Were these ‘friends’ of the Voodoo Queen’s, out for revenge or something? His mind went back to the moment he had tackled the imp. It didn’t feel like the voodoo shop. The only thing familiar was that light. That bright light. Full of warmth and peace and energy. He looked back at Alice with confusion. “Alice what did you do to it?”

“I banished it back to where it came from.” Alice shrugged. “It seemed like the right thing to do.”

“Yeah, but how? What was that light?” Boris asked. A memory tickled the back of Boris’ mind.
Alice ducked her head and looked away.

“What do you mean?” Alice asked evasively. Before the wolf could ask more, they pushed through the curtains. Bendy was chasing Dot around the dance floor.

“This is a fun dance!” Dot laughed.

“Knock it off!” Bendy demanded. Dot hugged the doll and Bendy stumbled to a stop, choking and gasping. Dot’s eyes widened, and she instantly loosened her grip. She approached Bendy with worry on her face.

“Sorry!” Dot squeaked. Bendy took the chance to snatch it away from her.

He took a couple of breathes, before turning a steely look on her. “This isn’t a toy. It’s important and apparently dangerous too.” Dot nodded looking a little chastised.

“C’mon bud. My sister didn’t mean any harm,” Yakko called out to him from the front of the stage.

Bendy scoffed. “You Warners should each have a warning sign hanging around your neck. You are all a hazard to health.”

“Why do you think ‘warn’ is in our names pal?” Yakko chuckled. Bendy rolled his eyes, but he was smirking. He stuck the doll in his vest to hide it.

Boris turned back to Alice. She was watching Bendy and the Warners with a gentle smile on her lips and a happy light in her eyes. He wasn’t imagining things. He had seen that magic before. Why was she acting nervous when he asked about it? Could it be that Alice was the angel that gave him the map? Why would an angel be working at this casino? Where was her wings? Didn’t angels only wear white and such? Could she help him understand the map better? He had so many questions.

Boris “Alice are you-”

“ALICE!” The doors banged open with a crash. They were thrown aside so forcefully that their hinges gave out, and they fell over. A grey man marched in with a cane in hand and a top hat. A thin man with a bag over his head and goggles over his eyes was next to him. A woman with crazy long hair and a lizard…hood? was on his other side. The man with the hat was scowling, showing his razor-sharp teeth. His monocle flashed. “WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DOING IN MY CASINO!”

Alice spurted. “M-M-Mr. Black Hat, sir!”

Chapter End Notes

*Mercowe here* Soooooo, I have to apologize for ya'll having to wait a little longer to get this week's chapter. I ended up getting three weeks behind on editing this thing for Tap because I was slammed with big projects in school (seriously, there was a crater)...And I have been going out on dates lately during the weekends. I ended up editing all three chapters this morning. It’s been fun and exhausting. Anyways. I hope you enjoyed this week as much as I did.

Here's a little fun moment that happened when me and Tap were outside recently. By the way, this is how our conversations tend to go when we’re both tired...
*We both get in the car in the freezing cold.*
Tap imagines someone asking a question:
Imaginary Person: How did your week go?
Tap: We froze to death...
Imaginary Person: What?
Tap: Don't you know? I'm a ghost! Booo!
Mercowe: I'm a cow.
*Tap cracks up.*
Tap: Mooo!

Tap here! I remember that! XD
And here's the amazing tumblr for the bbros!

https://thebbros.tumblr.com/

Have a good weekend! See ya next time!
Mercowe and Tap out!
Chapter Summary

Black Hat has words.
Bendy has questions.
The Warners have a sleepover.

Chapter Notes

Hello! ^^
How are you?
Mercowe and I are being buried under snow but otherwise we're great!
So, quick note. Updates will be posted on Saturday so they can be edited and look nice.
I get chapters typed up on Friday, but Mercowe doesn't have enough time to look them over, so this will work out better for her sake. Thanks for being patient with us! ^^ I hope you have a good weekend, enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy’s eyes widen at the sight of the other demon. Angry energy was rolling off him in waves. Every fiber in Bendy’s being screamed for him to run or fight. Yet, he remained locked in place, unable to move. It was terrifying. Black Hat wasn’t even paying him any attention. He was completely focused on Alice. She also seemed equally locked in horror. Her face was pale, eyes wide.

“You inferior imbecile! Alice, this is the last straw!” Black Hat waved his cane. The guy behind him wearing a paper bag over his head had to duck so he wouldn’t get hit. His…employee? “What do you think you are pulling here!” He was on the stage in a shift of the shadows. Alice squeaked in alarm as he grabbed her arm. “Gun fire, destroyed tables, stolen chips, and above all else, you used that infernal magic again!” She cringed and shrank away with each accusation. Bendy clenched his fists. He opened his mouth to snap at the grey, pompous shark-toothed, frog face. No guy should treat someone like that. He stopped himself at the last second as a thought hit him.

“I-I-I’m s-s-s-sor-” Alice looked like she was on the edge of fainting. Bendy didn't know her circumstances. It froze his actions and choked out his words. If he fought against this terrifying creep he could make things worse for her. His mind went back to how Pete used to be to him and Boris. Sure, it was cruel, but they had a place to live and food on the table because of the job. It had been done legally and he and Boris had been so proud that they didn't have to beg or steal for it. They had been able to work, good honest work.

He didn't know what had Alice working in a place like this. Maybe it was the only job she could get. Maybe she had a family that desperately needed to money. Stars, there could be a million reasons. Bendy didn't know a single one. If he got in the middle of this...he didn't know what was at stake
here for her. What she could lose...

“No, but you will be!” Black Hat leaned over her intimidatingly. His one visible eye flashed red and black and a forked tongue flicked out between his teeth. Alarm caused Bendy's heart to race. If he didn't do something...

“Hey, now.” Yakko suddenly popped up between Alice and the demon. Yakko’s hat and coat were gone. His button up shirt had the sleeves rolled up much like Bendy’s outfit. He gently freed Alice from Black Hat’s grip with his sudden surprise appearance. “I don’t believe that’s how one treats a lady,” Yakko said simply to the tall demon.

Hat growled. He lifted a hand with his middle finger and thumb pressed together. He looked like he was ready to snap them. The guy in the bag cleared his throat and caused the tall business man to pause. Goggles hid his eyes. He was in an employee uniform, wearing a vest and button up suit. His bowtie was a bit crooked. Black Hat glanced back at him with a scowl.

“No!” The girl standing next to the bag guy started whacking him. “Don’t! He was gonna do something cool!” She was... odd. Her eyes didn’t match. She had a hood over her head that looked a bit like a lizard. She had a messy ton of long hair that curled before it touched the ground, just like a tail would. She wore fingerless, mismatched gloves, riddled with holes, and long mismatched socks over her exposed legs. If Bendy wasn’t so focused on this threatening man he’d appreciate her outfit and gams more. Her short skirt disappeared under the unbuttoned uniform coat and vest. The tie she wore was loose and the first two button of her top were left unbuttoned as well. Her grin revealed fangs and there were several stud earrings in her ears. Bendy had a passing question on whether she was human or not.

“Ow! Stop that!” the guy in with the paper bag complained. He ducked under his arms to protect his head.

“SHUT UP!” Hat barked. The two froze. He turned back to Yakko with a frown. “She works for me, and I can treat my pathetic lackies any way I wish.”

“Yeah! You tell him, Hatty!” the crazy looking woman called and hopped up and down energetically.

“Demencia! Shut your trap!” Black Hat shouted back at her. She giggled. They started to argue... or flirt...Bendy wasn’t really sure.

Bendy turned back to Yakko. His posture was easy going, and his smile was there, as normal, but there was a change in his eyes. Bendy somehow knew that Yakko was serious here, in a way that Bendy had never seen before. The Warners had always been carefree and easy going. They seemed invincible and acted confident in every crazy act they performed. That’s why it had seemed like such a shock when the Cupbros had defeated them. When they had seen these two at Alice’s show, Bendy had been surprised. They hadn’t changed. Dot and Yakko had assured them that they were still on top of the world. Bendy had doubted at first, but as the night went on he had been convinced...

Until now.

There was the tiniest hint of fear in Yakko’s eyes.

That’s what got Bendy moving. If a crazy fella like Yakko Warner was scared of this guy, someone would have to do something. Bendy wasn’t sure what, but he knew that he couldn’t stay on the side lines here. Some instinct warned against this, but the rest of him focused on his friends, his brother on
the stage. So Bendy hopped on stage just as Hat was turning his focus back on them.

“Alice. You will go to my office, now!” Black Hat hissed in a low and calm tone now. Alice paled even further. She looked deathly white. Bendy couldn’t blame her. The casino manager looked and sounded calm now, but the energy that still rolled off him was full of dark malice and blood thirsty intent. Bendy didn’t allow himself to imagine what would happen if Alice went with him. No, he couldn’t allow that.

“B-b-b-but sir,” she tried to reason. “It was an emergency.” Hat grit his sharp teeth.

“Are you talking back?” he asked and took a deep breath.

“N-no sir! I-I’m j-j-just trying to explain. I had to banish—”

“YOU BANISHED SOMEONE IN MY CASINO!” Black Hat blew up. Bendy blinked. Was he imagining things or were Black Hat’s teeth getting longer?

“It was my fault,” Bendy jumped in. All eyes turned on him. Boris looked like he wanted to say something too, but was frozen like Bendy had been.

Black Hat raised a brow before he narrowed his eye. Somehow his monocle also narrowed. “You? Who in hell blazes are you to speak up? What are you doing in my casino?”

Bendy lifted his head and squared his shoulders. It was like standing underneath a magnifying glass, but instead of heat he felt ice. There was an intense burning cold that nipped at him and made him fight down a visible shiver. The energy from the other demon went from malicious to hesitant. Like an awaiting predator, the energy was thick, ready pounce.

“My name is Bendy. I was enjoying a vacation here until trouble showed up. I had my room broken into and some things of mine taken. If it hadn’t been for Alice, I wouldn’t have gotten my stuff back,” Bendy said as evenly and reasonably as possible. He probably sounded flat, and he had no idea if any fear showed in his eyes.

Black Hat huffed. “So, you’ll take responsibility for this mess, hmm?”

Bendy frowned. "Shouldn't you be apologizing for your clubs terrible security?" Alice was shaking her head barely.

Black Hat sneered. "Trouble wouldn't have come if you hadn't acted our first." The sneer turned into a sharp grin. "You threw that first hit with the mobsters, you were the reason they came back and shot up my establishment. If I pay for the couple hundred, if even that, in your damages, then I can expect the few thousands it'll take to fix all the bullet holes, replace the stolen chips, and compensate to my costumers.” How did he know Bendy threw the hit! He felt a shiver go down his spine.

“Make him pay for everything,” the man with the bag on his head said.

“Make him our slave! He’s cute! I can keep him as a little pet!” Demencia cackled excitedly.

Bendy and Black Hat scowled.

“Would you two shut up!” Black Hat hissed.

“Don’t you call me little!” Bendy snapped at the same time.

The demons shared a glance of surprise.
“Hahaha! You made the same face! That was funny! Do it again!” Demencia chuckled.

Black Hat sighed and turned to Bendy. The dark power had calmed, but annoyance was in his face. “I must inform you that you have broken a few rules here at the casino, and I must have you escorted off the property. Be thankful I’m not involving the police or having you pay for anything.”

Bendy narrowed his eyes suspiciously. That didn’t make much sense. Why just let them walk? He had a nagging feeling this was more for Black Hat’s benefit than his. He was sure that the guy was running some shady stuff with the local mobs in Toon Town. He wondered what would happen if the cops did show up. “Really? Why?”

“Bendy!” Boris whispered. Bendy glanced over at his brother. The wolf was shaking his head in warning. He wanted Bendy to just leave it. Alice’s eyes were pleading for him to stop too.

Hat rolled his eye. “Don’t think I’m unaware of your frolicking, you star-bent fool. A demon always keeps an eye on his…others.” Hat smirked. His shark teeth gleamed at Bendy mockingly. “And you’ve done a fine job making the news and causing a stir of chaos on the Surface. I’m sure mommy and daddy are so proud of your first outing.”

Bendy’s eyes widened and his frown turned into a confused scowl. What in the name of the moon and stars was this guy talking about?

“But you see, I don’t have time to deal with an unkept budding like yourself. I’m playing the big games here and that requires some…finesse. Come back in about fifty years, and we’ll talk.” Hat gave Bendy a half-lidded look with a mocking shrug and grin. “Until then, take my advice, don’t play on other’s territory. It’s a fast way to get yourself killed up here.”

Bendy was taken aback by the casual death threat. He was stuck between feeling angry for being talked down to and terrified that someone could threaten him so lightly, like commenting on the weather, and mean it.

“Don’t you threaten my lovey-dovey like that!” Dot was there, shaking a finger at Black Hat with a deep scowl. “I’ll introduce you to my pet if you do!” Bendy’s tension was completely cut by Dot’s appearance. He smacked his forehead with his hand.

“Dot, how many times do I have to tell you! I’m not your boyfriend, and my name is Bendy!” Bendy sighed.

Dot looked over her shoulder and winked at him. “I know Bendy-boo! I love you too!”

Black Hat raised a brow. Instead of looking angry or annoyed, he gave the girl a long knowing look. He looked back over to Bendy with something like pity and understanding in his slit pupil. When Bendy knit his brows in confusion, Black Hat tilted his head. Bendy followed his direction to the girl with the long hair. She was grinning with her tongue sticking out of the corner of her mouth. She looked like she was trying to sneak something out of the bag guy’s pocket.

Bendy made eye contact with Black Hat again. The message was easy to understand now. ‘You have to deal with one of these too.’

Hat sighed. “I’ll give you a few minutes to collect your things. I can’t allow this kind of violence here, not if we want business to stay good. Personally, I’d love to see people tear each other apart limb from limb, but-” Hat shrugged, looking bored and annoyed.

Bendy felt another shiver dance down his spine. “I get it.” Bendy muttered, more to get out of there sooner than anything else.
Alice took the tightest step forward. “Um, sir I—”

“Alice, you’re fired.” Black Hat stated flatly and turned around to leave. Alice’s jaw dropped, and she stiffened.

“Oh! Hey! Wait a minute! This was all on me! Don’t fire her.” Bendy took a step to follow him. Black Hat whirled around.

He sneered at the whole group now. “No. Alice, you know the rules you broke. We had an agreement. I’ve let you get away with a few things, but I can’t turn a blind eye to banishment. I’d say don’t take this personal, but you know what I really think.” He smirked. “You can also pack your things and go.” Alice’s mouth was still hanging open. She looked like she wanted to say something. Her eyes narrowed in indignation. Then she suddenly stopped. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath and nodded. When she opened her eyes, she seemed calmed and focused.

“Yes, sir,” she said simply. “I have a new light on the situation anyway.” She smiled. Black Hat scowled and turned away.

“Bu-But Alice! You shouldn’t lose your job because of us!” Boris protested. “What about your singing?”

Alice smiled warmly at him. “It’s okay. There will be other work. I’ll be fine. It wasn’t your fault. This was going to happen eventually.”

“Uuuuuuuuh.” Yakko looked at her, confused. “Why’s that, doll?”

“Because Mr. Hat doesn’t like me, and that’s fine by me,” Alice huffed. Bendy frowned and turned back to watch the casino manager.

Black Hat reached his followers. “Make sure they have their stuff and get out,” he ordered. “Then meet me in the back.” Demencia saluted.

The bag man stepped forward with hunched shoulders and lifted a finger in protest. “Bu-b-but sir! You can’t fire her! We still haven’t figured out how to—”

“Enough! Flug!” Black Hat growled and kept walking. The man cowered before the demon.

“Ye-yes sir! Sorry Mr. Black Hat, sir.” Flug whimpered.

The other demon was out the door before anyone could say anything else.

“Feeeuw! That was like dancing around an active landmine. Good job everybody!” Yakko gave the group a thumbs up.

Bendy turned back to Alice. “Do you have anywhere to go?”

Alice gave him a wry smile. “Not really, but don’t worry. I’ve been in tighter pinches than this.”

“No where to go!” Yakko gasped. “Then you’ll have to come with us!” He winked at her.

“And of course, my hunka mailman will be with me.” Dot wrapped her gloved hands around Bendy’s arm. He scowled at the annoying girl.

“Actually, I’m not planning on it,” Bendy said. “We’ve gotta get to Oddswell’s old place, find anyone from the group.”
“We can help,” Dot and Yakko said at the same time.

Boris chuckled. Bendy rolled his eyes. “Of course you can.”

Alice cleared her throat. “I wouldn’t want to intrude.”

“Don’t worry about! We need more gorgeous dames in this story anyway!” Yakko said. “There are way too many guys here.”

“You’re not gonna hear me complaining about that,” Dot giggled. Bendy sighed. There they went again, talking nonsense.

“Hey! This isn’t getting your junk and scamming!” Demencia popped up from the ground. She picked up Alice, just like she had earlier that day. “I’m not leaving my bon-bon waiting long! You need to get gone!” She raced away with Alice, yet still managed to watch them from over her shoulder. Bendy blinked. Why couldn’t he meet normal people? Was that too much to ask?

“Sh-she’s right! It’s time for you to go,” the guy (Flug?) spoke up.

Bendy gave him a dirty look. Flug flinched back. The group got off the stage and headed back to their trashed room. Boris tried to ask the man questions, but his only response was to call him ‘Dr. Flug’ and walk faster. Bendy stuffed his hands in his pockets. He didn’t like this. Black Hat had obviously made some assumptions about him, which he really didn’t care about, but he had made everything Bendy had been doing sound like a peal for attention. Hat made it sound like Bendy had a goal that had been done a million times.

Had other demons caused chaos and gotten in the papers? Was that normal? And what the cuss was a budding? What ‘big game’ was Black Hat a part of?

For once in his life, Bendy actually wished he knew what other demons were like and the background they came from. He wanted to know if they were all blood thirsty jerks like Black Hat. If they were, then he was better off. If not…

The group came to the room. Flug complained at the state of the room. The Warners started to pick on him. Bendy rolled his eyes. At least it kept them busy and off him. Bendy looked around at the mess. It was bad, but not beyond salvaging. The couple of cans they had left were good, their clothes were fine, and besides the broken spine of Bendy’s Felix the Cat book, their papers and books were all okay. Boris had kept the map in his pocket, so that had been in no danger. Though, the wolf pup was sorrowful at the state of Bendy’s gift from him.

Bendy was a little heart broken too honestly, but he rather it be the book’s spine than his. It didn’t take long for them to get their things together. The boys quickly changed in the bathroom and were ready to leave in ten minutes. Good thing too, because the Flug guy looked like he was nearly bursting with frustration. It was a moment later that they found themselves outside the casino in the cold night air.

Bendy adjusted his goggles and sighed. “Ya know,” he said to Yakko. “This stuff usually happens when you’re around.”

Yakko’s brows shot up. “I have no idea what you mean.” Bendy felt side of his mouth pull up in a wry smirk.


“So where are we going, Bendy?” Boris asked. Bendy sighed.
“I guess we’re camping in the woods.” Bendy shrugged. They really didn’t have many choices beyond that.

“Nope! You’re coming with us!” Dot said.

“And that doll too,” Yakko said with a smirk. Bendy’s hand went to the vest pocket he had put the doll into. This little thing was becoming more of a burden than he had first thought.

“Oh!” Bendy and the rest turned to see Alice with a couple of suitcases. She was in a simple black dress with flat shoes and a pair of white gloves. She gave them a small smile. “You all didn’t need to wait on me.”

“Nonsense!” Yakko said.

“What kind of people would we be to leave a girl behind?” Bendy asked. Dot rolled her eyes.

“So, everyone’s here? Good? Great,” Dot said. “I’m cold and ready to call it a night.”

“Wait. Where are you taking us?” Bendy asked before she could do her weird thing. She smiled.

“To a new friend!” She reached over and pulled. Once again, the world shifted sideways and suddenly they were somewhere else entirely. It looked like an apartment.

“What in the world!” Alice stumbled, and Bendy caught her arm before she fell over.

“Sorry! We should have warned you. Dot sort of can teleport,” Boris said on Bendy’s other side.

“It’s called a scene change,” Dot huffed and sat down. “And that was hard. I’m going to bed.”

“WHAT IN THE STAR BLAZING HEAVENS!” There was a crash behind them and Bendy turned around to see what was going on. He was ready to run or flee.

There, in a wide entryway, stood a fox in pajamas pants. He dropped a cup, which shattered on the floor. His eyes were huge as he stared at them. Bendy glanced around the room for an escape. They were standing in a large living room. There was a circle of couches, a coffee table, a TV, a couple slightly singed plants which sat on mismatched tables and two large windows, one behind him and another to his left. The windows were covered in curtains, blocking the any view of the outside. To Bendy’s right was a closed door and a hallway that disappeared into darkness. He turned back to the fox. Beyond him seemed to be a dining room-kitchen combo. It seemed every surface had papers, folders, or photographs on them.

“Wiston! Did I hear glass breaking?” A voice called from down the hall.

“Xedo! They’re back, and they’re not alone!” Wiston called. Bendy tensed. He shared a worried glance with Boris.

“Hey ya, Wiston.” Yakko waved lazily. “How was your evening?”

“What did you guys destroy this time?” Wiston demanded with an accusing finger. “And who are these people?” He waved at Bendy, Boris, and Alice.

Alice ducked her head a little and looked at the floor. “I am so sorry to intrude. I’m…not sure how got here?” She straightened up. “I’m Alice. It’s nice to meet you.” She smiled and gave a polite curtsy.

He looked her up and down carefully. He seemed extremely suspicious. To be fair, if the Warners
had pulled this on him back at their place in Sillyvision, Bendy would have done the same thing. Anyone that knew the Warners could be just as crazy as them.

“Wiston,” the fox stated flatly. “XEDO! Get out here! I just got curtsied at and I don’t know what to do!” he shouted down the hall, making Bendy and Alice jump.

“Aww, c’mon Wiston. Be nice. They’re friends,” Dot said and then yawned. There was a thump and a curse down the hall. Another fox appeared in the room.

“What in the world are you…shouting…” the fox’s voice trailed off when his eyes scanned the room and landed Bendy and Boris. “YOU!”

Bendy was really getting tired of that. How many people were going to be surprised to see him today?

“You’re the B brothers! Bendy and Boris! In my living room!” Bendy guessed this was Xedo. He had on glasses, a loose shirt and pajama pants. His tail swished back and forth in excitement. Bendy wondered how this was gonna go. “Wonderful!”

Bendy blinked. That wasn’t the reaction he was expecting. “After all the research, the weeks of looking and interviewing, to finally meet you! To think, after fleeing capture, that they would return to Toon Town! What could this mean? Are you here for Oddswell? Did he send you on an errand for him or is it something else? Either way, you’re here!” He stepped forward and offered his hand.

“Sorry. I’m Xedo Tiptail. Journalist for the Toon Town Times.” Bendy hesitantly gave him his hand. The fox shook it firmly before turning to Boris to do the same. “To be completely honest, I was suspecting the Warners weren’t friends of yours and were just pulling my tail, but this clears up any doubt.”


“Not in the slightest.” The fox didn’t miss a beat. The siblings chuckled.

He focused on Bendy again. “I have been following your story for quite some time now. I almost have all the pieces together. There is still quite a bit that doesn’t add up. Do either of you mind an interview?” Xedo went off at a mile a minute. Bendy felt whiplash.

“Lay off Tippy. It’s nearly midnight. We’re exhausted,” Yakko cut in. Xedo turned a steely eye on him and Dot.

“And where were you two? Thought you could sneak off while Dr. Scratchansniff was dealing with Wakko’s hospital papers? Thought I wouldn’t notice the silence at night?” He put his hands on his waist and looked at them like a disapproving dad.

Wiston chuckled. “Busted.”

Dot and Yakko sagged. Dot yawned again. “We went to go get them. We knew they’d show up eventually.” She stretched.

“And where did they show up exactly?” Xedo demanded.

“At a casino,” Alice said. “It’s on the outskirts of the county.” Xedo gave her an appreciative look before frowning at the Warners again.

“A casino? Really?” He pitched the bridge of his snout and sighed. “You two. Go to your room. We will talk about this in the morning with Dr. Scratchansniff.” Xedo pointed to the hall.
“Aaaaw. Do we have to tell?” Yakko whined.

“Go,” Xedo said with finality.

“You’re lucky I’m too tired to argue,” Dot muttered. She headed down the hall. “Good night Bendy-boo! I’ll leave my door unlocked.” She winked over her shoulder. Bendy scowled. Xedo was giving him a sharp look.

“Not in your life,” Bendy muttered, but she was already gone.

Yakko hadn’t moved.

“That means you,” Xedo said.

“But I’m not tired. ‘Sides, I brought guests and it’s rude to not introduce them to you,” Yakko said.

“Didn’t he introduce himself, though?” Boris asked with a tilt of his head.

“Alice, this is Xedo Tiptail. He is a journalist that is trying to figure out Bendy and Boris. He looks all shady since he’s a fox, but he’s really obsessed with the truth. He is a professional stalker too! He could probably find out anything about people’s lives. Now that I think about it, that’s terrifying,” Yakko said. “And that’s Wiston, Xedo's pyromaniac brother. He’s fun. We’ve already gotten in trouble with the fire department four times.” He turned on his heel to face the foxes. “And guys, this is Alice I-don’t-know-her-last-name. She just lost her job at the casino for helping us out. She was a bartender and a singer--and a pretty spitfire, if ya know what I mean.” Yakko winked. “She has nowhere to go.”

The three struggled to make eye contact.

“Yakko. You’re not helping,” Bendy said deadpan.

“And this is Bendy! He is tough and tries to play it cool, but he’s really a fluff heart.”

“Yakko,” Bendy warned.

“And that’s Boris, don’t get confused, he’s the younger brother. He has to try to clean up Bendy’s messes, but he will charm he’s way through most things.”

“Yakko!” Bendy snapped.

The Warner blinked twice and turned to him with a smile. “Yes?”

“Do us a favor. Go to bed.” Bendy reached up and put a hand on his shoulder. “It’s gonna be a busy day tomorrow.”

“Really? What are we doing tomorrow night, Brain?” Yakko asked with a knowing smirk. Bendy frowned. He knew he was at the expense of a joke he didn’t understand. Still, you choose your fights with the Warners.

“I already said, remember,” Bendy said “And I would like your and Dot’s help.”

Yakko thought about it. “Uuuuuuuuuuh, I guess.” He shrugged. “But I want you to owe us one.”

Bendy blinked. “Owe you?”

“Yeah. A favor when we call one in,” Yakko said, holding up a hand with his pinkie and thumb out
like it was a phone to his head. “Don’t worry. It’s not like we’ll ask you to rob a bank or anything.”

Bendy looked heavenward, wondering if it was worth it. “Fine.” If it would shut his trap. “I’ll owe you one.”

“Alright! G’d night everybody!” Yakko waved and marched off proudly.

Xedo stared. Wiston’s jaw dropped.

“Good night Yakko,” Boris called after him.

“Good night,” Alice said with uncertainty.

“Alright. Sooo…sorry about just showing up in your apartment,” Bendy said, trying not to cringe.

“You have to tell me how you did that!” Wiston jumped in front of him.

Bendy leaned back, his eyes widening in shock. The fox grabbed his vest.

“I have never seen any of them do anything anyone has told them to! Not without a ton of begging, crying, and screaming! How did you get him to listen to you? How!” Wiston demanded. Bendy was lifted off his feet, which immediately annoyed him.

“Wiston, drop our guest,” Xedo demanded and pulled the younger fox back.

“Ops! Sorry.” Wiston shrugged apologetically, letting him go.

“We just ask them,” Boris said, tilting his head and quirking his mouth. He shrugged to himself.

The foxes still looked amazed at the pair. “I’m not buying it. You guys are wizards,” Wiston said.

Alice cleared her throat a little. “Well, if it isn’t too much trouble. I will be on my way. I need to find a hotel to stay the night.”

“Wiston, the apartment next to this one is also mine. You can stay in the guest room there. It’s late and I don’t think anyone wants to be out by themselves in the city at this time.”

Alice smiled uncertainly. Her brows drew together. “Is it really okay?”

“I’d feel better if I knew you had somewhere safe to stay, Miss Alice,” Boris said, “Especially after all the help you gave me at the casino.” Alice looked to the wolf with mild surprise.

“Yeah,” Bendy added. “We’d definitely rather you not be on the streets right now.”

She glanced at him with her brows drawn together. “Well…I do still want answers from you boys,” she said slowly. Oh great, Bendy thought, this will go over well. He didn’t really want to drag the dame into this mess…but she already got herself involved--sort of. She, at least, had lost her job because of them. Bendy couldn’t believe that he had endangered yet another person.

“There are two locks, one on the apartment and one on the room door, if that helps,” Wiston said.

“I would like answers too,” Xedo jumped in. “I don’t mean to be nosy.”

“Even though you are being absolutely nosy, bro,” Wiston quibbled.
“I would like to compare notes,” Xedo said, then glanced at a clock on the coffee table. He adjusted the glasses on his snout thoughtfully. “It is late. We can talk in the morning.” Wiston smirked. “I hope that is okay with you two?”

“You’re okay with us staying here?” Boris asked with an ear perked.

“Of course!” Xedo said. “You are wanted across the country by now. I take you out that door, and I may never find out the whole story!”

Bendy’s eye twitched. Were they just a cash grab for this guy? A big article for his star fallen paper? “Isn’t it the papers’ fault we’re wanted across the country? I found a lot of hogwash in those articles, pal. Did you write those?”

Boris’ eyes widened as he looked between the fox and Bendy.

“Oh my,” Alice mumbled to herself.

The fox sighed, with slumped shoulders. “No. Those fabrications are an embarrassment to the business, if you ask me. My boss is making a fortune on you boys, and he wants anything he can get. I refused to write an article until I had all the facts. I will not spread misinformation like my coworkers do.”

Bendy narrowed his eyes. “Yeah, that sounds likely.” Xedo’s chest puffed up, and he opened his muzzle to speak.

“It’s true.” Dot popped up on Bendy’s shoulders. She was in a large night shirt and shorts.

“Yeah. He’s like that. We’ve kept an eye on him,” Yakko said, stepping out from behind Boris. The boys hardly reacted. Boris only gave them a glance and Bendy tossed Dot off his shoulders and head before she could mess with his goggles or hair. The others jumped in surprise.

“I thought you were going to bed,” Bendy growled.

“Uuuuuuh.” Yakko put a finger on his chin. “We kinda remembered your trust issues last minute.”

“Yeah! We’re here to vouch for them! They are good foxes. Promise. No chicken coop nonsense here.” Dot crossed her heart with her finger. “And now we can go to bed.” She grabbed Bendy’s arm.

“Not with you!” Bendy barked and yanked his arm back.

“Are you two okay with the couches?” Xedo asked in exasperation.

“As long as I am away from this nut job! Stars, compared to some places we’ve slept, it’s a Grande suit,” Bendy muttered.

“Thank you,” Boris said as he put down his bag. “Won’t you get into trouble housing us?”

Xedo shrugged with a mischievous half-smile. “Only if I get caught.” Bendy smirked. Okay he could end up liking this guy.

“I’ll show you to the other apartment, miss.” Wiston waved an arm to Alice.

“Thank you kindly.” She smiled warmly as she followed the other one away.

“Alright! Cuddling on the couch!” Dot hopped onto the couch Bendy had set his pack next to.
Without looking, Bendy shoved her off.

“Go to your bed,” he said. She pouted.

“But mailman. You are my bed! I want to package-” Yakko suddenly grabbed her ankle, and Dot squeaked in surprise.

“C’mon sis. I’m sure this chapter has already gone on long enough,” Yakko said. “Good night everybody!” Yakko waved as he dragged his pouting sister out of the room.

“You’d think we’d understand them better the more we’re around them,” Boris said as he sat and slipped off his paw covers.

“I think the only way to understand them is if you’ve completely lost your mind,” Bendy muttered and pulled off his goggles to put them on the coffee table. Boris shrugged.

“I will see you two in the morning.” Xedo gave them a small nodded. “Don’t hesitate if you need anything. Glasses are in the top cabinet to the left of the sink.”

“Thank you, Mr. Tiptail. Good night.” Boris smiled a puppy-like thanks. Bendy felt himself smiling in response. He must never let the wolf know how easily he could get people with that look…Lately Bendy had a feeling Boris might be aware of it. That could be very bad for Bendy. Or more like, very bad for his wallet.

The boys were quick to get ready for bed. Teeth and fangs were brushed, clothes were changed, faces washed, and books and journals were checked. Boris pulled out the map, but there was no sign of an ‘X’ anywhere. They tried to figure out what that meant, but like most things related to the map, they couldn’t really come up with anything.

Bendy checked and double checked the doll. He hid it near his pillow. No one was going to get close to the star fallen thing. He almost felt like it was laughing at him. He tried not to think about the crushing pain the stupid toy had brought to his ribs, or how scared he had been for Boris. No, he definitely didn’t want to think about it.

He pulled back the blankets to find Dot and, chasing her away one last time, was able to crawl onto the couch to sleep.

It was finally time to get some rest. Sadly, Bendy couldn’t really think of it as peaceful, not with the fears of morning looming over his mind.

Chapter End Notes

(Mercowe here!)

Wow, this week I really thought Bendy was gonna get eaten by Black Hat...Just kidding, I knew he was gonna be fine, but it made me laugh that Black Hat thought Bendy has some sort of doting demon parent who sent him out to wreak destruction.

Tap actually pointed out my favorite typo of the week before I started editing. Wiston is describing Tiptail and calls him a professional stalker (which is hilarious in the first place), but instead it was written, "He's a professional starker too!"
Now I'm sitting here imagining Tiptail in an Iron Man suit. It's beautiful! :D Red on red! See you at Comic Con, Tiptail!

Tap: Nnnnnnnoo! Stahp Mercowe! They already know I suck at grammar! Don't put that imagine in their minds! Ahhhhh!

Mercowe and Tap out!
Cup had a surreal feeling of amazement. He sat between his brother and the frog brothers in their boat casino. They were laughing, having an enjoyable time. It was so very strange.

Cup gazed at his drink as he reflected on the event that brought him to this point. The moment Mugs had explained what the frog brothers had done they had headed to the river bank. Cup was bent on revenge. How dare they toss his brother out! He was gonna sink their boat to the bottom of the muddy river with them tied up in it.

Mugs had advised against it. That had surprised Cup. He wasn’t used to his younger brother speaking up. Mugs agreed that they couldn’t leave things as they were. Word spread fast in the dark corners of the underworld markets. If a rumor spread that they were weak or had been crossed by some common casino pair, then some cocky buck would show up and waste their time—or worse, they wouldn’t get in with the more influential people. Worst case, the boss found out.

Even Dice would be a nightmare.

They decided to act, but first they had earned a break. They took two days off to relax, heal, and have a bit of fun. Nothing too wild, a card game here, a parade there, and a swing club. After the rest, the cup brothers had headed to the casino to claim a victory and put those frogs in their place. Cups had not expected what happened next.

Mugs was the one that had stepped up. He'd challenged them to a fight, acting more like an old pal than someone they had crossed just a few days ago. He'd told them about his victory against the Voodoo Queen…and the frogs were happy about it!

Apparently, she had been a real problem for them, for quite some time. She'd been a true terror to all the affairs in the city. She was a nightmare to anyone that wasn’t on her side.

Still, they were the frog bros, so they’d accepted the fight, but it had been cheerfully. It felt more like a friendly skirmish than a serious fight. They had given it their all just as Cup and his brother did.
The frogs had a couple new tricks up their sleeves. They included spiked balls and a fast barrage of fists, but in the end, the results were a knock out win with the Cupbros on top. Instead of giving them what they had coming though, Mugs had stopped him. Mugs invited them to a drink. Cup couldn’t believe it.

With a grin and a black eye, Croaks accepted. Ribby had grinned, showing a new gap in his teeth. Cup didn’t trust it. They were usually bull headed and didn’t get buddy-buddy with people they didn’t like. Cups had objected at first, but Mugs was so animated and excited that they’d accepted. He hadn’t seen his brother so happy in a while, and thus here he sat…with the frog brothers…like friends. They really hadn’t changed much, except their clothes had gotten a bit fancier. Cup kept his guard up. He listened to the jokes and gave into some good laughs. The drinks were good, but Cups made sure only to sip. He didn’t want to get drunk. It was…nice. He was almost enjoying himself until the frogs had gotten serious.

They had to bring up the isles of course. And what had happened after the cups had vanished. Their view was different from Chalice. Of course it would be, Chalice was a ghost. What did she care for bills or food?

The isles were falling into poverty, thanks to the cursed casino. The Devil had added loan sharking to his list of activities so he could go after the people that weren’t dumb enough to try his card tables. He would wait until they were desperate. Then, they’d sign away their souls or businesses. Cup grit his teeth. The devil had just started doing these things when the frog brothers had been told to relocate to the city of mud. That had been a while ago.

Croaks figured that the devil owned half the businesses on the isles by now. He and Ribby got letters from relatives, which kept them updated. Many people had disappeared or moved away before the Devil came knocking for a deal. It made Cup’s stomach turn. He hated this. This was why he avoided the other islanders. He didn’t want news. He didn’t want to know how everyone was suffering because he screwed up. He didn’t need reminders.

“But it isn’t all bad,” Croaks said.

“Oh?” Mugs tilted his head, causing his straw to shift to the other side of his rim.

“Yeah, there’s been a lot of bonding over these tough times. Neighbors are looking out for each other. Ridiculous squabbles have finally been put to rest. Friends have become more like family,” Croaks said. “It’s like the ones that stick around are closer than ever.”

“It’s amazing what a common enemy can do,” Ribby added. Cup looked back down and took a drink. Oh yeah, of course they were getting all brotherly when they all have someone to hate, like him and Mugs. Just lay all the blame out, he thought sarcastically.

“It’s good everyone is looking out for each other.” Mugs smiled sadly before taking a drink.

“Well, it’s a bit hard for us debtors. Lot of us are getting dragged around, doing his dirty work. Most aren’t allowed to talk about it either,” Ribby said.

“Are you in contact with a lot of them?” Cup asked.

Croaks lifted his hand and gave them a so-so sign.

Ribby leaned back thoughtfully. “We have a bit of a circle goin’ with an odd people popping up and disappearing. It’s not really organized. We hear from Goopy once in a while. Beppi sends letters often. He just rambles about the work he does. Nothing really serious. We think he’s an odd one.”
Croaks nodded in agreement. “We got something from Baroness Von Bon Bon once. We know Sally is missing. Her husband is looking for her, so the circle is keeping an eye out. Dr. Kahl’s also gone missing recently too.”

Croaks shrugged. “We get things like that from the grapevine.”

“Does the boss know you’re doing this? Staying in contact and all?” Mugs asked.

“If he does he’s never stopped us,” Ribby said. Croaks lifted a brow, giving the boys a scrutinizing look. Cup felt his heart drop.

“Is that why no one knows what happened to you two? He didn’t allow it?” Croaks asked.

Mugs looked to Cup to answer. Cup swallowed and didn’t look at the amphibians. “Something like that,” he muttered.

Ribby sniffed. “Look fellas, we need to apologize.” That had Cup look up again. Apologize? For what?

“Yeah. We were on the wrong lily pad here,” Croaks said, leaning his elbow on the table with a sigh. “We blamed you two for our state of affairs for a long time. Giving us our come-upin’s and takin’ our contract like that left a bitter taste in our mouths.”

“Shoulda seen you were just a couple of kids in the same ditch we had landed ourselves in,” Ribby said. “Sorry for treatin’ ya like villains all this time.”

“Yeah. After thinkin’ it over, we knew you had about as much choice in all this as we do. Stars, maybe even less.” Croaks sounded uncomfortable as he looked between Cups and Mugs. “We shoulda helped ya when ya came to us Mugs.”

Cups scowled. Yeah, they should have. The black eye and missing tooth Croaks and Ribby were walking away with was light punishment in his opinion.

“Don’t worry about it.” Mugs waved a hand. “It all worked out, and we probably would’ve done the same.”

“We would’ve sunk your boat,” Cups muttered. The frogs chuckled nervously. They knew he wasn’t kidding.

“Next time,” Croaks said.

“Uh?” Cup lifted a confused brow. Next time? Next time what? Sink this tub? He brushed his bangs out of his eye.

“Next time either of you guys call for help, we’ll do everything we can,” Ribby explained. Cup blinked in surprise. What?

Mugs smiled brightly. “Gee, than-”

“Why?” Cup demanded suspiciously. It didn’t make sense. They hated him and Mugs…didn’t they? It was all a show. Mugs looked over in surprise.

The frogs grinned. Croaks ribbited, “‘Cause someone has to watch out for us sun blazed debtors!”

“Yeah, you boys have been flyin’ solo for too long,” Ribby said. “I’m sure the others will see it that way too.”
Cups blinked. Was he serious? There was no way. He and Mugs were dogs to the Devil.

“Oh?” a fifth voice cut in. “Is that so? I didn’t know there was such a good vibe among the employees.” Cups and Mugs looked around tensely. They knew that annoying voice. “What fantastic news,” he said sarcastically. Cup saw the stupid square head first.

“Dice,” Cup growled. His presence instantly killed the mood. The waiter bugs slowed, the guests went from loud and jolly to quiet and cautious. The frogs scowled at the Devil’s right-hand man.

“You boys sure do like to take your sweet time.” Dice narrowed his eyes, but the grin stayed on his face.

“Don’t get your tie in a twist. We took care of the dame,” Cups muttered.

King Dice raised a brow. “Proof?”

Cups snorted at his mistrust, but reached into his pocket. He tossed the items onto the table cloth. Two were hoop earrings, one rolling off the table onto the floor with a metallic ting! The rest were bits of the glass, taken from the crystal ball, and a slightly crumpled newspaper clipping. Dice stepped closer to the table and took the clipping. It was a story on the mysterious death of the Voodoo Queen. Mentioned how she died of some sort of trauma, but no one found any wounds to cause it. She had a burned hand and bruising. The theory was foul play or shock, but there were no witnesses, and no suspects.

Dice raised a brow. “Not bad.” He tucked the article away and examined the crystal bits. Cups snorted again. Easy for him to say. He hadn’t been turned into kitchenware for days on end and locked in a dark chest. Cup would like to see him used as common dice and tossed around. The mental image had Cup hiding a smirk.

“And the item?” Dice asked.

“You mean the doll?” Mugs asked.

Dice frowned. “Yes. The other part of your job was to bring me the doll.”

“Sorry.” Mugs shrugged. “There were a ton there, but none that really stood out to us.”

“Unless having them stab you with needles count,” Cup huffed.

“You mean, you idiots don’t have it!” Dice slammed his hand onto the table. The four sitting people jumped.

“You wanted us to take care of the dame. We took care of the dame,” Cup said. “Well, Mugs did.”

“It doesn’t mean anything, if you don’t have that doll!” Dice seethed.

Cup raised a brow. “Is this doll really that big of a deal?”

“It’s the whole point!” Dice swept their drinks away with a swing of his arm. Cup and everyone else stood.

Ribby croaked indigently. “Hey! No need to take it out on the drinks.”

Cup shared a confused look with Mugs. Sure, the pipsqueak and his wolf had run off with that thing, but Cup didn’t get why Dice was acting like this. It had something to do with a machine. That’s all he had told them!
“What’s with the toy, King Dice? If it was so important, why didn’t you tell us?” Mugs asked.

“You idiotic-”

“Yes Dice, why don’t you tell them?” A shudder went down Cups spine. The room darkened and guests shrieked and shouted in alarm. The temperature dropped to freezing. Cup pulled his jacket around him more tightly.

“It’s him,” Croaks gulped.

“B-boss!” Dice gasped. “What are you doing here? I thought-”

“That I wouldn’t notice you trying to pull a fast one on me?” the deep voice chuckled.

“Never, boss!” Dice gasped. Black pupils shined out of bright yellow eyes. The Devil stepped out of the shadows with a laugh. His huge horns curled and gleamed in the half light. His unsettling eyes scanned the group, before fixing themselves on Dice.

“Stuff it, Dice. I don’t need your lies right now. You three are coming with me.” He pointed his clawed finger at Dice, Mugs, and Cup. Mugs let out a shaky breath. It fogged in front of him.

“But sir! We were sim-”

“I said, stuff it! Are you deaf on top of stupid?” Devil hissed. Dice gulped.

“Now then.” The Devil walked up to Cup, towering over him. “Did you have fun in that cupboard?” Cuphead looked away and didn’t speak. The Devil grinned. “You are aware--how thin the ice is under you, aren’t you?” He turned away before Cup could even thing to answer that.

“I think it’s time we three have a little chat,” the Devil said. “It’s obvious that you idiots don’t realize what your job is.”

He waved a hand. His eyes flashed brightly, then a dark hole appeared in the floor. “Time to fix that.” He glanced back to the brothers. Mugs and Cup shared a look. Mugs looked terrified with his teeth clenched and his eyes wide. Cup hoped his face appeared brave, it was hard to be sure. His nose and cheeks were numb from the cold and his hands wouldn’t stop shaking. “Get in the hole.” The two looked back at the Devil. His dark grin and bright eyes didn’t give away anything. For all Cup knew, that hole led to hell and the end of the line for him and Mugs. “You too Dice.”

Dice glared at the demon, before stepping up and jumping into the darkness.

“Thanks for the drinks fellas.” Cup looked over to see Mugs smiling at the frog brothers. It was strained and quiet, but the frogs assured him it was fine.

“Are you two appetizers still here? Don’t you have a casino to run and souls to collect?” The boss sneered to the frogs.

The frogs ribbeted in surprise and horror. "Th-there's no need for that, sir." Croaks said.
"Yeah we're happy workin' here." Ribby added.

"Good to hear. Wouldn't want to rip your souls out in front of all these guests now would we?" The Devil chuckled. All four debtors paled. "Now c-mon! Before my patience runs dry." Cup spared the frogs one last glance. They tried to looked angry, but it didn’t fool Cup. They felt defeated. It was in the hunched way they held themselves and their silence as he and Mugs approached the hole. So much for help. They were going to watch him and Mugs take the plunge.

Cup glanced at his boss. He couldn't blame the frogs. Who could beat a creature like this? Frost was forming on the pillars of the casino room. Darkness that came from the demon dimmed the room and removed any feeling of hope and joy. His white teeth and curved horns seemed to glow with his yellow eyes in the gloom that he brought. He crossed his arms as he waited for Mugs and Cup to jump.

Cup turned to the dark hole. There was no bottom to it, just solid darkness. It was a beast’s hungry maw ready to consume anything that dared enter and never let go. Cup glanced at Mugs. Mugs drew his brows together in question.

Should they jump or fight?

Cup bit back a scoff. Was Mugs nuts? They had to jump. No way did they have a chance against this guy. With a huff Cup stepped forward without another thought.

The cold changed as he fell into the void. Heat licked at his face, but the darkness didn’t recede. He could almost hear something over the roar of the wind in his ears. He didn’t try to focus on it. He didn’t want to know what was in here, in this impenetrable darkness.

How long was he going to fall? It was hard to grasp time, but it must have been a while by now.

…five minutes…

…ten…

…twenty…

Did is thing even have an end? Had the Devil jibbed him and Mugs? Cup was tempted to light his finger, but he was also worried what he would see. If he could…attract anything. But if he didn’t, would he just keep falling forever? He wavered back and forth on his options.

“Mugs! Can you hear me!” Cup called out. He didn’t get a response. Just when he had made a choice to really look around, there was a flash of light underneath him. He only had time to notice it, before he fell into it. “Ah!” he gasped in surprise.

The world spun as he tumbled, and he was blinded by the sudden light. He was completely stunned, and then he landed on his shoulders instead of his feet. He blinked and tried to see, to figure out what was up or down, where he was.

The fuzzy image of a wood beam slowly came into focus as he stared at the ceiling. Cup groaned and turned his head. It was a dimly lit room full of shelves, crates and boxes.

“Nice job sticking the landing slick,” Dice mocked. He was leaning against a wall with his arms crossed.

“Shut up,” Cup groaned and slowly sat up. “Where’s-”
“Wah!” Mugs suddenly flew up and fell on top of Cups before he could move out of the way.

“Ow.” Cup wheezed underneath his brother, his breath knocked all out of him. King Dice snickered.

“Cup?” Mugs groaned.

“Yeah, bro.” Cups gasped for air. “Can you get off me?”

Mugs rolled off, and Cups slowly sat up again. Cup never wanted to travel through a black hole in the ground again. His stomach wasn’t sure if he was still falling or not.

“Where are we?” Mugs asked. He was laying on his stomach with his eyes closed.

“No clue,” Cups muttered.

“You know this place.” Dice smirked. Cup frowned at the manager. Cup managed to get up on his legs. He didn’t feel very steady, like his legs had fallen asleep or something. The Devil then appeared from the hole, and it closed behind him.

“What are we doing here, boss?” Dice asked. Cup helped Mugs up and turned to the demon. The Devil’s ever-present smile was gone. Cup blinked in surprise. Had he ever seen the Devil not smiling? Even when he was as angry as the deepest level of hell, he’d smiled.

“Not an hour ago, I sent one of my personal minions here to collect the item you three all failed to get. Two of you failed unknowingly.” The Devil stared at him and his little brother. “And one of you did so knowingly.” His stare turned to Dice. The manager stared back at the owner silently. “And dared to lie about it.”

“So, I’m gonna explain to you mooks exactly what you’re supposed to do and how I’m gonna dish out your punishments.” The Devil’s grinned returned. Cup didn’t know if he should be relieved or worried. Mugs gulped next to him. Cup felt his hand twitch for a cigarette. He held back the urge.

“Where are we?” Mugs asked.

“Hat’s Casino,” the Devil answered. He narrowed his yellow eyes. “He needs a little…talking to.”

Cup paled.

“Black Hat?” Mugs’ eyes widened.

“It’s been a while since you boys visited your daddy, hasn’t it?” Dice smirked. “How cruel. I’m sure he misses you.”

Cup scowled. “We aren’t sticking around to find out.”

“But Cups-”

“No Mugman.” Cup shook his head.

Dice rolled his eyes. “Pathetic.”

A blue bullet hit the wall just left of his head. Dice scowled and turned glowing green eyes on Cup. His finger still smoked from the blast. “Stay out of it,” Cup warned.

“Why you-”
The Devil burst into laughter. “Enough, all of you, or I’ll turn you all inside out. We have work to do and you are wasting time. Have your petty fight later.” Dice frowned.

“So, why are we here, Devil?” Cup demanded with false bravado.

“I’m gonna explain this once.” The Devil held up a clawed finger. “Your job is to stop the completion of the machine. Those twerps already have one of the machine parts and that sun blazing map!” The Devil fist his hand.

“Map? Wait. What piece?” Mugs spoke up.

“That doll you let them walk off with!” the Devil hissed.

“How the cuss is that a part of a machine? It’s a star fallen toy,” Cup asked. He didn’t get this at all. “What does it even do?”

The Devil rolled his yellow orbs. “Do I really have to say that you can’t judge things by how they seem, you dolt?” Cup gulped and backed down. He shivered as a chill raced down his spine.

The Devil turned and started walking. He motioned for the rest to follow him. Cup and Mugs did so reluctantly, with Dice close behind. “As for the map... It was stored in the Upper. It’s able to reveal the location of the machine pieces to only a few people.”

“A few? What does it look like to everyone else boss?” Dice asked curiously.

“Just an old blank paper,” the Devil grumbled. “Can’t believe they got their little mitts on it. What are those stupid feather heads doing?”

Dice whistled. "The Upper. That isn't a small feat. Wonder how they got it."

"I will find out or burn their entire city to the ground." The Devil grumbled. Cup and Mugs gulped. They had never seen their boss this angry. Cup hoped he didn't take his anger out on them.

They made their way out into a hallway. The sound of chips could be heard in the distance. Cup frowned. Yeah, now he recognized this gaudy place. Stars, he didn't want to be here. He didn't want to imagine what would happen if he bumped into anyone right now. He must have shown it on his face, because Mugs gave him a nudge and a reassuring smile.

“Alright.” Cup cleared his throat. “So, we just destroy these parts, right?”

“Wrong! You can’t destroy these things. I’d suggest you don’t even try, kid, but then again it could be fun.” The Devil smirked.

“Why?” Mugs asked cautiously.

“Because it usually doesn’t turn out well for you!” The Devil laughed with mirth. “Anyway, pain and horrible death aside, these things are powerful. If you handle them wrong, it could get messy fast.”

“So, what? We’re supposed to bring them to you?” Cup asked.

The Devil grinned and narrowed his eyes. “That’s one way to go about it.”

“Fine, then where do we go? The pipsqueak has one, what about the others? I can try to get them first.” Cup suggested. The Devil scowled, flicked his spiked tail and turned away from them.
"If it was that easy, I would have handled it by now. There really isn’t any easy way to find them except the map.” He started down the hall.

That took the wind out of Cup’s sails. He looked at the back of the demon’s horned head.

“Then, how ‘bout we just destroy the machine?” Mugs suggested. The Devil looked back at him, deadpanned. Mugs shrunk. “Unless, we don’t know where that is either…”

Dice held up a gloved finger. “One, it’s like the pieces, you idiot. If ya can’t crush the pieces, how can you hope to destroy the machine? And two, we don’t exactly know where it is.”

“But you have an idea?” Cup guessed. The dice man shrugged.

“Then what can we do? We can’t find it, and we can’t destroy it. So what?” Cup threw his hands up.

The Devil turned to glare at him. “Listen brat, you can-.” He stopped mid-sentence, getting a far away look for a moment. His smile dropped into a scowl. “By the seven levels of hell! Can’t anyone do anything right around here? Next imbecile to ruin my plans is going to the wheel of torture!”

The cups and the dice man shared a look. “What is it boss?” Dice asked after a worried silence.

“No time. You’re with me Dice. And since you lied to me and sent these two to do your dirty work behind my back, I think you’re responsible enough to take their punishment too.”

“What!” Dice barked, his jaw dropped.

“Shut your trap, Dice. You’ll live…probably. Anyway, we don’t have time to meet with that capped excuse of a hell spawn,” the Devil huffed. Cup and Mugs shared a smiled. Cup did his best to hide his snicker. Served that square right. The Devil slammed a claw on the wall. Red blazed across the surface. Cup had to squint.

“What about us, sir?” Mugs asked.

“I don’t care how you do it, just make sure that machine doesn’t become active,” the Devil said.

“Uh?” Cup and Mugs tilted their heads in confusion.

“Don’t let it get turned on, you mooks!” the Devil growled. “Stars! Do I need to spell it out for you?”

“Oooooh, right boss!” Cup said. The red on the wall shifted and swirled. They took shape into symbols and lines. When the Devil was done, the red disappeared and black writing was left on the wall. It was in the symbols Cup and Mugs used to communicate with the boss. Cup could even make out some of them.

“Good. I’ll just leave that scum this message,” the Devil said. His eyes narrowed, and his tail lashed like an angry cats. “C’mon, Dice.” The hole yawned up in the floor. Cup shivered. He never, ever wanted to go in one of those again. Ever.

“Yes, sir.” Dice gave a small stiff bow. The Devil stepped over and was gone in an instant.

“Have fun.” Cup couldn’t help himself. The manager gave him a green glare.

“Don’t think this is over. You gave me a bad roll. I’ll be sure to even out the score someday,” Dice threatened.

“Bring it, cube.” Cup smirked. Dice tsked and hopped into the black hole. It closed behind him with
a whoosh.

The brothers stood in stunned silence for a minute, next to the message. “I wish you wouldn’t push him Cup. He is the boss’ right hand man.”

Cup snorted. “After this, maybe he won’t be.” Mugs rolled his eyes. “I can hope, bro.” Cup suddenly became super aware of where they were. “Let’s get out of here, before he notices us.”

Mugs took a deep breath and let it out in a sigh. “We were with the boss. I’m pretty sure he knows Cup. Can’t we just-”

Cup stuffed his hands in his jacket pockets and spun on his heels. Mugs was right. They had to leave now if they wanted to avoid the casino manager. It didn’t take Mugs long to catch up to him.

“I guess that’s a no,” Mugs pouted into his scarf.

“We have to hurry anyway. Boss said they were here about an hour ago. If we’re lucky we can find that pipsqueak in the morning,” Cup said as he stopped and checked around a corner. No one was in sight. Mugs fell quiet after that. Cup gave him a quick glance. Mugs was looking at the floor with a far away stare. He almost seemed…sad. Cup inwardly scoffed. Mugs understood why they were doing this. He had nothing to be sad about. It was those two or them two. In Cup’s mind, it was an easy choice. He would always choose himself and his brother.

Even if there was an uncomfortable weight in the pit of his stomach, he ignored it. This job would be like any other.

The boys were quick to get out of the building. Cuphead frowned at the woods in front of them. Why did this stupid thing have to be so far from the city?

Oh well. Vacation over.

It was time to get to work.

Chapter End Notes

Aaaaaaaand the beverage bros have now caught up again. Dang! They even got a vacation while Bendy and Boris were running for their lives. Oh well, it's not like their most current experience was the easiest anyways.

This week my favorite typo went along these lines... :D

"It was a story on the mysterious death of the Voodoo Queen...The theory was fowl play or shock..."

That sounds like...
Fowl
TAP: Ha-Haha-Ha. You're hilarious. But I have a gem to share this week too! Have you ever wondered what that hole is that Dice and the Devil use to get around? Well, here's the first time they ever saw it and it's priceless. They had no idea what to do with it!

Mercowe: You wanna know what I want answers about? How did Cup and Mugs get away from the space octopus?

TAP: All in good time my friend. All in good time.

Hope you enjoyed! Have a good weekend and we will see you next time! Mercowe and Tap out!
Catching Up To Reality A.K.A. The Pug of Guilt

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

A good breakfast before Bendy and the gang head out to see a familiar sight.

Chapter Notes

Hey lovelies! Welcome to the weekend! Happy Easter! Happy Passover! Happy April Fools! If none of those apply happy day!
Thanks for reading! This chapter is a lot of talking, but it's important.
Sorry it took me so long to get back to those of you that commented. It's been a nutty week for me. XP Finals are coming up so my time is slipping away to studying and projects.
Still!
I was able to get a chapter done! And if the title is confusing don't worry...
it'll all make sense if you read the end note AFTER you read the chapter.
Have a good one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Bendy woke up too hot and cramped into the corner of the couch. He shifted, and whatever had him trapped moved. Bendy’s eyes flew open to the small form of Dot curled up right next to him. The sound he let loose in the apartment startled everyone awake and a couple of neighbors as well. Those that heard it believed it to be the screech of a terrifying creature made from their darkest nightmares. Understandably, the few minutes of the day started in completely chaos.

It wasn’t long after the neighbors got an apology from the fox brothers that the occupants of the apartment were scattered around the kitchen. Coffee was brewing, eggs and bacon were cooking. Milk, fruit, cereals, orange juice, oatmeal and other goods were scattered on the table.

Everyone got their plate and bowl together before a serious conversation started, though, surprisingly it didn’t start with Tiptail, like Bendy thought it would. He could tell the fox was anxious to start in on his questions. His excitement came off him like Boris at a Mickey show. No, instead it was Alice who asked the first question.

“So…I think I deserve an explanation on why I was fired over a magic doll,” Alice said. “I obviously know the least here, and I’m sorry to be a stitch in the side about it, button I was hoping to understand what exactly is going on here.”

Bendy could help smirk at her little puns, and then took a deep breath. Oh boy. They were going to have to start from scratch, uh? Alice looked between Bendy and Boris. She sat opposite Bendy with Yakko on one side and Tiptail on the other. Dot sat too closely for Bendy’s liking on one side with Boris sitting on his other. Wiston was at the stove, making more bacon.
“Sure thing, doll!” Yakko grinned and leaned forward over his plate.

“Oh no you don’t! You are not allowed to explain anything.” Bendy frowned at him. “You will just confuse her.”

“Then I’ll do it!” Dot lifted her spoon.

Bendy rolled his eyes. “You just want to scare her away.”

“Yeah, and?” Dot raised her brows innocently.

“How about I explain?” Xedo offered with a small bow of his head.

“You?” Boris lower an ear and tilted his head in confusion.

“Yes. That way you’ll know how much I know and can fill in anything I miss. Then we can ask questions once everyone is up to speed,” Xedo explained patiently. His nose twitched. Bendy’s brows flew up. That sounded reasonable and logical. How long had it been since he heard someone like this? Completely sane? He had to guess Red. Boy, that had been a while back.

“Okay. That’s fa-”

“GREASE FIRE!” Boris shouted. Bendy’s head snapped so fast his neck popped. Wiston was cackling as the fire jumped higher from the pan in his hands. It licked at the ceiling and lit up the room. Dot squeaked and grabbed his arm.

Before anyone could panic, Xedo slammed a lid on the fire and killed it. His expression was calm, completely unfazed. Bendy shook off the youngest Warner. Wiston pouted and lowered his ears. “You burned the bacon brother. Such a shame. Go sit at the table and think about what you’ve done.” The younger fox trudged to the table with drooping ears and a dragging tail. Xedo focused on the group again as he cleaned off the charred remains of meat. “Sorry about that. Now, where were we?” Bendy swallowed half his glass of juice. Well, so much for sane. The smell of burnt meat hung in the kitchen like a bitter reminder of reality beyond the pleasant morning light.

“Um, what?” Alice asked uncertainly. She glanced around the table. Bendy gave her a nervous smile. He just couldn’t see this ending well. She was gonna call them crazy. He noticed Dot’s hand again and swatted it away. She had become interested in the doll again. He was sure if he hadn’t been laying over it that morning, she would have taken it. Now that the danger of last night had passed, and she had time to think Bendy feared she had come up with some horrible ideas for the magical item. He had kept it close and her far…or as far as he could manage.

“Sorry. He enjoys…a light show. That aside, I should start with your explanation, Miss Alice, quite right. So, the story of the B Brothers starts in the small town of Sillyvision,” Xedo said as he cleaned the pan and started more bacon.

Sillyvision. That seemed forever ago. When was the last time they had written Sasha? She was probably mad at them…especially if she was getting the paper. Bendy stayed quiet as the fox explained what happened in the town. The demon was surprised by how many facts he got right. Boris threw in a comment every now and then. Bendy was surprised to learn a bit more about the lady detectives. Apparently, they were rather famous for being top notch detectives, solving the unsolvable, and catching the uncatchable, not to mention they were women in a mostly male occupation. Their careers were one conquest after another…until the mystery of the murder of a team of archaeologists. Bendy felt a pang of guilt. The detectives failure to catch him and Boris were another mark on their records for sure.
But he didn’t have time to sit in a jail cell and wait for courts to figure out everything. He was also sure that the pig police back home would do everything in their power to keep him locked up for good. The bacon was done and served. People were slowing down, and Xedo stored the leftovers. Bendy felt the elder fox’s eyes on him. The journalist was probably watching them closely for reactions and such. Bendy didn’t mind…much.

Then came Warnerburg. There, the fox wasn’t so clear on the facts. Boris, Bendy, and the Warners had to explain more. Alice stayed quiet with only an occasional nod to show she was listening. Her brows knit together. Dot and Yakko were excited to share on the warehouse incident and the car chase after.

Then Bendy and Boris explained their train incident.

“And that’s when you first met me?” Alice asked suddenly.

Bendy blinked. “Well, yeah.” He shrugged. He had almost forgotten that.

“I’m sorry. You were going through so much,” Alice said, ducking her head. “I even yelled at you.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Bendy smiled and waved off the apology. “You didn’t know.” That didn’t seem to comfort her. Her dark lips remained down turned.

Xedo took over for Toon Town. Once again, getting most of his facts right. “They found his address after the girl helped. Sadly, she lost her job—”

“What!” Bendy demanded. Xedo startled and adjusted his glasses.

“W-why yes. My coworker, he, well…what she did was illegal. The school found out,” Xedo said matter-of-factly. He lifted his mug to take a drink of coffee.

“Oh no.” Bendy groaned and dropped his face into his hands.

“What happened to her?” Boris asked, eyes wide and ears down.

“She lost her job and had to leave the school. I’m not sure where she is now, but I think she still lives in the city,” Xedo mused, thoughtful.

“Can you find her?” Bendy suddenly asked. “I’d like to apologize.”

“Do you think that’s wise? As a wanted felon?” Xedo asked. Bendy shrugged. If he were honest about himself, being ‘wise’ hadn’t been on his list of priorities for a while now.

“She lost her education and job because of us. For all I know, I helped ruin her life. I think she deserves an apology,” Bendy said. Not that it would do her much good. No words could really help in this, but maybe he could give her some peace? It was thanks to her help that they were able to find the doctor and start their quest. It was thanks to her that he and Boris now had a chance to save lives. Xedo nodded his head and continued the explanation.

Bendy shifted uncomfortably as Xedo continued. Of course, with focus going to the doctor, the ink illness had finally become the focus of the tale. Though no one was looking at him, he felt like everyone’s attention was focused on him, wary of his condition. He didn’t like it. He didn’t like people thinking he was made of glass. So what if he was sick? He still outran a giant man-eating snake!

He was happy to hear that Red was doing better. Well, at least physically. She had recovered from
her attack and had been arrested as soon as she was released. She and the doc were still behind bars.

“I wasn’t able to find much about it. It seems Miss Hood was correct. There is barely anything out there when it comes to the ink illness.” Xedo now turned to Bendy. There were the burning questions. Bendy sighed and glanced away.

“Ink illness is when someone starts turning into ink. They cough it up, they melt. It happens in attacks that are extremely painful,” Bendy said flatly. Boris lowered his head, staring at the table. The kitchen was silent. Bendy kept his eyes on the table. He didn’t want to see anyone’s face.

“They turn into ink?” Wiston muttered in confusion.

“Yeah,” Boris muttered.

“Do they…die?” Wiston hesitated. Bendy pursed his lips. That’s right. This thing was supposed to kill him. Stars, there had been times when he wished it would, so he could escape the pain.

“Yeah,” Bendy said.

Xedo cleared his throat. “Has anyone ever recovered?”

“No,” Bendy said. “At least not that we know of today. That’s why we are after the machine. The ink machine has the cure.”

Xedo nodded. “Miss Hood had explained a bit of the dynamic when I spoke with her. I tried to talk to doctors about ink illness, I didn’t get much of a response.” He frowned and his ear twitched. “But there were some that showed interest and concern.”

“And that’s what the doll is for? It’s a piece of the machine.” Dot spoke up. Bendy nodded.

“Why is this being covered up?” Xedo asked, trying to stay on track.

“We have no idea. It’s probably the same reason Wilson, the archaeologist, is dead and why Oddswell lost his job at the school and is now in prison,” Bendy said as he crossed his arms and leaned back in his seat. He glanced up at the group around the table. Alice was watching with wide, sad eyes. Wiston was picking at the edge of the table. Xedo had a pad and pencil out.

“I guess this is a good time to tell you why Wakko is still in the hospital,” Yakko said. He leaned forward and rested his arms on the table.

“Isn’t he still recovering from the fight?” Boris asked.

Dot shook her head.

“He has the inkness,” Yakko said. Bendy and Boris’s heads snap toward him. Bendy’s eyes widened.

“What!” Bendy demanded.

“Yeah…,” Dot said her head lowered.

“How bad is it?” Boris asked quietly.

“He’s only had two attacks. If he hadn’t had the second one in front of the docs, he would be here with us,” Yakko said. Bendy hummed in understanding.
“Wait, what? Why would he be here?” Alice asked confused. “Wouldn’t he still be sick?”

“Yeah, but people with ‘inkness’ seem completely normal until they have an attack.” Bendy gave Yakko a look.

Yakko smirked. “Think it’ll catch on?”

“With my writing it should,” Xedo said, his pencil flying across the page. Alice blinked and looked around the table.

“Isn’t that dangerous? What about spreading it?” Alice asked.

“It’s not contagious like that,” Boris said. “It only affects certain people.” Bendy frowned. Certain people. Xedo started saying something, but Bendy was distracted. Wait…did that mean Wakko got ink illness from him! Bendy felt like his chair just got yanked out from under him. His stomach must have dropped to his feet. Was this his fault?

Dot put a hand on his arm. Bendy was shaken out of his thoughts by the light touch and looked over at her, expecting her to do or say something annoying. Instead she just gave him a sad smile. “Don’t worry about it.” She took her hand back without him having to shake it off. It didn’t cure his self-disgust, but it did help him stay calm. Now wasn’t the time for him to blame himself.

“So, this owl wanted you two to help him and this doctor find the cure for this disease,” Alice summed up.

“Well that, and Bendy is sick too,” Yakko said bluntly. Bendy looked out the window, embarrassed and ashamed. Not only did he not want Alice to know for some reason, he now had to sit on the chance that Wakko may be sick because Bendy had passed the illness to him. He felt his face heat a small degree.

“I’m sorry,” Alice said with genuine sympathy. Bendy’s gut twisted. He gave her a quick glance before looking away. What was with him? Why did he feel this way? It was so stupid.

“So, how did you two find the doll?” Xedo asked. “You disappeared in Toon Town and there have been too many reported sightings of you fellas, so where did you really go? What happened?” Xedo asked as he leaned forward.

Bendy and Boris took turns explaining the story. They showed the group the map from the angel…of course all anyone else saw was a blank paper, no surprise there.

They went over the trip to New Orleans, the temple, the Voodoo Queen, and meeting Mama Odie. They explained what the doll had done so far too and the near loss of it at the casino. Bendy kept out what had happened to the Voodoo Queen though. It probably we a bad idea to mention he had indirectly killed her. He just said that they had gotten the doll. He also didn’t mention how the Cup brothers had showed up when he and Boris were in New Orleans. That Mug guy had helped them, so he wan’t to throw him under the bus. Boris gave him a curious look for these censored choices, but didn’t give him away.

“Well,” Xedo said, sounding satisfied. “It sounds like whoever doesn’t want you to succeed is desperate. We need to get to this gentleman’s house.”

“Oh, one more thing,” Boris said. “What did you do, Alice? You said you banished that guy.”

Alice blushed and shrugged. “It’s something that my family taught me.”
“So, are you a witch or magical or something?” Boris tilted his head.

“Something like that.” Alice gave him a strained smile. “I’m not the best at those kinds of things.”

“I don’t know. I’m pretty spell bound.” Bendy smirked. Alice laughed in surprise.

“That was terrible, bro.” Boris shook his head.

“That was awesome!” she giggled. Bendy grinned proudly.

“I think it’s time we head out. The sun is rising, and we will lose the day if we don’t move.” Xedo stood up with his empty plate. The others followed his example and cleaned up the kitchen before heading out. “First stop will be the doctor’s old home. I believe that it is owned by Miss Hood now?”

“Yep,” Boris answered.

“Right then. Shall we?” Xedo asked. “We’ll have to sneak you to my car. We don’t want anyone to recognize you.”

“Can your car fit seven people?” Alice asked.

“It’ll be a bit tight,” Xedo admitted. “But not too bad.”

“Don’t worry. I can just sit on my mailman’s lap.” Dot smiled and put her hands behind her back.

“Over my dead body.” Bendy frowned and crossed his arms. “Sit on your brother.”

“Aaaaaw, but Bendy-Wendy,” Dot whined. The demon huffed at her antics.

“Can we just do one of those ‘scene changes’ you Warners use?” Bendy asked. Everyone looked to the youngest Warner. Her mouth made a small ‘o’ of surprise.

“Wh-what?! You want me to drag around seven people? My heroic mailman, I am tickled you turn to me for help, but I can’t carry that many at once.” Dot shook her head furiously. Bendy gave her a doubtful stare. “Really!” Bendy frowned. “It’s the honest truth!”

“You sure it isn’t just because you want to be crammed into a tight space with me?” Bendy accused.

“Weeeeeell.” Dot smirked.

“But it is true she can’t take that many,” Yakko cut in and leaned a hand on Bendy’s head.

“So, the car it is, I guess,” Boris said nonchalantly as he, Wiston and Alice headed for the door.

Sadly, Xedo was right. It was a tight fit. The elder fox was behind the wheel with Wiston and Yakko next to him. Alice had one window seat in the back with Boris and Bendy in the middle and Dot next to the opposite window. Boris was forced to sit low, so no one could spot him through the glass…Bendy didn’t think about why he was fine sitting as he was.

He had to constantly push Dot away and keep her hands away from his vest. Besides the Warners, the rest of the car was tense and quiet. Every cop they passed had the group holding their breath.

The drive from central Toon Town out to the nice town houses in the old suburb was about twenty minutes, but it felt like an hour. When they finally reached the quiet street Xedo turned down a back alley and the occupants of the car spilled out to the chilly air. Bendy stretched his arms above his head, relieved to be free. Xedo stepped in front of the group.
“The house is being watched, at least from the front. We’re going to sneak in from the back. Stay quiet,” Xedo explained, leading the group to the fence. The gentleman checked around, before using a pocket knife to jimmy the lock. The wooden gate swung open to the backyard. Bendy was surprised that the place seemed clean and well kept. The leaves were raked, and the lawn and the couple of small bushes in the back were trimmed.

Yakko opened his mouth, but Wiston slapped a hand over his mouth. “Not. A. Word.”

Yakko grinned sheepishly and shrugged innocently. Dot sighed and rolled her eyes. Xedo reached the back door and tried it. Of course, it was locked.

Boris leaned over to whisper to Bendy. “Are we sure this is a good idea? Last time we broke in, we scared Red.” Bendy blinked and thought about that.

Red and Oddswell were in jail…so no one should be in the house…right? Bendy narrowed his eyes and approached Xedo. The little demon put a hand on the fox’s wrist to stop him from picking the lock. Xedo looked over to him with a confused look.

Bendy lifted his other hand and knocked on the old door. “You think someone is inside?” Xedo asked.

“Well-

The door suddenly swung open and caused Bendy to jump. “Whadda ya wan’?”

A tall, lean wolf leaned against the doorframe of the house with his arms crossed. He had on a long sleeve shirt that was tucked into nice pants and fancy slip on shoes that Bendy knew would do no good at anything strenuous. Sitting over his annoyed frown was a thin mustache at the tip of his muzzle. His ears, which were way pointier than Boris’, flicked up as the wolf took in the crowd at the door.

“Well now. Whadda we heave ‘ere?” The wolf straightened up. He’s eyes focused on Alice and his frown turned into a smirk. He let out a whistle, which had them all jump. “Now dhere’s a tretty liddle dhing!” he said in his heavy accent. “Wha-yu doin’ freezin’ out-ere? C’mon in ‘ere toots.” Alice frowned, completely unimpressed. The fella completely ignored everyone else. Bendy felt his eye twitch.

“Look here pal!” he spat and stepped in front of Alice. “What are you doing in Oddswell’s house?” He lifted a finger to point accusingly at the stranger.

The wolf’s frown returned as he fixed his dark eyes on Bendy. “Dis ‘ere is my Red’s abode, kid.”

“Your Red?” Bendy blinked. What the hell did that mean?

“Dat wha’ I said liddle man.” The wolf leaned over and raised an unimpressed brow.

Bendy clenched his hands. He contemplated reaching up and ripping the schmucks mustache off. He must have twitched, because Boris was suddenly next to him.

“What did you ca-”

Boris cut in before Bendy could completely forget himself and give the guy a piece of his mind. “We’re sorry. See, we’re friends of Oddswell and Red. We were just stopping by to see if there was-”
“Who is it Avery? Is it more guests?” a woman’s voice asked. Bendy tilted his head. She sounded familiar, grandmotherly. Avery straightened up and turned to look at the speaker.

“Jus’ a cuppa too, tree trouba-makers, ma’am,” Avery sounded. An old gofer in a sundress and cardigan came into view with a cane and a suspicious frown that disappeared immediately when she spotted the boys.

“Granny Gofer!” Boris grinned, his tail wagging happy.

“Boys! Oh, my stars! It’s so good ta see you boys again! I’ve been so worried!” The old gopher pulled the two into a tight hug. “I was startin’ to worry you had hit real trouble! The news had me in a twist for weeks!”

“Sorry Gran,” Bendy apologized and awkwardly patted her back. She let them go and started to check over them.

“Now, you two haven’t been banged up? You’ve been eatin’ good? Were ya able to nab what the doctor wanted?” Grandma Gopher fired off one question after another.

“Uh,” Boris looked over to Bendy for help. Bendy heard a snicker behind him and shot a glare behind him to Wiston and Yakko.

“Yu know dem, ma’am?” Avery crossed his arms and tilted his head.

“Oh, yes. They are good boys Avery, don’t you worry.” Granny waved him off.

He huffed and leaned against the doorframe again. He shot a speculative eye over the group, until he hit Alice again. He winked at her. “Dunno, dem two look like dem B boys in da papers.”

“We are,” Bendy stated flatly. That had the guy startle and take a step back. Bendy smirked. Boris elbowed him.

“Absolute poppycock!” Grandma Gopher growled.

Boris gasped. “Granny!”

“Oooh! Lies! All of it! About you boys and the good doctor!” Granny waved her cane. Boris and Xedo had to duck. Her thick glasses slid down her nose, and she had to stop to put them back in place.

“That’s why I’m here, ma’am,” Xedo said. “We were hoping we could come in and talk.”

“Of course! Come in! Come in!” Grandma ushered everyone through the door. Bendy watched as Granny played mother-hen over each member of his party, introducing herself and charming or embarrassing each of them.

“Le’s take dis party inta da frunchroom right by over dhere.” Avery threw a thumb over his shoulder. Bendy raised a brow. He had no idea what a ‘frunch room’ was.

“Hey, Avery, where ya from?” Yakko asked.

“Shicahgo,” he answered with a shrug.

“Ah, you guys got the Bean, don’t cha?” Yakko snapped his fingers and smiled.

“Yep, dat’s home,” Avery said.
Boris leaned close to Bendy. “Where? I’m having a tough time understanding this guy, bro.”

“He said he’s from Chicago,” Bendy whispered back. The wolf led the group into the living room and leaned against a wall. The boys and everyone else plopped into a chair or the couch. Bendy was ready to kick Dot off the seat next to him, but to his surprise Alice sat next to him. He glanced around to spot Dot in a single chair looking at Avery with a goofy smile on her face. Bendy blinked. He decided not to say anything. He did not have a problem with these seating arrangements.

Boris, Bendy, and Alice occupied the couch that sat against the side wall. It was cushy and hardly used. The painting behind them was of a lake side dock. Xedo and Yakko shared the loveseat to their right. They had the large windows behind them with the curtains closed, partly blocking out the morning light. A side table next to Xedo had a lamp, a smoke tray, and a newspaper on it. To Bendy’s left were two chairs that held Wiston and Dot. Behind them was the fireplace and the shelves of knick-knacks. There hadn’t been much changed. It was still skulls, books, and diplomas. Bendy wished it didn’t remind him of the voodoo shop. Across from him was a large armchair with another side table and lamp. Behind it was a large bookshelf stuffed with books. Papers stuck out here and there. Bendy believed it was close to bursting. Scanning the titles he could make out, it seemed to mostly be medical textbooks. The room smelled mostly of paper and firewood.

Granny came in with a platter that had lemonade on it. She offered some to everyone and then took the big armchair in front of the bookcase. “So, what’s the case boys?” She turned her beady eyes to the brothers.

“We wanted to learn more about ink illness.” Xedo spoke up. “I’m a journalist for Toon Town Times, and I’ve been trying to piece together the truth for the public to.”

“Bah! The news!” She pointed her cane accusingly at Xedo. “What good as the news ever been to us? Shaming the doctor! Getting him and dear Red thrown into the slammer and accusing these young men of heinous crimes!” she ranted, swinging her cane. Avery stepped forward and removed the lamp before she could break it. “No, you can take your news and get out!”

Xedo waited patiently for her to finish before speaking. “Mrs. Gopher, please, I want to clear these boys of the falsehoods others have pinned on them. Yes, they have done some socially unacceptable things, fighting, fleeing the cops, getting this address, but nothing that deserves murder charges.”

The elderly gopher huffed at that and crossed her arms.

“I also want to expose this deadly illness. This needs to be common knowledge. I want to know who is covering this all up and why. The first we have to do, though, is inform the public.”

Grandma narrowed her eyes. “And you’re tellin’ me you can do that?”

“Absolutely,” Xedo said with complete confidence. The gopher huffed a laugh that almost sounded like a laugh.

“Alright newsie boy, but first,” she turned back to Bendy, “how did it go?”

“We got it,” Bendy said. Boris nodded.

“So it’s the real deal? We got a cure?” Granny’s eyes widened.

“Well, not…exactly,” Boris said.

“We got one of the parts to the machine,” Bendy admitted. “There are still more, and I have no idea where the actual machine is or if we’ll have to build one ourselves.”
“How many more?” Avery asked.

“Four?” Boris guessed.

“An’ it tuk you dat long to get jus-one?” Avery demanded.

“Fella, you have no idea what we went through to just get this one. We nearly died a dozen times.” Bendy scowled.

“Well, shoo us dis part den.” Avery was gruff. “If it’s worth awl da trouba.”

Bendy and Boris made eye contact. Boris shrugged. Bendy sighed and reached into his vest. He pulled out the little doll and showed the room.

“Dat’s it! You nearly died fur dat liddle dhing!” Avery burst into laughter. Granny whacked him on the knee with her cane without missing a beat. The wolf yelped and dropped to cradle his injury.

“Hush you,” she warned, with a frown before turning back to the boys. “Well done. I’m glad you got back safely.” Bendy and Boris nodded appreciatively.

“So, my questions?” Xedo asked gently. Granny frowned.

“He really is trying to do the right thing Miss Granny,” Yakko said with a grin. “Right Dot?” Dot sighed dreamily. “Dot?”

“Yeah, whatever.” She waved her hand loosely.

Bendy leaned forward. “Is she okay?”

Yakko rolled his eyes and shook his head. “Yeah, she’s just getting a new crush?”

“Uh?” Bendy’s head tilted sideways in surprise.

“Sorry bud, but you’ve been out done.” Yakko nodded.

“You mean, she’ll leave me alone?” Bendy asked.

“You are no longer the focus of her affections.” Yakko shrugged.

“Yes!” Bendy pumped his fist. Finally! Sweet freedom!

“I’m sorry?” Alice said confused.

“Don’t be. That’s the best news I’ve heard today.” Bendy leaned back and grinned at her. She smiled back, a touch unsure. While this was going on, Xedo had started his questions.

Granny explained that she was a patient of the doctor’s. She suffered from ink illness, and it had been two weeks since her last attack. She was staying at the house to help any of the other patients that dropped by for pain meds or advice. She couldn’t give the treatment Red or Oddswell could provide, but she knew a little. She had been with the good doctor for six months now. There were now eighteen people that she knew of with ink illness.

“There have been six more cases that popped up since the good doctor’s arrest. They won’t last as long as me or the others if they don’t have his help,” Granny stated.

Xedo nodded and wrote down her answers. “Why haven’t you tried to bring this information to the
“I have. No one takes what I’ve said seriously. Newsies like you disappear or deny ever meeting me. I get why now, but I didn’t back then,” the elderly woman said, tapping her cane.

“Why?”

“The same reason that pig, Jerry, fell quiet and his demon wife.” Granny turned to Bendy. “No offense, dear.”

“None taken. I know what you meant.” Bendy lifted his hands in a placating fashion. If she was anything like Black Hat, Bendy really couldn’t blame Grandma Gopher.

The old gopher nodded and smiled.

“What did Jerry do?” Boris asked with a perked ear.

She snorted. “He accepted a fair share of money to say nothing. I know because they are spending it as fast as they are getting it.” Bendy frowned.

“Huh, does he still come by here?” Yakko asked with a dangerous glint in his eyes. Bendy gulped. When was the last time he’d seen one of the Warners look like that?

“Sorry deary, no. I suspect that cockroach isn’t desperate yet.” Granny sighed.

“And they’ve come to you too?”

“And never published a thing!” she hissed. Xedo nodded.

“So we know how the scum is. How ‘bout the kid?” Bendy asked. “As in our squirrel boy?”

“Yeah, have you seen Steven recently?” Boris asked with a smile.

Granny smiled sadly.

“Squirrel kid?” Avery sniffed. “Dat funeral was tree days ago boys. You missed him.”

“What!” Bendy’s jaw dropped.

“What do you mean?” Boris’ voice shook. He glanced at Bendy with large, frightened eyes. His ears were down and hands clenched on his lap. The others reacted, but Bendy didn’t bother to pay them any mind. The room fell into a tense silence as all the focus landed upon the wolf and little gopher woman.

“Wha? You dought a kid could last wid dat kinda pain fur long? Nah.” Avery shook his head and looked to the floor. “Star fallen tragedy.”

“I’m sorry, boys.” Grandma Gopher smiled broken-heartedly. It was the smile of someone who had never wanted to see what she had seen, but had swallowed the bitter pill anyway. “Steven isn’t with us anymore. He’s gone.”

Chapter End Notes
Mercowe: Well...to be honest, friends...I did not see that one coming. Tap didn't tell me about that...and Steven's death just hit me right in the dang heart.

Ow.

I was having a lot of fun. I even had a great typo pun ready. It is still appropriate, because now I feel guilty for being so happy-go-lucky and forgetting that people are dying...

Presenting the... "Pug of guilt."

TAP: I'm sorry! This pug has hit us both on several levels! I both wanna laugh and cry! Here are the feels. See ya next week!
Tap and Mercowe out!
Alice sat beside the brothers, watching them anxiously. Bendy seemed to have gone into some kinda shock, and Boris was weeping his eyes out. The kind gopher got out of her chair and went to give the young one a hug in his grief. Alice watched for a second before looking back to Bendy. He was staring at the carpet with a fearful, far away look. Alice understood that others showed sorrow in different ways. She knew that this news had hit both of them hard. She wished she had acted faster and comforted Boris. She didn’t quite know how she could help the demon next to her. Heavens, she wanted to help with no hang ups about them anymore…well, at least not about their characters and motivations. She still had one problem.

Bendy was a demon.

Not like Black Hat. She understood that now. This band of friends around them had proven that to her. They were sincere…and not a bit odd. Like she thought, it wasn’t his character! It was just…his essence? His power? The darkness that she sensed from him made her instinctually want to pull back and cringe from touching him. The thing that Mr. Hat had mentioned about a mark floated through her mind. Sure, his energy wasn’t hostile or as violent as Hat, but it was still…uncomfortable? Disturbing?

She wanted to pinch herself. What was her problem? She had touched him back at the casino without a second thought! Though, that had been an emergency, and she had just reacted. If there were some kinda mark she already had it, so there shouldn’t be any reason for her to hesitate now! Besides, he was suffering! She hated to see suffering, not if there was something she could do about it.

“Bendy?” She tried to call him. He didn’t respond. “Bendy?” She bit her lip and took a deep breath.
Oooooh. She was going to have to touch him to shake him out of it. She shouldn’t ask someone else
to do it. That would seem odd. Okay, she could do this. It wasn’t like he bit or anything. She let out
the breath and reached for his gloved hand. Again, his power was cool. Instead of feeling warmth in
his hand, she felt cold. He didn’t really respond. “Bendy? I’m sorry. That’s really hard. I can’t
imagine,” Alice said. She ignored the goosebumps that were rising on her arm and gave his cold
hand a squeeze. He seemed to shake himself out of it. He blinked and looked from her hand on his to
her. Alice tried to give him an understanding smile. She didn’t know how well she did.

Bendy turned to Boris and put a hand on his shoulder. The wolf leaned into him and the kind gopher
let him go. “I’m sorry, boys.” There were tears in her eyes as well. Alice felt her own eyes sting with
sympathy. She couldn’t imagine a child she knew passing so suddenly and from some terrifying
sickness. She didn’t feel prepared to help, but she also so desperately wanted to. If only she had her
halo. She may not have been able to bring back the dead, but she might be have been able to help the
sick. Why was she so useless?

Bendy cleared his throat. “Can Boris and I have a moment? We, uh, we need to…” Bendy trailed
off, seemingly lost for words in his shock.

“Sure, deary. Take as long as you like. This place is home for any that need it,” Granny said. She
patted both boys affectionately, then turned and went back to her seat in the slow, steady manner that
all of elderly moved.

Bendy nodded. Alice went to pull her hand back when he squeezed it. Bendy didn’t look to her, but
she did hear him. “Thanks,” he whispered, before letting her go and standing up. Bendy led the still
tearful Boris out of the room.

“How old was he?” Xedo asked after they disappeared.

“What? My age?” Dot piped in. Alice blinked. She knew the girl was young, but ten? Suddenly,
Bendy’s rejections had more weight to them. Now, though, Alice wondered how old the demon
was. She wasn’t going to judge by his height obviously. He had a youthful face with large eyes…his
teens? Maybe early twenties? He surely had to be around her age or younger! And going on such
dangerous tasks?

“Your brudha ‘as it too, yeah?” Avery asked.

“Yeah, but Wakko’ll be fine,” Yakko said. “We’ve gotten him back from death before.”

“He’s terrible at board games,” Dot muttered.

“What about the young boy’s family?” Xedo cut in. Alice stared at the Warner siblings. Did they
mean their brother was bad at board games or…Death was bad at board games? She shook her head
and dismissed the bizarre thought.

“‘Ad da funeral ‘n heave’t heard from dem since,” Avery said. Granny turned to the fox.

“They’ve been going through the motions. Hardest thing in the world, losing a child. Please, leave
them be, young man,” she told the journalist.

“Yes, ma’am.” Xedo bobbed his head a bit. “I’ll respect their space.”

“Good. And get this story out! If you can clear the boys and the doctor, things would be a lot better
for us,” Granny said.
“Absolutely,” Xedo said.

“Good,” the gopher replied.

“Well then, we best get to work on that next piece!” Yakko said. “We don’t have all day.”

“Hold on,” Alice cut in. “What are we going to do with the piece of the machine we have? Someone already tried to steal it, and they almost succeeded! Not to mention what it did to Bendy!”

“That’s true,” Xedo agreed.

“What happened to the boy?” Granny asked with concern.

“That doll attached to him,” Xedo said.

“It’s a mini mailman,” Dot added with a giggle.

“Whatever happens to that doll, the same will happen to Bendy,” Alice explained. She was still curious on why the Warners, or Dot specifically, called Bendy that. Now was hardly the time to ask about such things. She refocused on the matter at hand. “It was very dangerous for him when it was stolen. The person could have easily harmed or maybe even killed him.”

Granny gasped. “Oh my!”

“Stars ‘n moon,” Avery cursed. “He ‘as to do dat too?”

“How did this happen? Can it be undone?” Granny asked in a concerned tone. She looked between Alice and Xedo for an answer. Alice shrugged with wide eyes. She had no clue!

“They said that it bit him, right?” Wiston asked. In all the chatting, the younger fox had gotten up and was looking at the knick-knacks on the shelves.

“Yeah,” Yakko said.

“Wiston, don’t touch those.” Xedo gave him a deadpan look. The younger brother smiled, showing off his sharp fangs.

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” Wiston said. “Anyway, why not just have it bite someone else?”

“What good would that do?” Granny asked.

“Well, he’s one of the only people that can even stand a chance at finding the pieces, right? That makes him important.” Wiston shrugged and turned back to the shelf. He was eyeing an old wooden figurine. Xedo cleared his thought and gave him a sharp look.

“You sayin’ we need sum’ne dat isn’t so importan’, yeah?” Avery tilted his head with one ear down and one up. Alice guessed that was a wolf thing, since Boris did it too…Though Boris was a cute pup and this guy--Avery and Alice made eye contact and he gave her a wolfish smile and a wink. Alice frowned. Yeah, he was this kinda guy. Didn’t he say he had a girl?

“Avery,” Granny said disapprovingly. “There isn’t anyone here that’s more or less important than anyone else.”

Xedo spoke up this time. “Actually, ma’am, he is correct in a strategic sense. Bendy is one of two people that can use a map that they obtained from an angel. It shows the locations of the parts. I don’t think just anyone can go after these machine pieces.”
Oh, that map! Alice was so frustrated with herself over that thing! Of course she could see it, but she pretended that she couldn’t. People weren’t supposed to know she was an angel! It was so irritating, but she understood why it was that way. Everyone wanted something, and angels were a good bet to chase down. If they didn’t beg, demand, bribe, then people who wanted her help might turn to force. The rules on the Surface weren’t the same as the ones in the Upper. Angels could get kidnapped! Enslaved and locked away! Not to mention the other dangers…Alice held back a shudder. It would also ruin her chances to complete her act of charity and earn her wings. She couldn’t afford to return without her wings. Not after all her hard work! Sure, she was a screw up and her brothers and sisters would mock her at times, but she would prove them wrong! She would make mother, father, and grandmama proud!

Alice sighed. She felt like the miracle she had given Boris had backfired. They weren’t even able to use it really. It was dated. The landscape had changed, and the map hadn’t. It was practically useless when they had gotten to the general area. They had wasted days looking for the part. If the little squirrel boy was any indication, anyone with the sickness didn’t have days to waste. Even worse, without her halo, she couldn’t really do anything to change it. She wasn’t strong enough. She didn’t know the right runes for it. Heavens, she could accidentally destroy it! Then were would she leave everyone’s hope? A pile of ash on the ground, that’s where. Even the tiny sliver of hope and purpose was better than absolute despair. Besides, she doubted she’d be able to mess with it without giving herself away completely. She had a feeling Boris was already suspicious.

“A’ight, den. I’ll do it,” Avery said.

“Avery, no!” Granny argued. The volume of rising voices dragged Alice back into the conversation. Oh no, what had she missed as she stared off into space? She chastised herself for focusing on herself too much and not listening to what was happening presently.

“I don’see anyone else tryin’ nothin’, so I will. If it’ll help my Red out den I’ll do it. ‘Sides dem boys’r needin’ to get dem bits of da machine to help out da rest of ya wit da illness. Dese funerals’r too depressin’ fur me. Dey need ta stop. I’m nat doin’ nothin’ right now. Dis would at least make me useful,” Avery growled gently to the old woman. He frowned are her and lifted a hand to brush at his pencil thin mustache. He might be a mook, but he seemed to at least treat the old woman with respect. Alice guessed there was hope for him after all, but what was this about him being useful.

“Pish-posh! You are useful, Avery dear! You’ve been running around all over town checking on any of the patients that haven’t come by. You’ve been dropping off their pain meds for me, cleaning this house spotless and keeping it well supplied out of your own pocket! You’ve been a huge help to me and every single one of Dr. Oddswell’s patients. I won’t hear otherwise! You have even been keeping out those terrible newsies that see this place as a quick buck!” Here Granny Gopher turned to the fox reporter. “No offense, dear.”

“None taken. I understand ma’am. Some journalists.” He shook his head with a look of disgust and clicked his tongue on the roof of his mouth.

“Thank you, son.” She turned back to Avery. “So, I won’t hear anyone bad mouth you, boy. Not even yourself! Not after all the help you’ve been since you’ve shown up.” She waved her cane in the air resolutely. Alice couldn’t help smiling. The old gopher was a hot spit-fire with a wonderful soul. She and grandmama would be the best of friends if they ever met.

Avery flushed and looked down at the rug. “Dat’s kind o’you Gran, bot da fact is wha’ I heave done isn’ gonna cure no one. Dem boys will. Dat machine will, if it’s real. If it’d help dem get dere dat much quicker. I don’mind bein’ bit.”

“You think there’s a chance the machine won’t work?” Xedo asked curiously.
Avery shrugged, and his ears dropped. “Well, if dat ding is really a part o’ it, den I guess it exists, but I’ve no idea where dis machine is n’it sounds real ol’ to me. Who knows wha’ conditions it’s in, n’dat’s if it’s even together at awl! I’m jus’ sayin’ dat dem boys’ll already have dem hands full. Dey don’ need no curse on top of it.”

“That is a good point there, wolfie,” Yakko mused.

“It’s probably as old as dirt,” Dot added. “By the way handsome, you free tonight?” She sighed and leaned toward Avery. He gave her a baffled look in return. He looked around the room to see the other’s reaction. There were none, until he made eye contact with Alice. She shrugged. The young Warner girl didn’t make any sense to the angel. They had tossed a few puns and jokes around at breakfast, but the Warners were a bit odd in a dangerous way. She enjoyed their humor, but some of the gags they described seemed a bit cruel to Alice.

“I’m busy,” he finally answered the girl. She sighed and little heart floated over her head.

“Avery has a good point,” Wiston said. He had moved over to the books now and was leafing through one. “How do we know that this machine isn’t a pile of rusted, busted metal somewhere?”

“We don’t,” Granny said gravely. “But it’s the best chance we got, at least that’s what Dr. Oddswell believes.”

Xedo hummed, thoughtful. Alice found that thought a bit bleak, but she was determined to be optimistic! “Then we better find it and get it working!” she said with resolution. She seemed to have startled the group, which caused her to flush a little, but she didn’t back down. “We need to help Bendy and Boris as much as possible if that is the case. We’ll build this machine from the ground up if we must.”

“That’s the spirit!” Granny grinned.

Avery grinned wolfishly. “A spitfire too. Hmmm.”

Alice frowned at that.

“I think you have the right idea Alice. We will worry about the machine when we get to it. For now, we should focus on supporting the B-Brothers, caring for the sick, and clearing their and the doctor’s names,” Xedo said, putting his pencil behind his ear.

“Yeah!” Yakko and Dot cheered.

“Don’t forget. We also need to warn people about ink illness,” Granny stated. She sat with her head raised and her little shoulders straight. She held a certain air of nobility that only those with a life time wisdom and experience could ever manage. “These shady dealings need an end. Once everything is in the light, those that oppose our efforts will have a tougher time stopping us.”

“That will be first on the agenda, but I would like to have one last discussion with everyone before we disperse, and I get my paper finalized and to the print,” Xedo said. “Alice, do mind bringing the brothers back in here?”

Alice blinked in surprise. “Me?”

“If you wouldn’t mind,” Xedo said with a strange smirk that Alice couldn’t place.

“I can go!” Dot offered.
“Maybe next time, shortcake.” Wiston moved in front of her while he was fiddling with a strange little box with carvings on it. “This will take a lady’s touch.”

“Hey! I am a woman!” Dot frowned. Granny chuckled knowingly. Alice glanced at her, questioning, before standing.

“Okay?” Alice said.

“Wiston! Put down that lighter! You don’t even know where that box is from!” Xedo was up in a flash and snatched the lighter from the younger’s hand. The younger fox’s ears dropped, and he smiled sheepishly.

“You tryin’ to bourn up da house!” Avery scowled.

“For some of this decor, that might be an improvement,” Yakko stated with a shrug. The room fell into a ruckus of voices as Alice headed to the exit. She hoped they would be back in order once she and the boys returned.

As she turned down the hall and went to the front of the house, a calm came over her. She was surprised that the voices died away to a dull muffle so quickly. “Bendy? Boris?” She looked around and didn’t see them. There was a study and a smaller sitting room at the front and a staircase that took up half the wall and went up. Sunlight filtered through the curtains, painting the old wood and worn furniture in hues of light. Little particles of dust drifted around in the air in lazy patterns. Alice glanced up the stairs and then back down the hall. They weren’t down here, and Mrs. Gopher did say the place was open to them.

She straightened her shoulders and slowly climbed up the stairs. “Bendy, Boris? Are you up here?” she called out. Still no response. She got to the second story and looked around. There were three routes it seemed. A thin hall led left, a another two to her right. She decided to go right and instead of heading back to the front of the house, stick to the back wall. There were four doors on her left and tall windows that were covered on her right. A couple of paintings of forest scenes hung on the wall and two small cabinets that had vases of flowers sat spaced out along the hall. She went to each door and knocked before cracking it open and checking inside.

There were a couple of bedrooms, a storage closet that was full of dried plants and other things that looked like powders and liquids. Ingredients? Chemicals? Alice decided not to mess with anything and closed the door. She checked the last door, and it seemed to be some kinda lab or study room. It looked similar to the study down stairs, except there was a long table covered in empty beakers, cylinders, bottles and so on. Alice went in to get a closer look at all the delicate, intricate glass. Glass tubes twirled around, bending this way and that. Bunsen burners sat untouched and unattached. Papers were pinned to the walls around the room. More jars of liquids, powders, and dried up leaves sat on and around the table. Alice looked closer at one of the jars. It was half full of dark liquid. She narrowed her eyes at it. She pursed her lips as dread pinched at her heart.

She turned to the pages on the wall. They were covered in number problems, calculations, lines of chemicals formulas. Alice couldn’t make heads or tails of most of the scrawled numbers and letters, but among the pages were smaller notes with comments on them. They said things like. “No. Close. Is it affecting their genetics? Not contagious! First lasted three weeks. Second lived six months. Difference?” And other things. There were a few news clippings, obituaries, and strange deaths or disappearances. Alice gulped. Were…were all of these deaths related to ink illness? There were dozens! She paused at one to read it.

*Tragedy strikes the circus! Rabbit retires from show business after sudden loss of wife and assistant.*
Oswald, the Lucky Rabbit, has been off stage for a time now. His young wife and stage assistant, Ortensia Rabbit, shockingly passed away this week. Oswald’s younger brother, Mickey Mouse, announced that the rabbit magician won’t be returning to the stage anytime soon. Despite this sad loss, The Fantasia Circus will still be performing across the country. Many fans mourn the loss of the young wife, mother, and star. No other details have been released to the public by the family at this time.

Alice turned away with a heavy heart. How many other stories were like this? She looked back around the room and noticed a door off to the side. She walked to it with a new weight on her shoulders. It was one thing to hear talk, another to see this. Somehow, the conversation around the breakfast table had seemed like an exciting escapade. The things you read about in books, with daring rescues and treasure. It had been like Bendy and Boris were brave adventurers on a great quest. Now though…now it had opened to a dark reality. They were desperate boys, doing all they can to stop a tragedy. Her mind went back to what she had learned earlier today. It was all so overwhelming--what those two had been through, what they had already seen. Boris and Bendy seemed to be the only family each other had. She couldn’t imagine being in pain, sick with a disease that--so far--had killed everyone who’d had it, or being a younger sibling watching her only family slowly die. She shook her head.

She found herself in awe of the two. They were still able to smile. They had hope. They were going at it with all they had. They made her want to do everything she could too. She wanted to help!

But…

But, she didn’t have her halo. Her powers were at half strength, if not less. She only had a limited number of miracles left, and they wouldn’t heal anyone of this thing. If the miracle could, it would have for Boris back then. Miracles were usually very direct. Since it had given Boris the map, their best chance was with the map. That’s how it worked…So why was the map so useless? She had never heard of something like this. A useless miracle? Was it her? Was she really cursed like her siblings said? Was it because she had a screwed up gift? Would it have been different, better, if it had been a different angel? Alice bit her lip and shook her head.

She couldn’t doubt herself now! She had to be strong! If the miracle had failed, then she would do something else. She had never let a setback stop her yet. But any set back here would cost lives, her mind whispered darkly.

She reached the door handle and turned it gently. She’d just have to not mess up this time. She started to pull it open, but stopped at the sound of voices.

“You can’t,” Boris said.

“I know, bro. Don’t worry,” Bendy said.

“How can I possibly not worry!” Boris cried.

Bendy chuckled. “By remembering how ridiculously stubborn I am?”

Boris scoffed. “Let me do it.”

“No way. I’m not putting you in that kind of danger,” Bendy said seriously.

“And you are already in twice as much! Sick and cursed! You can’t do it all by yourself, Bendy! Let me help!” Boris barked. “Stop pretending you’re okay!”

“You are helping! Stars, Boris!” Bendy snapped back. “Of course, I’m not okay! I can’t handle the
thought of you getting hurt! Alright! Stop asking! I won’t let you! I don’t,” Bendy choked up a bit, “I don’t want you hurt.”

“You think I like seeing you suffer then? Don’t you think I feel the same way, Bendy?” Boris demanded. “What can I do?” There was quiet sniffling for a few minutes. Alice felt like she was intruding, but she was afraid to move and alert them to her presence. How could she back up without them noticing?

“We keep going. We get up and keep going.” Bendy sounded calm again.

“Ju-just like we always do,” Boris answered weakly.

“Absolutely. Remember, you’re the one that keeps me going, bro. We’re doing this together. We’ll save everyone. Stars! We’ll be heroes even!” Bendy said cheerfully. “Imagine all the girls that will want to get to know me then!” Bendy said humorously. Alice rolled her eyes. So, her suspicions of his character weren’t off. Still, he wasn’t a complete scoundrel.

“Bendy no,” Boris groaned.


“Bendy,” Boris complained. “Now?”

“I see your muzzle twitching.” Bendy sounded like he was grinning. “Where’s the widdle wolfy? Is that him?”

“Here I am!” Boris said.

“There he is!” Bendy said. “There’s that smile!”

“Yeah, yeah,” Boris grumbled reluctantly.

“What? You don’t want me looking for my widdle wolf?” Bendy asked.

“No, it’s just,” Boris mumbled something.

“What was that?” Bendy asked.

“Nothing.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah.”

“Really?”

“Bendy.”

“Okay, okay,” Bendy said. “But really, what?”

Alice slowly pulled the door closed. She crept back and took a deep breath. Okay. She didn’t hear any of that. Act natural. She had just showed up. She didn’t hear the touching moment. She has no idea that Bendy could be so…yeah. No idea. Just a scoundrel, not a doting brother. Was her face red? Haha. Oh golly, her face was red. Why did that have to be so cute? Calm down. She didn’t see anything! Nothing at all! She took another deep breath, schooled her features like she was going to
walk on stage, and approached the door. This time she walked with purpose. She hoped one of them would notice her steps.

She got to the door again and paused for a moment to make sure she wasn’t flushed. That taken care of, she knocked and opened the door.

“Hello? Bendy? Boris?” She pushed the door open to see a room that was similar to the one she was in. The walls were lined with photographs and news clippings. There were random items on shelves with a few books. There were Robots pieces, a microscope, a stone with runes carved into it, a jewel, a pocket watch, and an old pottery with more runes on it. Oddly, she didn’t recognize them. Two chairs faced each other over a low coffee table with more papers scattered over it. The two windows had their curtains drawn back allowing the light to filter into the room. The boys were standing in front of the window, in view of the garden in the backyard.

“Oh, hey Alice. Did you come to get us?” Boris asked. His eyes were still a bit puffy from crying. Alice wanted to go comfort him somehow, but she reminded herself that, again, this was the Surface, and she wasn’t close enough to him for that. Words would have to do here. Bother.

“Yes. Mr. Tiptail has something he would like to discuss with us. I think we’ll be leaving soon,” Alice said. “Are you two okay?” Dumb! That was such a dumb question! How could they be okay!

“Yeah, we’ll be fine,” Bendy said with a shrug. Alice bit her lip and nodded. “How are you holding up?” Alice blinked in surprise.

“Uh?” she asked dumbly.

Bendy looked out the window at the fall scenery. The leaves outside were turning different colors and falling. Clouds drifted by in wisps. The neighborhood seemed quiet, peaceful in the morning light. “I mean, gee Alice, you were kinda roped into all this. How you holding up? I know it’s overwhelming, and you didn’t really ask for this.”

“I did, though,” she protested. Bendy looked back at her with a raised brow. “I asked Boris to explain everything and you fellas did.” This time she shrugged uncertainly. “It’s not your fault that everything is a huge mess.” That’s what her life felt like most of the time anyway.

“You sure?” Boris asked.

“You sure?” Boris asked. “Yeah. I’m just glad I was able to help you.” Alice smiled.

“Even though you lost your job?” Bendy asked.

Alice almost giggled. “I think we can agree that my job wasn’t a glass-half-full kinda gig.” Bendy chuckled and Boris smiled, the light casting them in a halo of light. “I’ll find more work,” she reassured them again. “Anyway, we best get downstairs. Everyone else will be wondering where we disappeared off to,” Alice said.

“Okay,” they said. The three walked back to the staircase and down to rejoin everyone.

“Right, I have everything I need. Not everything I want, but this will be enough to notify the public and clear Dr. Oddswell, Miss Hood, and your names. The facts are clear on this at least. Still, I think there are some things we need to keep to ourselves.” Xedo adjusted his glasses as he looked over his notes.

“Like what?” Yakko asked. He was fiddling with a microscope with his tongue sticking out.
“I don’t think Bendy and Boris’ quest should be shared,” Xedo said.

“But that will be the hope to the sick! Hope is important for those with the ink illness!” Granny Gopher exclaimed.

Xedo nodded. “I agree, but I think Bendy and Boris’ names should be anonymous. We can talk about the machine and the hope for a cure, but the boys already are having a hard time moving around publicly as wanted criminals. It’ll will escalate if people start treating them like heroes. Or worse, blaming them for their hardships. I believe it’s best their names are cleared and then the boys can disappear into obscurity. It’ll allow them to move about cities freely without people trying to distract them.”

Dot sighed. “Makes sense. It’s hard to dodge adoring fans.”

“So, when asked we reply there are simply ‘people’ working on it,” Wiston said.

“Exactly.” Xedo pointed his pen at his brother.

“Okay, what else?” Alice asked.

“We need to hide the parts and not mention the map,” Xedo said. “Those are obviously crucial for the success of this mission. You’ve already faced almost losing them. We will have to act with the highest level of caution.” Everyone agreed.

“I also think we need to switch that doll curse or bond over to someone else. Bendy, you need to be at your best for your quest,” Xedo said.

“No way. I don’t want to endanger more people,” Bendy said.

“But you are only one of two people that can read that map,” Xedo said.

“Yeah, and I don’t mind having a doll of myself,” Yakko said. Bendy snorted.

“Not gonna happen.” Bendy frowned.


“What are you boys planning to do next?” Xedo asked, changing the subject.

“Go after the next machine part! Duh!” Dot giggled.

“Actually, we can’t,” Boris said with his ears pinned back.

“What do ya mean?” Avery asked, annoyed. Boris pulled out the map and unfolded it. Alice peeked over. The map showed rolling hills, rivers, and forests. Nothing about the city at all. Alice had to hold back a sigh of frustration and embarrassment.

“Nothing has shown up on the map. Until it shows us where the next part is, we have no idea where to go,” Boris explained. Both Granny and Avery leaned forward to get a look.

“N’you’r nat messin’ wit us?” Avery said. “Dat isn’ a blank paper?”

Bendy frowned. “It’s as real as this doll.” Bendy pulled it out again. Alice looked it over curiously. She hadn’t gotten a close look before.

It really did look like Bendy. It was simple, with a stitch mouth, little goggles, vest and pants. It’s
button eyes shined in the light of the room.

"Fur awl I kna dat’s just a dumb doll," Avery said. He shrugged off the wall and stepped up to Bendy. Bendy brought the little thing closer to himself and glared up at the wolf. "Wha? You dink I would hurt you o’ somethin’? Grow up!" Avery chuckled. "Let me see." He held out his hand to Bendy. Bendy shared a look with Boris.

“It’s okay, sonny. You can trust Avery. He’s a good lad.” Granny smiled.

Bendy hesitantly handed it over. Avery lifted it up and looked it over with a curious eye. “I can move it wit’out messin’ wit you, right?”

“Yeah,” Bendy said, watching with sharp eyes. Boris shifted nervously and folded up the map without removing his eyes from the bigger wolf. His ears were back, and he seemed tense. Alice found she was holding her breath.

“Berries,” Avery said and lifted one of the little arms. “Don’ seem like a big deal ta me.” He gently pinched the head between his thumb and finger and turned it a bit. Alice saw Bendy twitch.

“I think that’s enough,” Boris said, glancing at Bendy. Alice wondered what he felt. Avery narrowed his eyes.

“One quechon, how’d it bite you?” Avery asked, still messing with the head. “It’s just a stitch. It don’ gat a mouth.”

“I don’t-“

“Eouch!” Avery jerked and dropped the doll. Everyone jumped.

“Hey!” Boris barked, looking at Avery angrily. He leaned down and picked it up. “You said you’d be car-”

The doll Boris picked up did not look like the one that Avery had dropped. It was a wolf, with a tail, long ears, and a stitched muzzle mouth.

“Well, dat’s how dat ding bites den.” Avery chuckled and shook out his hand.

“What did you do, you idiot!” Bendy scowled. Avery snatched the doll from Boris. The younger wolf yelped in surprise as the thing disappeared from his frozen fingers.

“ Took away one of your problems.” Avery grinned a sharp grin. “You’ welcome.”

“But now-“

“Look, liddle pal. I can take care of myself. Dis ding is gonna be hidden away. I got nothin’ ta worry ‘bout,” Avery said, shaking the doll a little.

“Don’t call me little.” Bendy sneered. The energy around Bendy became agitated, and Alice fought the urge to get up and move away from him.

Granny sighed as she rubbed her forehead. “You didn’t have to trick him, Avery dear.”

The wolf shrugged. “Was gettin’ impatient.” Bendy scowled and crossed his arms. Boris looked between the two of them with wide eyes. Alice also stared with huge eyes.

“Berries! Can I try?” Yakko asked. He appeared right next to Avery. The older wolf hardly reacted.
Alice jumped in her seat.

“No,” Avery said.

“What’s done is done. I think it’s best we get moving.” Xedo stood.

“One second.” Bendy sighed.

“Don’ madder wha you say boyo. I’m just as stub bun as you,” Avery said.

Bendy scowled. “At least let me show you a good space for it.”

“Ain’t a safe the best place?” Dot asked. She appeared on Avery’s other side and leaned into him with a sigh.

“No. That’ll be obvious,” Bendy said.

“C’mon Avery. This will be between you, me, and Boris.” Bendy stuffed his hands in his pockets.

Dot lifted a finger, “But-”

“He’s right,” Xedo said. “The less people who know where the hiding place is, the better.”

Chapter End Notes

Mercowe: Ok. I'll admit it, it's sorta my fault this chapter got out so late today. Me and Tap have finals next week, so even though she got it to me this morning...studying sort of jumped me and held me hostage for most of the day. I only got to finish editing around 7 or so, and then Tap wasn't here, so I couldn't really post it without her, now could I?

Anyways, enjoy the chapter. There weren't any really good typos in this chapter other than the slightly funny fact that Tap mixes up trick and treat sometimes. Have a good week!
Aren’t they sooooo cute!
Playing Go Fish

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Boris and Bendy buy flowers and visit Steven's grave.

Chapter Notes

Hello! 
I'm free! Finally free! TwT No more finals, it's over! 
I turned in my life the other day and have no more responsibilities! Sweet freedom!

Mercowe: Don't be fooled. She means her textbook.

Shush! I don't have to deal with My Life anymore! Let me be happy!

Mercowe: You can be happy without messing with the readers. :P

It's been fifty chapters! If they haven't figured out I can't be taken seriously then what can I do about it? Anyway! We've hit 5-0 chapters! Holy cheese! I can't believe it! 
Thanks for sticking around and reading this far guys! Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Bendy sighed as they left the house. Things were not going according to plan. He knew they were all in a tough corner since the doc had been arrested, and he and Boris were wanted, but he'd thought that things had started working out. They had one part of the machine, they had a map, a plan, and thanks to the Warners, they had a guy that was sure he could clear their name. Yet, things felt like they were spiraling out of control. He hadn’t expected the doll to bite someone else and for Avery to pull a fast one. He hadn’t expected to hear Wakko was sick. He hadn't expected to find out Steven was gone.

It was all happening way too fast for him. Just when he'd thought they were going to make a difference, any illusion of choice was snatched away by this star fallen illness. They were headed to the hospital to get Wakko and Dr. Scratchensniff. Bendy had been floored that the Warners actually had a guardian. He remembered when he'd turned eighteen and was finally able to claim guardianship of Boris, so the stupid system would stop heckling them. How often had he and Boris escaped the Sillyvision orphanage growing up? Enough for the lady in charge to try and send Bendy to an orphanage a town away. By the beginning of the next week, he and Boris had met up at their favorite alley with a couple of bags of food for their troubles. Heh.

Still, the hoops he'd jumped through to get legal guardianship had been terrible. Social Services would have taken Boris away if it hadn’t been for Pete bribing. It'd given Bendy a little more time to figure out the legal mumbo-jumbo. Good thing Pete was a cheapskate who worried more about losing half his work force than about child laws. Bendy never wanted to do that much paper work.
The drive to the hospital was short. Bendy found himself next to Dot and Boris. They pulled up to the hospital, where Wakko sat in a wheelchair on the curb. Behind the chair was a pretty rabbit nurse who was scowling at the approaching vehicle. She was curvy, and her ears were angled back. Bendy wasn’t sure if she had them pulled back or if she was just mad. Bendy appreciated the short length of her nurse’s skirt, it was similar to the one Red had been wearing when he met her. Next to the chair was an older man with a bald head, long face, and glasses so thick that Bendy couldn’t see his eyes. Xedo pulled up and stopped the car.

“Hello again, Mrs. Fanny.” Xedo nodded his head. She scoffed at him.

“Do you have any idea how much of a pain it is whenever you show up? First Red, now this?” Fanny indicated to the young Warner in front of her. He looked up to her and purred. She sneered. “He must be one of the worst patients I’ve ever had the displeasure of dealing with.”

“I’m sorry for all the trouble, nurse Fanny,” Xedo said. “Do you need any help?”

“Yeah bro, what ya doin’ wheeling around?” Yakko leaned over Xedo and stuck his head out of the window.

“It’s hospital policy.” Fanny sighed and rolled her eyes.

“Ooooh, I like it. You can drive me anywhere, babe.” Yakko winked. Fanny scowled.

Dot yanked Yakko back in his seat from behind. Her eyes rolled heavenward. “Boys.”

Fanny’s eyes went to the back of the car and zeroed in on Bendy and Boris trying to hide behind Alice. Her perfect brows shot up in surprise.

“I can explain,” Xedo said quickly.

“Don’t bother,” she huffed and turned her nose up. “Red has already sworn me to secrecy. You’re damn lucky I’m friends with her. I don’t want to get involved in that mess.” She waved a hand at the back of the car. “I’m sure all will make sense in time. I really don’t care one way or the other. Just get Red out of jail.” With that she tilted the chair, dumping Wakko out and walked back into the hospital without another word.

“Sank you Miz Fanny!” Dr. Scratchensniff waved. “Now, how are vee to get in zee car?” Bendy blinked at his odd accent.

“We’ll be getting out here,” Bendy said, reaching over Dot to open the door.

“Is that a smart idea?” Wiston asked.

“Boris and I need to head out for a minute. We’ll see you back at the apartment,” Bendy said.

“Where ya goin’? Can I come?” Dot asked, fluttering her eyes at Bendy.

“We’re going to the cemetery to see Steven,” Boris explained.

“You’re not invited,” Bendy added flatly. “Go be with your brother or something. Don’t break stuff.”

“Awww,” Dot pouted and crossed her arms. “How about I just act as your bodyguard instead?”
“No, thanks.”

“Love interest?”

“No.”

“Secret admirer?”

“Move, Dot.”

“Stalker?”

“Dot.”

“You fellas are bailing right as I get to see you again?” Wakko asked, looking at Boris and Bendy.

“Sorry, Wakko,” Boris said sadly. “I want to do this, and we might not get another chance.”

“You don’t think it’s too dangerous?” Xedo asked.

“We’ve been able to dodge them so far,” Bendy said with a shrug. The boy climbed out and stepped up on the curb.

“Vait. I’ve zeen you bevoore,” the doctor said, tapping his chin.

“Course you have Scratchy! That’s Bendy and Boris, the BBros!” Yakko said.

“Vat!” Dr. Scratchensniff jumped.

“We told you they were pals of ours!” Dot called.

“I don’t efer belif a vord from you sree,” the doctor said. Good policy to live by, Bendy thought.

“We’ll explain,” Xedo said. “Get in.”

“Good to see you fellas are okay at least,” Wakko said to Bendy and Boris.

“Yeah, hey, sorry to hear the news,” Bendy said.

Wakko shrugged. “Figured that just put us in the same boat.”

“Still, it sucks,” Bendy said.

“Well, there has to be some reason Tap took my talent away completely,” Wakko sighed.

“Uh?” Boris tilted his head.

“Can’t use my talent at all. We’re now flying blind. No fourth wall, no hopping out. Heck, I can’t even remember the script or the other stuff anymore.” Wakko thumped his head with the palm of his hand gently. “Only the stuff I was there for. It’s really weird. It’s like someone snatched my glasses away, and I’m stuck with bad vision,” Wakko huffed.

“I miss our fans and friends in the comments!” Dot called from her seat.

“I miss messing with Tap,” Yakko said.

“We got her for April Fool’s,” Wakko said.
“True.” Yakko smiled.

Bendy, lost on the conversation, shrugged. “Well, sorry you can’t do those…things anymore. You fellas take care. We’ll see you all later.” Bendy put a hand to the side of his head and gave them a little salute.

“Be safe,” Alice said. Bendy nodded and the two headed away. Xedo had told them where the cemetery was. It was bit of a walk, but Bendy thought that might be a good idea right now. The boys kept their heads down and walked along less crowded streets. No one seemed to pay them much mind.

“Think we could find some flowers?” Boris asked. Bendy glanced up at him.

“Dunno, bro. It could be tough, this time of year. Maybe,” Bendy said.

Boris nodded sullenly. He’d been sullen ever since he found out. Bendy didn’t blame him. It was a very uncomfortable shock. Neither of them had many experiences with death, and neither of them had considered the possibility of a kid younger than them dying. It was…Well, Bendy didn’t really have words for the feelings that went along with it. Heartbreaking for one. He had been such a good, happy-go-lucky kid. It made him feel guilty. Sure he and Boris had been getting the parts, but they also had played around. They had gone to a few parades and jazz clubs while in New Orleans. They’d hung around Black Hat’s Casino to listen to Alice sing. They had wasted time.

No. That wasn’t right. They had been lost in New Orleans and needed a break, a lead, anything. They’d had to hide in the casino because of the warrant for their arrests…

That wasn’t stopping them from walking the streets now, Bendy thought with a wince. They still could get arrested at any moment, but with Xedo on their side Bendy had some hope that getting arrested wouldn’t be a worry for much longer.

The worst feeling, though, was the revelation of his own mortality. His next ink attack could be his last.

“Hey Bendy, look!” Boris elbowed him and pointed to a shop on the corner. It was a little flower shop with bright plants in the window and hanging around the entrance. “Can we get some flowers?” Bendy looked the place over. It didn’t have any posters of them, and there didn’t seem to be anyone inside.

“Sure, bro.” Bendy put his hands in his pockets and the boys headed in. The shop had rows of plants. It smelled like freshly turned dirt and spiced herbs. There were all kinds of plants too, not just flowers, but tiny trees, bushes, and ferns too. “Pick whatever you think it reasonable Boris.”

“Okay,” Boris said and headed to some simple bouquets near the counter. Behind the counter were more shelves, but instead of housing more potted plants, there were dried herbs in labeled jars. Lavender, ginger, chamomile, rosemary, peppermint and more.

“Hello.”

Bendy turned to see someone come from around the shelf of herbs. She was a cute mouse in a simple, yet frilly, dress. Her apron had a few tiny tools in it, and her smile was gentle. She reached up to pluck a dried leaf stuck to her round ears with a giggle. “Welcome to my shop, I’m Minnie. How can I help you gentlemen today?”

“We’re here to get flowers for a friend,” Boris said with a sad smile. “Something simple, if that’s okay.”
“Sure! We have all kinds. Do you know what you want?” she asked.

“Not really,” Boris admitted, his ears dropping.

“Oh, that’s okay. Is it for an event?” Minnie said with a nice smile.

“It’s for a grave,” Bendy cut in.

“Oh, dear. I’m sorry to hear that,” Minnie said with a tilt of her head. “I think I have just the thing.” She turned around and headed deeper into the store. She seemed nice enough. She certainly didn’t recognize them. Bendy was amazed he didn’t feel more paranoid. He shouldn’t feel okay with this.

She was back an instant later with a nice bouquet. “Lilies, gladiolas, roses, and carnations. Will that do?”

“That’s perfect,” Boris said.

Minnie beamed. “Glad I could help!” With that, the boys paid and headed back out. Boris held the flowers like a treasure as the boys walked quickly to the cemetery. When they arrived, it didn’t take them long to find the fresh grave and the name carved in stone. Steven Stanford the Squirrel. Bendy couldn’t bring himself to read the full inscription.

Boris knelt and put the flowers in a little stone vase that sat in front of the headstone. There were other flowers all around, letters, pictures, and even a toy car. Bendy stood behind Boris and gazed at the flowers and little mementos. The slight breeze sent a chill through Bendy and silence sat heavily between the brothers as they both thought.

He had just been a cute little kid who had barely started life. He was snuffed out, just like that. Bendy had barely known the kid, but they had promised to hang out when he and Boris got back. Steven had wanted to go with Boris and Bendy. He had been so excited to see them walk into the room. Little Steven had looked at them like they were heroes, or something ridiculous like that when Oddswell had given them the quest. Steven had promised to look after Granny and be brave. How could a good kid like that just be gone? He had barely gotten a chance to live. What the hell? Now, all that was left of him was the name on this big rock. And what about his family? Bendy didn’t know a thing about them.

He felt numb. He realized that Boris was weeping again. “I’m so sorry Boris,” Bendy said, putting a hand on Boris’ shoulder. He’d never wanted his brother to suffer. Boris was just as good as Steven. He was so good hearted. The wolf didn’t deserve this. He was still a kid himself. He shouldn’t have to be putting flowers on a grave.

“Me too. Steven was great. He shouldn’t have died,” Boris wept. “It’s not fair.” Bendy gave Boris’ shoulder a gentle squeeze. What could he say to that? They were both very aware of how unfair life was.

“I know,” Bendy said softly.

“Bendy, he had a brother too! We had no idea. Wh-what about his family? We didn’t even ask-“

“Boris,” Bendy knelt beside the wolf and brushed some of his tears away. They left wet tracks down his furry face. “We barely got to know him. You can’t feel guilty about that. We couldn’t have done anything.”

“I hate it.” Boris dropped his head and squeezed his eyes shut. “It’s not fair. He was just a kid!” Bendy leaned forward and wrapped Boris in a hug. Bendy wasn’t sure how long they stayed there. It
didn’t really matter. No one was around the graveyard today.

As they got up to leave, Bendy found himself following a train of thought he never imagined he would take. He found himself planning for Boris. Not in the sense that he always had, work, job, weekends, and so on. No. What if…Boris had to go on…without him? With this train of thought came new worries that Bendy had never considered.

Was Boris able enough to take care of himself? Could he find work and pay all the bills on his own? Would he be alright? Would he recognize when some shady guy was trying to swindle him? He was so trusting that Bendy couldn’t be sure. Would social services try to send him back to the orphanage? Did that mean Bendy had to possibly find another guardian…just in case? He didn’t really know. He didn’t know! Bendy would have to make sure that Boris knew all the ins and outs. He had to be set to take care of himself. He would have to know how to get this machine going.

Just in case.

Bendy glanced back at the gravestone.

In Loving Memory of Our Special Son

Steven Stanford, the Squirrel

A dear brother and friend

Sleeping with the Angels, Love Mom and Dad

Bendy pursed his lips and turned away.

Just in case.

The pair made their way out of the graveyard and down the near empty streets. The melancholy of their moods contrasted with the bright sunny day around them. Even with the weather a bit cooler, it didn’t slow down the life of the city. The season continued to come, time ever matching. Many leaves had changed and were in the process of falling. The city had a preoccupied feel, as people flitting about here and there, wrapped up in the whirl of their own fears, ambitions and duties. Hardly a soul noticed the travel worn boys.

Yet, someone did notice them.

Bendy and Boris had just rounded a corner when they stopped dead in their tracks.

“Heya, fellas,” Cup greeted with a smirk. This was not good. He was leaning against the wall with a hand in his pocket. What chance did they have by trying to make a scene? Cup gave them a little salute with his other hand. Behind him, Mugs was tugging his scarf up to his round nose.

“Remember us?”

Best hope they had was to split and meet up.

“Boris split up!” Bendy shouted and spun on his heels. He darted to the right and back the way they came.

“Get back here, pipsqueak!” Cuphead shouted at him. Bendy grit his teeth and pushed himself to go faster. “Don’t think I forgot that you almost dropped me back in that crummy shop!”

“I helped save your glass hide, ya mook!” Bendy shouted over his shoulder as he ran. “This is one
Cup laughed. “I’ll show you my thanks!” Bendy raced on, ducking into alley, tipping trashcans, and taking sharp corners as he went. Bendy tried to take the most confusing way. He couldn’t shake the guy, and this mad dash wasn’t subtle. People were turning to watch them race by. He was sure at least some of them would recognize him. It was only a matter of time before the cops showed up. His lungs were burning, his legs ached, but he couldn’t slow down.

Finally, he seemed to be pulling ahead of the thug. He took a few more turns, jumped over a table, and ducked under a bush before pulling himself into an empty alley. He leaned against the wall and gasped for breath. His chest was on fire.

“Where you going with those tiny feet of yours?”

Bendy jumped and started running once again. Cup laughed and raced after him again. The burning in his chest didn’t decrease. His stomach twisted in pain. He ignored it. He had to keep running. He almost got to the end of the alley when he choked. “Ugh!” He missed a step and tripped. He spiraled forward, throwing his arm out to catch himself. The street grit bit into his arm as he skidded a short distance across the concrete of the alley. To his horror, his throat started to close too. His side bag flew off his shoulders, and he skidded to a stop.

“Ha! You clumsy little cuss!” Cup laughed behind him. This wasn't exhaustion, Bendy realized with horror. He was having an attack. He choked again and coughed. The pain in his chest and stomach was becoming an inferno. No! Not here! Not now! The pain! He tried to get up to no avail. His arms went around himself, trying to hold himself together. It hurt! He couldn’t even turn himself onto his back. He needed his bag. Oddswell’s pain meds.

Cup stepped up to him and stood over him. “Any last words?” Cup sneered. Bendy felt the ink dripping down his face. Melting.

“Guuh! No! No! No!” Bendy groaned. He couldn’t die here! He didn’t want to die! He hadn’t done anything for Boris yet! Oddswell was still locked up. He was scared. He didn’t see a way to survive this. He couldn’t move. He was melting. Too much! He couldn’t breathe! He was burning up! It hurt! He coughed up a mouth full of ink on the ground.

“H-hey, what’s…what are you doing?” Cup sounded unnerved. Bendy glanced back up at him. He wasn’t smiling anymore. The thug had a grimace on his face. He almost looked angry. “It’s pretty disgusting. Knock it off!” W-was that sweat beading on the cup's face? It didn’t matter. If the guy was thrown off his game, maybe he’d-

“Please,” Bendy whimpered. He’s voice was a horse whisper. “My-y b-b-bag. I need s-something to e-ease the pain…” Bendy coughed again and started to shiver. His mind was clouded by the fire in his chest, the burning in his throat. He couldn’t focus. It hurt. He couldn’t move. He didn’t know where his bag had gone. Was he going to die?

“What? You really expect me to-“

Bendy choked out more ink. “Bleah! Please!” The pain had spiked up a notch. How could it get worse? How was he still conscious! “AAAAAH! I C-CAN’T ST-STA-HAC!” He couldn’t stand it. Too much! He couldn’t tell the difference between the tears and the ink running down his face. He writhed and shivered on the ground. “UGH!” he groaned.

Cup’s eyes widened. His face dripped with sweat. He started to shiver, truly disturbed by the sight in front of him.
Bendy couldn’t take it anymore. He was sure this was his insides liquefying. He was dying. He’d never see Boris again. It was just too much. “Why!” He demanded tearfully. He was going to leave Boris alone. “NO! NO!”

Cup was now shaking so badly he was starting to rattle. He scowled and marched away. Bendy hardly noticed until there was thud and his bag landed in front of his face. “Ugh! You’re so annoying! Here, take it!” he barked. Bendy reached out with a shaking hand and fumbled with it. He was able to find the pills and take a couple. He didn’t know how he swallowed, but he managed it. He trembled silently with his eyes closed for a few minutes before the pain started to die down. If he wasn’t so exhausted, he’d laugh from relief. That…had been really scary.

“We’ll continue this some other time,” Cup said sullenly. Bendy cracked open an eye to see him standing with his back to Bendy. He had his hands stuffed into his pockets and was glaring at the distant buildings. The cup man tilted his head and turned the glare on Bendy. “When you’re not crying like a little cussing pansy.”

Bendy didn’t have the energy to retort. Everything ached, and he felt his grip on the world slipping. His vision blurred as Cup turned to approach him. Bendy fell unwillingly into the darkness of unconsciousness.

After Bendy had bolted with the other cup man on his tail, Boris and Mugs had been left alone. They had shared an awkward stare down. Mugs messed with his scarf, watching every move Boris made.

Mugs had been an ally back in New Orleans, but it had been clear that after the queen had been defeated that the alliance had ended. Still, the guy wasn’t shooting at Boris. The young pup didn’t really know what to do in this situation. Was he supposed to run? Mugs stuck a hand in his pants pocket and his eyes widened like he had just gotten an idea. Boris tensed, ready for anything. Was it a gun? No. That’d be silly. These guys had finger blasters!

Mugs pulled out a deck of cards. “Wanna play Go Fish?” Boris blinked twice in surprise.

“Uh?” he asked dumbly.

“Well, you’re not running, and I’m not shooting so…I dunno.” Mugs shrugged awkwardly.

“S-sure?” Boris said and cautiously approached the cup man.

Mugs grinned. “Berries.” Boris expected this to be a trap, but Mugs just brought out the cards and began to shuffle them. He sat at the curb and glanced up at Boris. The wolf followed his lead and took a seat. Mugs dealt the cards out and picked up his hand.

“Got any dogs?” Mugs asked. Boris watched Mugs with wide eyes before picking up his hand and looking at it. What was he doing?

“Only me,” Boris replied.

Mugs eyes widened in surprise before he laughed. "Hehe!" Mugs pulled out the card and put it in Boris' hand. "Does that count as my pair?"

"No you cheater!" Boris laughed and tossed the card back. "Pull from the deck." Mugs chuckled and pulled from the deck between them.

"Dangit, I thought I had something there." Mugs smirked as he fixed his hand and picked up the dropped card.
“How have you been Mugs?” Boris asked curiously. Mugs glanced up from his hand and back down again, his eyes widened a touch in surprise.

“I’m a’right. Happy ta have Cups back,” Mugs mumbled. Boris smiled.

“Got any cows?” Boris asked.

“Go fish,” Mugs replied.

“What about you and your bro?” Mugs asked.

“We’re doing okay. I-it’s been a rough day,” Boris said.

“Yeah?” Mugs tilted his head. The straw in his head shifted. Boris gave it a quick glance, before looking Mugs in the eye again.

“Yeah, this kid, Steven, he passed away while we were gone,” Boris admitted. His ears fell, and he swallowed the lump in his throat. He wasn’t going to cry again today. He had done enough of that, and it didn’t help anyone. It just made Bendy worry.

“Were you friends with him?” Mugs asked, ducking a little into his scarf.

“Sort of. I’d like to think so. We didn’t know him for long,” Boris said. Mugs looked at his hand for a long moment.

“Got any goats?” Mugs asked. Boris handed over his card. “I’m sorry that happened.” Mugs surprised Boris. He looked back up at the other with wide eyes. Mugs was staring at the ground with his shoulders dropped.

“Yea-yeah, me too.” Boris said. He seemed truly sad to hear the news.


“Yeah, but it’s still worth living,” Boris answered. Mugs glanced over at him with a little smile.

“Yeah, it is. It can’t all be bad, right?” Mugs said.

“Right.” Boris nodded. “Got any squirrels?”

“Go fish,” Mugs said. Boris pulled from the deck and laid down a pair of cats.

“Hey Boris, I know you don’t owe me nothin’, but could ya do me a favor?” Mugs asked nervously. Boris blinked at his cards and looked at Mugs again. He was shifting and looking around like what he was going to ask was a secret.

“Maybe? Depends on what you want?” Boris said cautiously. Was he about to get ambushed? Boris looked around too.

“Could you drop this in the mail for me?” Mugs pulled out a crumpled envelope from his pocket.

“What is it?” Boris held out his hand for the letter. Mugs handed it to him with a small flush to his face.

“It’s a letter to someone important to me. Cups wouldn’t be thrilled if he saw me with it,” Mugs explained. Boris glanced at the address. Inkwell? He’d never heard of it.
“Is it a girl?” Boris asked, seeing the embarrassment on Mugs face. It really wasn’t any of his business, but he couldn’t help his curiosity.

“Wha? Haha! No,” Mugs chuckled. “It’s someone we fell out of contact with awhile ago. I just wanted ‘em to know that we’re okay.”

Boris smiled and carefully tucked the letter next to the map in his pocket. “We have someone like that too. She’s probably mad I haven’t written her in a while.”

The boys went back to their game for a bit before Boris asked, “Why would Cup not want you to send a letter?”

“It’s complicated.” Mugs eyes were half lidded, and he took a deep breath before letting it out through his nose.

“You don’t have to explain,” Boris assured.

“I wish I understood enough to explain.” Mugs frowned. Boris nodded sympathetically. “There are some days where I don’t get Cups. He’s my bro. I love him, but I can’t read his mind.”

“Bendy can be like that too,” Boris said with a sigh.

“Must be a big brother thing,” Mugs grumbled.

Boris smiled. “Yeah, but I’m sure they want what’s best for us.”

Mugs shrugged and answered sullenly, “Yeah.”

“You don’t think so?” Boris tilted his head and his brows knit together in worry.

Mugs looked away uncomfortably.

“I won’t tell anyone Mugs, it’s okay,” Boris reassured.

Mugs huffed before turning back to him. “There are some days were I think he just sees me as a burden and a screw up.”

Boris’ ears dropped. “I’m sorry.”

Mugs shrugged. The two continued their game. Boris puzzled over Mugs’ confession. He didn’t really know how to help with that. He knew for a fact that Bendy loved him and would do anything for him. In many ways Bendy was Boris’ hero and the feeling of love and loyalty was reflected just as strongly. He argued with Bendy, neither of them was perfect, but Bendy never ever hinted at Boris being a burden...There had been times when Boris had thought that though.

“There are some days where I think I hold Bendy back,” Boris found himself admitting to Mugs. The cup man was looking at him with an intense gaze. “I’m not as talented with mechanics. My talent is practically useless for something like this quest, and I’m not as fast or strong as Bendy. There are a lot of things I’m sure Bendy would be doing if he didn’t have to look after me all the time.” Boris smiled. “But I know that he’s proud of me and works so hard because he cares. Maybe your brother doesn’t say it, but maybe he feels that way too?” Mugs turned to him completely and crossed his legs.

Mugs tilted his head, his eyes knit together confused. “I mean,” Boris swallowed, “I don’t really know your situation or anything, but he works really hard right?”
“Yeah,” Mugs answered quietly.

“Maybe the reason he does is because he’s trying to do his best for you,” Boris suggested with a shrug. Mugs blinked and looked down at the street for a moment.

“That makes sense,” he said thoughtfully. “Thanks, Boris.”

Boris smiled. Mugs pulled up his hand again. He only had too cards left. “You have any ducks?”

“Go fish!” Boris said.

“Why...you good for nothing!”

Both players jumped.

“You’re playing with him?” They looked over to see Cups walking towards them with an unconscious Bendy tucked under his arm. He was glaring at Mugs.

Boris gasped. “BENDY!” The demon was limp, and there was ink on his face, indicating he’d had an ink attack. The wolf felt a weight drop into his stomach. He dropped the cards and scrambled to his feet.

“Here you go!” Cup tossed Bendy to the wolf. Boris just had enough time to brace himself and catch his older brother. “He started pissing me off with his whining!” Cup barked with annoyance. He walked over to Mugs and stuck one of his hands in his pocket, while he gestured with the other and shrugged. “I mean, how am I supposed to enjoy beating the cuss out of him if he’s already in pain?”

Mugs gazed up at him mutely. The elder turned to the younger, who was still sitting, and clicked his tongue in annoyance.

His eyes half lidded with annoyance, Cup hooked Mugs’ handle with his finger. “C’mon, you worthless star fallen cuss!” He yanked his brother up and walked off, dragging Mugs away.

“Ow! Owowowowow,” Mugs muttered the whole way. Boris could have sworn one of Mugs eyes changed to a star of pain for a moment there, but he wasn’t sure.

The wolf turned to Bendy with concern. His was steady. There were some ink stains on his shirt and his goggles were a mess, but he seemed okay. Boris guessed Bendy had just been exhausted. He always seemed to be tired after an attack. Boris quickly checked Bendy’s bag. Everything was still there too.

Boris slung the bag over his shoulder and took off Bendy’s goggles, stashing them in there. He used a handkerchief to wipe away a bit of the ink. The wolf pup was surprised. It seemed that Cup had helped Bendy when he’d had his attack. There were a few less pills in Bendy’s medicine, and Cup had even brought Bendy back to Boris. Even if he wasn’t very nice about it, Boris thought maybe he had been right about the older cup brother. Boris stopped when he heard sirens.

Easily picking Bendy up, Boris carefully made his way back to Xedo’s apartment. He had to stick to alleys and empty streets. It took a bit of time, but he made it without being spotted. Silently, he thanked all his years on the streets dodging the town cops and shop owners.

The rest of their afternoon and evening were spent at Xedo’s apartment, surrounded with more friends than they’d ever had before.
Mercowe:
Well, we've finally reached that portion of the story that connects with Rogue's comics...Get ready ladies and gents, keep your hands, feet and any other appendages you favor inside the vehicle at all times. It's gonna be a bumpy ride!
Chapter Summary

Bendy hates doing nothing.

Chapter Notes

Hello lovelies! What a week!
It was spring break for Mercowe and I and boy did we get writing. It’s awesome! I think you will like the things we’ve been working on. ^^
We have a surprise for you on Inky Mystery’s Birthday on Wednesday. Come back here on the 25th to find a link to the present. ;)
Until then, enjoy the chapter! ^.^/

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy and Boris spent the next day hiding away at the apartment. Since their run-in with the Cupbros, the city knew that they were back in town and everyone had an eye out for them. They couldn’t leave without a disguise, which meant that Bendy was going stir crazy being stuck indoors with little to do. To make matters worse Xedo came back the first day with bad news. He had been fired. Upon finishing his article on the ink illness, the newspaper had refused to print the story. When he’d threatened to walk, his boss handed him a box to collect his desk stuff.

The fox was fluffed up with aggravation as he marched around the apartment in a rage. Wiston also seemed stressed. It took Boris, Bendy, and surprisingly Yakko and Wakko to stop the younger fox from burning down the building nearly half a dozen times. Dot had pouted and the Warners had wanted to go get revenge on the news company. Xedo had to stop them. It wouldn’t help their image if they attacked the business. Bendy had quickly come to realize that the control Dr. Scratchensniff had over the Warners was about just as much as the rest of them.

Alice wasn’t there that day. She left in the morning to do job hunting. She didn’t want to be a burden, despite Xedo and all other company there assuring her that she wasn’t. Bendy had felt rather down. So much for clearing their names. It seemed impossible to free Oddswell and Red now. It made him so angry. Why weren’t people listening!

It had been hard to call and tell Granny the news. After Xedo had stopped pacing, he had gone into his room and didn’t return.

The next day the boys had gone out with Alice. She was looking for a job and the boys needed to resupply their packs for whenever they left the city again. They came by a shop that seemed familiar to Bendy. When they entered, he was surprised to see Betty Boop, the lovely lady that had helped them with a map to the city so long ago.

They had hit the jackpot at her store. It had everything they needed, canned food, maps, books,
clothes, sleeping bags, and more. It seemed to have a little of everything. Alice asked about work, and Betty was thrilled to hire her. Everything was going smoothly until Betty recognized the boys while they were paying.

Bendy had been ready to bolt, but Alice was able to talk her down from calling the police. Apparently, the gorgeous shopkeeper was used to her boyfriend getting arrested often, sometimes for things he had done and sometimes for things he hadn’t. She admitted that the reason she was looking for help around the shop was because he was locked up again, and she wasn’t going to pay his bail until next month, so he could think about what he’d done. Bendy just forced a smile and was grateful that the dame was so understanding. He was sure it was because Alice spoke up for them.

When they returned, Xedo was out of his room and planning. Bendy was alarmed, since his plans involved the Warners helping. A plan involving them promised chaos—every time. Bendy and Boris weren’t allowed to help, to Bendy’s annoyance.

“Okay, so run it all by me again? How is this thing getting out to the public?” Bendy crossed his arms and raised his brows. He leaned against the wall next to Boris’ seat. The group was loosely hanging around the living room to hear Xedo’s plan.

“I’m going to hand my story off to Phil, a friend I have at Toon Town Times,” Xedo explained.

“And this guy will help us?” Bendy asked skeptically.

“Oh, yes. I explained the illness as a conspiracy, and he was completely on board.” Xedo smiled. Bendy felt his brows knit in concern and confusion.

“Right…,” Bendy said doubtfully.

“The Warners will enter and create a distraction. When that happens, my friend will destroy the order sheet for the print and replace it with a dummy. Before anyone realizes what’s happened, they’ll have the article mass produced with everyone’s morning coffee.”

“Won’t that get him in trouble?” Boris asked, a bit worried.

“Possibly, but he assured me he is quite pleased to be involved in something this exciting,” Xedo said.

“Won’t the company do something about it once they realize what you did?” Bendy asked. “Can they get you arrested for this?”

“Not without evidence. Besides, I’m already fired.” Xedo adjusted his glasses. “The best they can do is print out a redaction and dismiss my story, but by then many people would have read it. I am hoping the people that are suffering or know someone who is suffering from ink illness will speak up. If the paper tries to dismiss ink illness, I hope the victims and their friends and families will stand in public retaliation. If the news broadcasts do their jobs, we should see results the day after tomorrow. Hopefully, it will be national news by then.” Xedo scratched his ear thoughtfully and jotted something down on his little journal.

“Say that all goes off without a hitch,” Bendy said, not really believing it would be that easy. “What next?”

“Then I’ll be writing another story about Wilson and Oddswell’s research, specifically about what happened to Mr. Wiseton and how you two tie in to all of this.” Xedo shook his pen in their direction. “With the public and media focusing more on the case than rumors, we can assume the police will pick up their feet and prove that you aren’t murderers. We can give hope to the sick with
the promise of the Ink Machine.”

“When do you think they’ll let Dr. Oddswell and Miss Hood out?” Boris asked.

Xedo pursed his lips. “Hard to say. Hopefully soon, things are only going to get worse with the doctor locked up.”

“And after the fun at the news office, we have to head home,” Yakko added.

“You guys are leaving?” Wiston asked in surprise.

“We have to go pick up something from home. We’ll be back,” Wakko explained.

“You guys don’t think it could wait until the doctor gets out?” Bendy asked. It wasn’t like them to leave all of the sudden when crazy things were happening.


“Don’t miss us too much, hot stuff.” Dot winked at Bendy. The demon frowned at her. Bendy discovered that as long as Avery was around, she would focus on him, but once he was gone, she went right back to tormenting him. Unfortunately.

“Yeah right. It’ll be nice to have some peace and quiet around here,” Bendy said. The siblings chuckled. Bendy rolled his eyes. “Oh and Xedo, if ya manage to not get arrested tomorrow, do you mind finding the girl from the college? The one that helped us and lost her job?”

“I could.” Xedo tilted his head. “Why do you wish to find her?”

“Yeah Bendy-boo, why?” Dot frowned. Again, Bendy rolled his eyes.

“She deserves an apology,” Bendy said.

“Yeah, Bendy and I didn’t mean for her to get in trouble,” Boris said. “It’ll be great if you could do that for us.”

Bendy nodded. “Maybe explain things to her a little? Let her know she did a good thing.”

Xedo shrugged. “Very well. That shouldn’t be too difficult.”

The next day, Xedo and the Warners left early to start their plan. The sun wasn’t even up yet. Still, Bendy found it difficult to go back to sleep, so he grabbed a random book from the shelves and started reading. He fidgeted there until the sun had risen, Boris woke up, and Wiston came into the kitchen with the paper and a wide grin. They had done it. Bendy looked at the front page.

**INK ILLNESS STRIKES TOON TOWN! THE EPIDEMIC THAT NO ONE IS TALKING ABOUT!**

They were all smiles during breakfast. Wiston turned on their little TV to see that the news broadcasts were already talking about it. Alice had to head out to work shortly after that. She also said she’d found a nice apartment and would be moving in a few days. Bendy had to admit, the girl could move fast.

The paper was releasing the redaction within two hours and the streets around the newspaper, any hospitals, and the city hall became crowded with people. Just as Xedo had predicted. The Warners
came back after breakfast, much to everyone’s relief. Toon Town didn’t need more chaos.

The reporters were going back and forth interviewing people. A ram claimed to have a friend with the illness and wanted to know why the paper was redacting something he had seen firsthand, why doctors were denying it’s existence. A young sparrow wanted the mayor to explain if this was real or not. There seemed to be a mix of frustration and confusion everywhere. The best was when they were able to talk to a couple of different doctors. One denied it was an epidemic, but thought the description of the sickness was interesting. Another doctor wondered why none of this had been brought to him before and attributed the current chaos to mass hysteria and delusion. Another admitted that he had been treating someone with it and that he was at a complete loss. Nothing had been working. Bendy liked the doctor. He was old and appeared almost humble. He admitted it baffled him. That one was the best.

The mayor declared a public announcement an hour after the crowd’s appearance. Bendy was a little worried a riot would break out, but surprisingly, the police were very organized about the matter and any troublemakers were taken care of before it could escalate. Bendy was a bit annoyed he had to stay in the apartment and watch.

When the mayor appeared, Bendy was a bit surprised. Mayor Medusa didn’t appear to be a man that would oversee a huge city. He was a round man, short, with a wave of thick hair. He had intense, lightly shaded eyes, a wide mouth with an upturned nose and small ears. He wore a very fine suit and walked to the podium like he owned the whole place. Bendy frowned. Oh great, he thought--a rich schmuck. He started out elegantly. He was a good speaker, Bendy had to give him that. Then, he surprised the demon again. Mayor Medusa denied everything. He said it was a scare tactic on the part of people who wanted to create unrest in the city. He hinted his suspicion toward Oddswell, Wilson, and the B-Bros possibly being tied to the mafia and black market. Bendy snorted as the man tried to undermine all Xedo’s work. The mayor was requesting for the arrest of the people that printed out these ‘lies’ immediately.

Good thing the public weren’t idiots. Many shouted in disagreement, demanding answers for the ink illness. Any time Medusa hinted that it was some other disease, he was booed. Too many had seen the truth in front of them in the faces of friends, family, and neighbors. After a while, Bendy caught the smallest hint of a twitch in the mayor’s eye. The crowd was getting to him. He continued to make denials and excuses, but many with friends and family sick wouldn’t move on the issue.

Bendy leaned back in the couch, thoughtfully. For most of these folks, this was the first time they’d had a name for the disease that was plaguing them. It was the first time someone seemed to have an idea on what was going on. To have the public authorities deny it…of course they wouldn’t allow it. Who knew how long some of them have been suffering with no hope in sight. Now that someone had given it a name, had presented a professional who knew what was happening, they weren’t going to just let that go.

Bendy smiled when the first person called for Oddswell’s release. It grew into a chant. The mayor scowled and waited for the chant to die down. It didn’t. Eventually, he had to leave the podium.

The rest of the day went on like this. There were a few knocks at the door. Bendy and Boris had to duck into a room as Wiston dealt with any visitors. Most were angry Toon Town people, the police, and a news reporter. All of them wanted to talk to Xedo, but the fox hadn’t shown up since he left. Wilson was able to dismiss all of them respectfully. Bendy had been impressed, but he realized the young fox was just able to hide his emotions well. Shortly after any visitor left, it was up to everyone to make sure he didn’t burn down the apartment in stress relief. Boris had taken some time to write a letter to Sasha. Out of guilt, Bendy scrawled his own note to her and let it join Boris’ letter in the envelope. They both agreed to not give too many details about their quest. Bendy didn’t want to
endanger her more. Boris offered to take them down to the mailbox, but Wiston stopped him and took it instead.

To Bendy’s horror, he had an attack at dinner. He'd just coughed into his hand and the next thing he knew, he was sprinting to the bathroom with Boris on his heels. He stripped off his vest, shirt, and goggles, before hopping in the tub and curling into a tight ball. Boris went to get his side bag and the pills. Bendy could hear everyone outside the door. They were all worried, but he didn’t want anyone else to see him like this. As the pain started up, Bendy bit his lip. He would not scream. He would not cry out. He didn’t want to scare them, and he didn’t want them to come in. Boris understood and made sure he was the only one that entered the bathroom. He had the pills and a towel. After taking the medicine, all they could do was wait it out.

Bendy wasn’t sure which was worse, the horrible pain raking his body or the worried, scared look in Boris’ eyes. To keep himself preoccupied, the wolf wet the towel and cleaned Bendy’s face. It stained the cloth and his hands. Bendy didn’t want to see. He squeezed his eyes shut as he held himself together in a tight grip. He ignored his tears. He ignored the sounds outside the bathroom door. It was just him and the warm cloth Boris was using to try and comfort him. Bendy, miraculously, was able to stay quiet through most of it. Only gasps for air and an occasional groan escaped him. He didn’t know how long he stayed like that. It was too long, an eternity in that fiery, sticky black nightmare before the attack finally relinquished.

Bendy’s body reabsorbed some of the ink, and Boris cleaned off the rest. The wolf went out and explained that Bendy was alright and just needed rest. The demon had started to fall asleep in the tub when Boris tried to pick him up and bring him to the couch he had been using as a bed. Bendy protested. He hated being carried around. Instead, the wolf gave him a hand, and the demon walked to the couch himself. He didn’t notice the worried glances from everyone else. He only stumbled once. Bendy was out before his head hit the pillow.

Xedo didn’t return that night. The next morning the Warners left with their…odd guardian. After spending a few days with the guy, Bendy wasn’t sure if he deserved pity or not. He tried to control them and act in a parent-like manner, but there were obvious problems. When they didn’t listen, he yelled, he pleaded, he bargained, and then he’d give up. There were times he would ask the Warners questions, and they would answer as…well as a Warner would. Instead of asking for clarification or repeating the answer to see if he’d gotten it right, he would repeat the question and deny their answer. They, of course, teased and harassed him. The more he fought, the worse they got. Bendy was amazed at how ridiculous it all got.

He didn’t like when the guy turned his attention to Boris or himself. He had questions, questions neither of them were able or willing to answer, questions that tried to get into their heads. It was like he thought they were puzzles to be figured out. Bendy interrupted his talks with Boris and started to reply like the Warners. The doc seemed to notice and dropped all attempt to figure out Bendy or Boris.

Anyway, they were gone with the promise to be back soon. Alice left for work at Betty’s store. She had really lightened up since leaving the casino. She smiled more, and the strange warmth she gave off with her presence seemed stronger. She punned and joked often. She had relaxed with the Warners messing around and talked happily with everyone. Bendy still felt like she was tense around him. She did smile at him often, but she was careful to never touch him, not even a brush of fingertips when passing a bowl. He noticed and due to her flush and unwillingness to look him in the eye, he was sure she knew that he’d noticed. He had a pretty good guess why she acted this way too. He did his best to not hold it against her either. He understood now. Her boss had been terrifying. He just wished…well, didn’t really matter. She had found a new apartment and was moving in two days.
That just left him, Boris, and Wiston at the house. That’s how the day stayed. The police chief and the commissioner had a press conference to talk about Oddswell and the B-Bros. It turned into a giant waste of time. The commissioner refused to let Oddswell go, even though he’d broken the law only to help those with ink illness. He also refused to have the wanted posters of the B-Bros taken down. He even had the guts to raise the bounty on them. Bendy rolled his eyes.

The Chief of Police was a bit more neutral on the matter, only giving some facts on the case and reassuring the public that they were working on it. Bendy spotted the detectives in the background. They didn’t seem happy. He wondered what the lovely police women were doing in all this.

Nothing else really happened. It was very quiet without the Warners. Boris and Wiston played a few games. They roped Bendy in occasionally. The brothers checked the map often, but there was still no change.

That evening, Xedo finally came back. He looked exhausted, like he'd aged a decade, but also pleased. “Everything is going according to plan. I’m sure things will start turning around soon.”

“Do you really think so, Mr. Tiptail? It sounds like the mayor and commissioner want to arrest you,” Boris asked, worried.

“What can they prove against me? They have nothing on me,” Xedo said confidently. The group settled in the living room. Bendy and Boris sat on the cushioned chairs and the foxes on the couch. Wiston brought Xedo a cup of hot tea.

“Unless they find us here.” Bendy frowned. “I think you get in trouble for letting wanted criminals stay at your house.”

Xedo snorted. “Young man, I know criminals, and you two are the furthest things from ‘criminal’ I have ever met. You two should be heroes, but due to your enemies and the nature of your quest, you must stay anonymous for now.”

Bendy snickered and shook his head. The fox was something else. “Pfft! When we don’t have to be so ‘secret agent’ about it, you have my permission to make us heroes,” Bendy joked. Xedo’s smile made him realize that the fox took him seriously.

Uh-oh. He better do something about that bef-A knock at the door cut off his thought. Everyone turned to look at it. Shrugging, Wiston got up to answer it. Bendy and Boris went around the corner, into the kitchen, to hide. It was probably Alice, back from work.

They heard a female voice. She sounded determined. “Is this Mr. Xedo Tiptail’s home?”

“Depends who’s asking,” Wiston replied.

“My name is Holly May. I’m here to see Bendy and Boris,” she stated. Boris yipped in surprise, and it sounded like Wiston banged into something. Maybe he'd slipped.

“What!” Wiston barked.

Xedo quickly went to the door. “What’s all this about?” he demanded.

“Sir, when you met with me today, you yourself admitted that I most likely lost my job because I helped them,” she explained. “I deserve a face-to-face meeting.”

Bendy felt his gut twist with guilt.
“What makes you think we know where they are?” Wiston demanded. There was a long silence after
that.

Well,” she said slowly. “There was that yip just now.” The foxes scrambled to make an excuse, but
the woman didn’t give them a chance. “And there’s the fact that the newspapers reported sighting
those boys in an area near here a few days ago. And then to top that off, today you show up with a
message from them. It doesn’t seem like a coincidence.”

Holy hell! Was this dame a cop or something? ‘Got nothin’ on you’, Bendy’s tail spike! She'd hit the
nail on the head!

“Bendy, what do we do?” Boris whispered. Bendy was too stunned to answer. He shrugged and
held up a finger for Boris to stay quiet. The click of heels in the hall had Bendy freeze. A tall woman
entered the living room. She was wearing low heels, a knee length skirt, and a simple blouse. Her
light hair was loose, wavy and brushed her shoulders. Her large light eyes scanned the room, before
snapping on the boys. Bendy remembered the little beauty mark in the corner of her mouth. This was
the girl that had helped them back at the college a lifetime ago.

She folded her arms in front of her and gave them a sharp stare. “Hello boys. I got some questions.”
Bendy heard Boris gulp behind him.

Bendy had a couple of escape plans run through his head. The problem was that they had left all
their gear in another room, and Bendy doubted they’d be able to come back for anything. If they
scrammed now, the cops would be all over this place, and Xedo’s creditably would be out the door
with them.

Holly’s next words stopped his thoughts instantly. “Do you have proof that Wilson was innocent?”

“Oh?” Bendy mumbled intelligently. His face drooped to show the shock he felt.

Holly unfolded her arms. “I’m not here to call the cops on you.” Her eyes softened a little. “I just
want to know if what you are claiming through Xedo here,” she nodded at the fox still stunned in the
doorway, “is real.”

Bendy blinked. At the mention of his name, Xedo appeared to reclaim himself. “Ah, well, I think we
should all have a seat then.” The fox pulled his brother along and kicked the door shut. “Would you
like anything to drink? Tea, soda pop, water?”

Holly took a seat. “I’m fine, thank you.” After recovering from his shock, Bendy noticed the tension
in her body. Her arms were held close to her body, and her hands were firmly clasped together in her
lap. Her eyes were raised, studying each of them.

Bendy elbowed Boris and gave him a silent glance at the girl. Boris raised a brow in question. Bendy
gave him a half smile and a little nod. Boris’ ears perked in surprise before his eyes softened and a
little smile came to his muzzle. Bendy had to fight the urge to roll his eyes. This wolf was so trusting.
One little gesture of permission from Bendy, and suddenly he was everyone’s best friend. What was
he going to do with this pup? Boris nodded, meaning he understood. The wolf pup went into the
living room and sat on the couch across from Holly. Bendy joined him and sat back, relaxing and
resting his foot on his knee.

“So, what can we do for you, Miss?” Bendy asked with a half-smile.

Holly took a deep breath, her face relaxing a little. “I want to know about Wilson Wiseton. Mr. Xedo
mentioned him in the article he published yesterday. I want to know what really happened to him.”
Boris brows knit together. “Did you know him?”

Holly shook her head. “Sadly no, but for some time I’ve admired his work. I had just joined the ancient history program at Yen University when he was accused of murder. To put my intentions here simply, if you can prove to me that what you’re doing here is real, I want to help you.”

Again, everyone was surprised. Xedo spoke up from the kitchen. “Are you sure that is wise young lady? What we are doing here is quite dangerous.” He came in with three cups of tea. Boris and Wiston took one, and he sat with the third. “Not only are we under threat of being arrested, socially scorned and having our names going down in history as the terrible criminals, but all of our lives are a stake here.” Bendy felt his gut clench in guilt. Had he really dragged all these people into this? Everyone who had been in and out of this apartment these last few days was in danger.

Holly look surprised for a moment. For a moment she considered what Xedo had said, but then a slow smile formed on her face. “Well...since I lost my job helping a certain pair of brothers, I would say that I’m already invested in this.” Holly leaned forward, giving them all a determined look. “And I refuse to fear the actions of the criminal.”

Bendy’s eyes widened. And now her too! What was he doing? He was doing the exact opposite of what Wilson had warned him to do in the first place, that’s what! Just asking for directions was roping in innocent people. Would Holly be able to handle guys like the Cupbros or thugs like at the casino? Bendy sure didn’t think so.

“However, I don’t want you to feel like that was your fault.”

That had Bendy come up short again. Who was this dame? How was she reading his mind! His face hadn’t given anything away except his surprise, he was sure of it! He glanced at Boris and did see a hint of guilt in the wolf’s eyes. Boris looked to him with equal shock.

Holly’s started to play with her fingers, still looking at Bendy and Boris. “I made the decision to help you two. I am the only person who is responsible that decision. Just like I am the only person responsible for my decision to come to you now. I just want to know if I made a good decision.”

“You are a very responsible young lady.” Xedo sounded impressed. “I can assure you that you have made the right decision here. There are certain events I have left out of my article for the public’s sake and ours.”

Bendy swallowed. He guessed he did owe her one. He just hoped that he was making the right choice here too. “Alright. We’ll tell you as much as you want, but it’s a secret, obviously.” He sat forward and rested a hand on his foot.

The girl nodded in response to Bendy. Then she turned to Xedo. “If you don’t mind me asking, wouldn’t it be more effective to try and spread the news and gain more support? With even this first article, you’ve gotten many people’s attention. People would be willing to help all of you.”

Xedo adjusted his glasses and set down his mug. “What you read yesterday was an article on ink illness, on how Dr. Oddswell and Wilson were trying to find a cure and how the boys were sent by Wilson to the doctor to help with the illness.” He laced his fingers together and gave the dame a smile. “If I am ever able to print an article again, you will read about how Wilson discovered that this isn’t the first time our world has faced this cursed disease and the existence of a machine that is able to cure the illness. This is what Wilson was after. This is our goal,” he explained. “What I won’t have in that article is that this is what the boys are searching for, and they are the only ones that have a chance of finding it.” Xedo chuckled and rolled his eyes. “If you don’t mind the cliché, they are the chosen ones.”
Something about Holly’s countenance started to change. Her eyes were a bit wider, eager. “How do you know this? Do you have records? Could I see them?” The edges of her lips pulled back, creating smile creases in her cheeks.

Boris and Bendy shared a look. Bendy raised a brow. He thought Xedo was going a little overboard. Calling them ‘chosen ones’ was too much. Still, he couldn’t back out now. Bendy waved a hand and gestured for Boris to go ahead. The wolf reached into his pocket and pulled out the map. He unfolded it, and showed it to Holly. Bendy got up and grabbed his side bag to pull out the page they translated from Wilson. He held it up so she could see it too.

The girl’s attention was now completely on the two pages in front of her. She gently touched the edge of the journal page, scanning it. She frowned at the map. “What’s this one supposed to be?”

“It’s a map I got from an angel,” Boris explained with his tail wagging.

“It’s supposed to show us where the machine pieces are,” Bendy said. “But it’s been a bit tricky.”

“An angel?” Holly took the map from Boris, staring at it intensely. She glanced at Bendy. “An angel gave a demon a…?” she looked at the paper again, “map?” She touched the beauty mark beside her lip, her brow furrowing. “If that’s true, then it must be of magical origin. If it’s that special, it can’t just be from the Upper.” She snapped her fingers. “Could it be from the Sanctuary?”

Her expression grew hard. “So, you’re telling me an angel gave you this?” There was more than a little skepticism in her expression.

Boris ears dropped, and his large eyes widened. Bendy scowled. Was it really so unbelievable? Was this another demon thing? Boris ducked his head and flushed. “Yeah,” he mumbled. “She was really bright. I couldn’t really look at her. She was warm and smelled like spring and rain and reminded me of sunshine. Her voice was super strong too, like trumpets. She wanted to help me.” Bendy put a hand on his shoulder.

“So yeah, he got it from an angel,” Bendy stated. “And we can both see it, but it doesn’t seem like anyone else can.”

Her expression had turned to surprise again when she saw Boris’ face, and she looked a little guilty. “It’s just highly unusual. Angels don’t give out favors normally. What you’re talking about is very rare. Seeing an angel outside the Upper is unusual.” She sighed, giving Boris back the map. Her eyes went back to the journal page. “This, however, looks like it’s written in ancient Micco.”

“Micco?” Xedo asked and pulled out his little notebook and pen. “Do you know anything about this?” Bendy pursed his lips. Why did that sound familiar?

Holly nodded. “Micco is one of the races that existed during the Angel and Demon War. It’s uncertain exactly how, but they were wiped out somewhere around that time. Before, during, after, the historical records aren’t very clear.” Xedo hummed and wrote something down.

“So, what do you think?” Bendy asked. “This the proof you were looking for?”

Holly continued to study the page. “It’s a start.” She looked up at Bendy. “Where did you get this?”

Bendy grimaced from the memory. He could never forget how he got that page. Wilson’s broken body flashed through his mind before he could completely push it away. “Wilson gave it to me.” He looked at the floor. “Along with his dying wishes.” This time he felt Boris’ hand on his shoulder.

The smile dropped from Holly’s face, and she slowly handed the page back to Bendy. “I’m sorry.”
Bendy shrugged. “It’s not like I asked for any of this.” He took the page and stared at it. “We tried to translate it, but it came out about as useful as the map--so barely useful at all.”

Holly blinked. “I can translate it. It will take some work, since Micco wasn’t my emphasis in school, but I have the right resources to take a good swing at it.”

“Really?” Boris asked in hopeful surprise. His ears perked and his tail up. “Can you fix the map too?”

Holly looked at the map ruefully. “Do you mean fix it as in ‘have other people see it’? Because I have no clue as to why other people wouldn’t be able to see it.” She rubbed her beauty mark again. “But I can try and do some research and see what I find.”

“No, no.” Boris waved his hand. “We need it to show street signs and modern things.”

Bendy nodded. “It changes depending on where we are and where the part is, but it seems extremely outdated. You know magic, so can’t you add a symbol to make it, I don’t know, name a city block?”

She frowned in confusion. “Magic? You mean runes?”

“Yeah.” Bendy stepped up next to her and pointed to the bottom corner. “There are three lines of symbols here.”

Holly snorted. “Well, I can’t see anything, so you’ll have to write them out for me.”

“Sure.” Bendy turned to Xedo. “Let me use your notebook.” The fox handed the book and pen over to the demon. Bendy carefully copied the strange symbols down, and when he was done he ripped out the page and gave it to the girl.

“Hmmm. Protection, Immortality, Sight, Location, Direction.” She glanced at the map, her expression less skeptical than before. “Most likely there’s also some sort of invisibility rune.” She looked at the symbols Bendy had written again. “And... I don’t recognize this one.” She tapped her finger on it.

“And what does that all mean?” Bendy asked with a raised brow.

“The protection rune keeps anyone from destroying the map. Immortality keeps time from decaying it. Sight...is sort of like...you can’t hide what you're using the map to find. Whether it’s hidden inside or under something, this rune it makes the location of what you’re looking for exact.” Holly sat back. “And location and direction are pretty much self-explanatory. They tell you where to go.”

“Sounds simple enough.” Bendy shrugged. “So, how do we make it so we can use modern landmarks and streets? All we see are fields, forests, and rivers that don’t exist anymore.”

Holly stared at the runes. “I think I can figure something out for you, but it’s going to take time. You see, I have to be careful about what type of rune," she tapped the symbols on the paper, "that I add here. Runes affect each other. I could ruin one of the ones already being used if I choose the wrong. Also, if I add a rune here, you might lose something important that the map is showing you now. I don’t know if you would be able to get that back later, especially since this map is so old.”

She gave a soft laugh. “Honestly, if the circumstances were different, I would seriously argue for you to stick this in a museum. These runes are about as old as that journal, maybe even older. In other words, they also date back to the Micco civilization.”

“As long as that machine is still around somewhere, that’s all I really care about,” Bendy admitted
honestly. He didn’t have time to worry about how old things were.

“Thank you for helping us,” Boris said with his puppy eyes in full force.

Holly blushed. “No need to thank me. I just want to clear Professor Wiseton’s name, and I honestly find this work fascinating.”

“To each their own,” Xedo said wisely. “Still, you do us a great service. How long do you think it will take to finish with the map and journal?”

Holly went back to holding her chin, finger rubbing her beauty mark. “It depends on which you want me to do first. I would need to test out how the runes react together before I try them on the map. It could be a couple hours, or a couple weeks. As for the journal, I think I would take a day or two if I can get back into the Yen Library.”

“The map,” the brothers said together.

“We need to get that next machine piece as soon as possible,” Boris said determinedly.

“Next machine piece? Now that you mention it, how does a machine come into all of this? You said it had the power to cure this disease. Does that mean that ink illness is related to magic somehow?”

Holly’s questions shot out of her mouth, rapid fire.

The boys shared a long sober look. Bendy turned back to her. “We don’t know.”

Holly pressed her lips together. “Next machine piece,” she repeated. "That means you have one then? Have you seen any runes on it?"

She received an uncomfortable silence and conflicted looks. Bendy bit his lip. He wasn’t sure he should tell her. Red was beaten because she knew about him and Boris. Bendy didn’t want to imagine what would happen to anyone that knew about the machine pieces. Someone had almost gotten away with the doll back at the casino, and there might be other people like the Voodoo Queen out there, who would kill to have it.

“No runes,” Boris said. Bendy gave him a sharp look. Boris ears dropped, and his brows raised in surprise.

Their guest took in the exchange quietly. “I understand.” She looked a bit disappointed. "This is very sensitive information right now, and you don’t know me.” Bendy blinked in surprise at her reasonable attitude.

Holly stood up, folding the piece of paper Bendy had written the runes on and putting it in her skirt pocket. “I’ll work on these runes and be back.” She paused. “However, at some point, if you come to trust me, I would like to see your machine part.”

Bendy blinked again and gave himself a moment before answering. If she was able to fix the map, it would save them a lot of time and headaches. He wasn’t sure that gave her the trust to see the doll. “We’ll see,” he said and stood also. “Thank you for talking to us and not calling the cops miss.” He winked.

Boris stood up too. “Yeah! You’re the bees’ knees if you can get our map working!”

Holly gave them a shy smile. “I’ll try my best.” She turned to Xedo. “Thank you for having me. And I apologize for barging into your home. I didn’t see any other way to convince you to let me talk to them, but it was still rude.”
Xedo chuckled and stood up. He offered her his hand. “No need. You have some impressive nerve. Not anyone would go chasing down a man to find wanted murderers.”

“We’re not murderers!” Bendy frowned. Boris chuckled behind him.

“And all for the sake to discover the truth about someone you respect. I admire that. If you ever want to be a journalist, I think you could be in the top bracket easy.” Xedo smiled.

Holly’s smile widened. “Thank you for the compliment. I’m afraid I find living people far too difficult to deal with sometimes.” She cleared her throat. “Anyhow. I should be going. Whether or not I figure this out, I’ll contact Xedo by tomorrow with an update.”

Wiston showed her to the door. As soon as it closed everyone let out a sigh.

“You really think we can trust her?” Wiston asked.

Bendy shrugged. “Whelp. If the cops are at the door in the next fifteen minutes or so, we’ll have our answer.”

“That’s not funny bro,” Boris grumbled.

“Wasn’t meant to be,” Bendy retorted and flopped onto the couch.

Chapter End Notes

Hooooo boy, a lot happened this chapter. It made me happy how Xedo was able to print that article even though they fired him. He always seems to have a good backup plan. By the way, I sorta am helping with the birthday surprise. I know Tap is enjoying it so far, and I hope all ya'll like it too.

Once again, there weren’t any fabulous typo puns (Geez, Tap, taking away all my fun :D), so I thought I would mention something funny that happened to us this week. We had decided to go an eat out for fun, and we happened to see this on the ledge next to us.

Tap's fiance noticed it first. It was hilarious because he was like, "Ben-dy C.T.O." We
got all confused until he pointed out, and he laughed. "There's no other way you can read that."

Anyways, I thought that was cool. Have a good week!

Tap and Mercowe out!
Welcome to the Mouse's House

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Who was that really famous mouse again?

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello! Happy Birthday Inky Mystery!
It's already a year old?! o.O When did that happen?!
To celebrate we get to finally meet the mouse! You excited? Boris sure is!
I want to thank all you wonderful people that take time to comment. You are all so fantastic! You make me so happy! ^.^
And for those that haven't seen yet, we added a bonus story called Inky Extras it's all added things to the Inky Mystery world! Holly’s journal about what is going on in Toon Town while the boys are out questing, 'what if' chapters of how things could have gone differently, side characters to show a new perspective, lore bits and bobs and more!
We've just started on it, but we'll continue to add to it as the story continues. It should be fun! :3 Especially for those of you that want more. XD
Anyway, I blabbed enough. Enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy walked into the living room with a cup of breakfast coffee. The cops had never come back, looking for Xedo, and Bendy was getting a bit stir crazy sitting in the apartment, now that they had been there for days. He noticed something out of the corner of his eye, something sticking out of Boris’ pack. He pulled out a folded-up flyer. It was for the circus. That’s right. Mickey Mouse was rolling into town today. How long had it been since they went outside? Too long.

Bendy went back to the kitchen with the flyer. “Hey Boris, wanna go to the circus?” Bendy put the flyer on the table. Boris’ head snapped up. His mouth was full of cereal. His eyes were the size of saucers and his tail was going a mile a minute. Bendy chuckled, the wolf was practically vibrating with excitement.

He swallowed, opened his grin to speak, and then suddenly froze. The smile dropped into a frown. “Wait. Is it okay? Everything is crazy right now,” Boris asked. Bendy’s brow flew up in surprise. He hadn’t expected Boris to be sensible. Bendy smiled. That was great!

“I think we should be fine. The circus is setting up in a busy spot. We’ll just disappear in the crowd. No one would think we would go there after all.” Bendy shrugged. Boris’ ears perked again. He was blushing. He really wanted to go, even if he had some doubt. It was so cute that Bendy almost rolled his eyes.

“O-okay then! I’ll get ready!” Boris was out of the kitchen in a beat and pulling out a toothbrush and some soap from his pack. Bendy bit his lip to stop from laughing. The door to the bathroom shut.
Bendy sat down at the table and finished his coffee.

“That was nice of you,” Alice said. “He seems really excited.”

Bendy shrugged. “He’s a huge fan of Mickey Mouse. He was always watching that mouse on the telly back when we had one.”

Alice hummed with a gentle smile. “You’re a good brother.”

Bendy flushed. “Yeah, well…”

“Are you really sure you’ll be okay? Aren’t those men that are hunting you in town too?” Xedo asked.

“If they can find us in the crowd that's going to be at that opening parade, they deserve a shot at us,” Bendy huffed. “I’m not going to stay here because of those mooks or the cops.”

Xedo smirked and nodded in understanding.

“So, you’re moving out tomorrow, Alice?” Bendy asked. She looked up from her bowl of fruit.

“Yes! I found a comfortable apartment near Betty’s place.” Alice smiled.

“You won’t be lonely or nothing?” Bendy asked as he grabbed a slice of toast and smeared jelly over it.

“No. Betty is wonderful company, and I’ve dropped by the house a few times in the past few days. Grandmother Gopher is a delight to get to know,” Alice said.

“You’ve been running errands for her?” Xedo asked with a raised ear.

“Yes. I have been dropping off some medicine to a few families,” Alice explained. “And buying groceries.”

“That wolf there hasn’t been a problem, has he?” Bendy glanced over at her and took a bite of his toast.

“Nothing I’m not used to.” Alice rolled her eyes. Bendy hummed.

“If he ever becomes a problem, let me know,” Bendy said.

“I can take care of myself.” Alice raised her brows and frowned.

“I know, but I owe you, so let me deal with something for ya.” Bendy brushed some crumbs off his cheek.

“I’d rather you not be a bully.” Alice smirked.


Boris suddenly burst from the bathroom and appeared next to Bendy. “C’mon! We’re going to miss the welcome parade!” He hooked Bendy’s arm and flew through the living room and toward the door.

“Woah!” Bendy choked on his last bite of toast with wide eyes.
“Good bye boys!” Xedo called.

“See ya!” Wiston called.

“Have a fun time!” Alice called as the front door slammed shut.

The circus was as packed as Bendy suspected. The Mouse himself was marching in the parade with an army of little musical bunnies. They were cute kids with their small instruments and flags and such. There was a mass of entertainers, jugglers, clowns, acrobats, strong men, and so on and so on. Bendy smiled as he watched and folded his arm, proud that he was able to bring Boris here. The wolf had stars around him, he was so excited. Everyone seemed to be having a great time with the show…well, except a grumpy cat a little way off from Boris, but Bendy didn’t pay her any mind.

The show was bright and full of fun and energy. It wasn’t exactly Bendy’s kinda gig, but Boris was couldn’t get enough of it. Families and couples oooed and ahhed over the performances, the dancing, the singing, and the line of tricks. It was at least a couple hours before the main attraction wound down and the crowds started heading to game booths and food stands. Boris stuck around until all the performers disappeared. Bendy noted where the mouse with the round ears went before the two of them followed the crowd.

Boris was in full fan geek out. “Gee, did you see the elephants! And when the acrobat flipped off and landed in it’s back with her hands! And when Mickey sang with the bunnies kids, and they did little flips! And-and-”

Bendy smiled and just enjoyed the moment. He spotted a guy that looked like a security guard. He hoped these guys didn’t have something like a list of the local wanted or whatever. Bendy approached the tall man.

“Excuse me sir,” Bendy asked. The guy looked down with a raised brow.

“Hello, little fella. What can I do for ya? Did you lose your parents?” The mook even had the nerve to lean down to talk to him. Hands on his knees. Bendy had to hold back every impulse to deck the bimbo and go off on him.

“No, man. I was wondering if people could meet the stars.” Bendy reined in his anger, forced on an only slightly pained smile, and said, “See my brother is a huge fan and this was the first time he’s ever gotten to see it all in person. My bro has been having a rough last couple of days, and I really want to do something special for him.” The mook nodded in understanding with that smile that people give to kids when they’re being cute. Bendy gritted his teeth and went on. “So, I was hoping to we could meet Mickey Mouse, if it were possible.”

The guard smiled. “Of course! Mr. Mouse loves meeting fans. I’m sure he’d be thrilled.”

Bendy smiled, proud of himself for several reasons.

“Hey, bro!” Bendy waved the wolf over. Boris bound over, practically vibrating with happiness.

“Wanna meet the mouse himself?”

Boris froze mid hop. His mouth dropped open. “Really!” he squealed.

“Yep,” Bendy said. “Bet you could get an autograph.”

Bendy thought that if Boris’ tail went any faster it would fly off.
“Follow me, kids,” the mook said with a smile. Bendy cracked his knuckles, but Boris’ innocent grin stopped him. The guy led them behind the tents to a building the circus was using. It turned out to be apartments. The fella led them to the back and knocked on a door.

“Hey, Mick! Ya got some excited fans that would love to meet ya!” he said. Bendy could hear voices on the other side. Their escort opened the door and turned to them. “Go on in. He’ll be happy to see ya.”

“Thanks, man,” Bendy said.

“Name’s Jeff, kid, and I’m glad I could help.” Jeff smiled and walked away with a wave. Bendy did everything in his power not to get annoyed. He hadn’t corrected the guy. He hadn’t wanted them to lose the chance to meet the mouse for Boris’ sake. He could deal with it. He’d punch a wall later.

Bendy shrugged off his frustration and went to head in, but Boris was frozen stiff. Suddenly, all his excitement had changed to nervousness. Bendy smirked. “You okay, bro?”

“Be-Bendy! I’m real-really gonna meet him! Mr. Mickey Mouse is on the other side of that door! Oh, stars! Oh, stars!” Boris was truly vibrating now. His face was blushing, and his ears were down. Bendy had to bite his lip to stop from laughing. Instead, he reached into his pocket, pulled out a piece of paper and pushed it toward Boris.

“You’ll do great. It’s not every day that you get to meet your idol. C’mon.” Bendy had to drag the shell-shocked Boris into the room.

“Oh, boy!” Mickey said as he wiped the sweat from his face with a towel. “That was quite the show, you guys.” He was in simple pants and a tank top, his big round ears standing out on the top of his head. A smile and warm flush on his face made him appear friendly.

The room was really basic. There were two chairs, one couch, three doorways connected with the main room. There was a kitchen off to the side with wide round dining table.

Bendy glanced at the nervous wolf and gave him a nudge. “M-Mr. Mickey?” Boris stammered out. Boris was shaking, sweating, and blushing. Oh man, that was funny. Mickey looked over to them curiously.

“I-I’ve b-been…a-always a f-fan of y-you, ever s-since I w-w-was small-l,” Boris gulped holding the paper up with both hands, “And I-I was wond-dering if, uh, i-i-if…”

Bendy decided to help his brother out. He casually pointed at Boris with his thumb. “He wants your autograph.”

Mickey smiled and put down the towel. He walked over to them and reached for the paper. “Sure thing, kid! What’s your name?”

Boris scratched the back of his head, getting some control of himself. “B-b-bb-boris!” he was able to get out. Bendy smiled and stuffed his hands in his pockets.

“So, you two liked the show?” Mickey asked conversationally as he signed his signature.

Boris geeked again. “Heck yeah, we did!” he gushed with his clenched and raised to his chin.

“Eh, it was ok,” Bendy admitted with a tiny shrug. In his opinion it needs more hot dames. Even if it was a family place, there could be more girls. Nothing wrong with that. “What got you into singing in the first place?”
Mickey handed the paper back to Boris and smiled gently. “Many things got me into singing, but my big brother Ozzy was the first and best reason ever.” He crossed his arms and looked down. “He used to come up with such cute songs and sing ‘em to me when we where kids!” Mickey chuckled. “He would say I’m better, but I disagree.” The mouse’s eyes became a bit teary.

Boris gave a silent gasp. “M-Mr. Mickey! Are you alright?”

Bendy raised his brows in surprise. He hadn’t expected that.

Mickey quickly reached up to brush away a tear and smiled. “Nah! I’m ok, kid! Just missing some good old days.” He seemed a bit embarrassed. Bendy frowned in understanding and curiosity. Wishing for the past could be a painful thing. Bendy glanced over to Boris. The wolf had that worried look on his face.

Bendy was just about to speak up when one of those bunny kids walked into the room. He was leading an older rabbit by the hand. The kid was cute and fluffy with a little button nose and dark eyes. The older rabbit though, was a mess. One side of his shirt was untucked and only half buttoned. His ears were disheveled and droopy along with his fur. He had very dark shadows under his glassy eyes. He seemed…checked out, like he wasn’t really in the room mentally or emotionally. Just an empty shell. Bendy furrowed his brow. He looked familiar.

“Uncle Mickey!” the kid chirped in a high-pitched voice. “Uncle Goofy and I are going shopping, and we’re taking papa with us. You need anything?”

Mickey turned around to face them and patted the kid on the head. “Just be safe, and take care of your father for me, ok?”

“Oh!” The bunny stuck out his tongue and grinned. He seemed very proud of himself. How old was his? Couldn’t be that old. He was performing with Mickey at what? Like seven years old or something--suddenly Bendy felt like he got punched in the gut.

“UGH!” Bendy nearly doubled over and choked. What the hell! Now? Why now! Bendy next cough tasted like ink. How was it this fast? He grabbed Boris’ sleeve.

“Ah, ghu!” Bendy swallowed. This was terrible. He opened his eyes to see the rabbits watching. The kid’s eyes were as big as Boris’, full of worry. The other rabbit looked horrified and shaken. Bendy turned away and coughed again.

“DONALD! Take Ozzy and his kid away please!” Mickey called as he helped Boris get Bendy into a back washroom. There was a bucket that Bendy grabbed immediately. The pain had already flared to a terrible burning. Boris helped Bendy out of his shirt once he was done with the bucket. The wolf then turned and was fumbling in Bendy’s pack for the pills.

“What’s going on here?” There was a hoarse quack from the living room.

“AAAAHH!” Bendy shrieked as the pain became too much. His thoughts were erased by the ink and fire running through his system with every beat of his heart.
“Not now, Donald!” Mickey shouted out of the room. Mickey helped Boris give Bendy the pills, and then offered Boris a damp towel. Bendy went back to the bucket and coughed up more ink. The pain lacing through every fiber of his being. He was shaking as he finished coughing up the last mouth full of the black liquid.

Finally, it seemed to be easing. If scarcely bearable was ‘easing’ that is. Bendy wasn’t sure if it was the pills or if it was just a faster attack than normal. He sat back and found himself leaning against Boris. The wolf was supporting him, helping him stay upright with his arms around Bendy’s back. Bendy grit his teeth and clenched the front of Boris’ shirt in his hand. He still felt hot, he was sure there were tears still running down his face. It was hard to tell with the ink. “Boris,” he gasped and swallowed. He ignored the sore burning in his throat. “Boris I’m s-sor-

“Shh,” Boris nuzzled the top of Bendy's head. He was such a good brother. Bendy shut his eyes and focused on breathing and Boris’ heartbeat for a few moments. The pain left, little by little. Bendy felt exhausted. He laid down. Boris stuck by his side and held his hand. Boris cleaned off any leftover ink, and Bendy relaxed.

“I’m sorry I ruined your first impression Boris,” Bendy apologized.

Boris blinked in surprise, then he laughed, his ears were back. “Haha, you’re so silly Bendy! As if I care about that right now.” Boris gave Bendy a small nuzzle. Bendy frowned. He should care. That should be his biggest worry. He was just a kid. He shouldn’t have to be looking at Bendy like this. He should be geeking out and laughing and being a lighthearted, happy-go-lucky kid.

Bendy had screwed it all up. Oh well, there really wasn’t anything he could do about it, not until they got the machine going.

Boris was exhausted and relieved. Bendy would be okay for now. That had been scary. Then again, the last couple of times Bendy had an attack had been really stressful. He seemed to be getting worse. Boris really hoped the map would show them the next machine piece soon.

He heard footsteps behind him and remembered that The Mickey Mouse was here. Mickey had gone to put Bendy's and his own shirt in the wash. They had gotten ink on them. Boris got up and turned. Boris did the best he could to smile and not show how exhausted he was with worry. He didn’t know how well he did. “Thanks for everything, Mr. Mickey. I don’t know how--” Mickey hugged Boris, cutting off his train of thought. “Eek!” Boris squeaked in surprise.

“Hehe, looks like you didn’t need my help to ruin things for ya, bud,” he teased. Boris wanted to just crawl under a rock and never come out.

Boris pulled back, but kept his hands on Boris’ shoulders. He had a gentle, sad light of compassion in his eyes. Boris was still too shocked from the hug. Boris opened his muzzle to try and say something. “BARK!”

Mickey blinked in surprise. Boris was mortified. He heard Bendy chuckle behind him. “Hehe, looks like you didn’t need my help to ruin things for ya, bud,” he teased. Boris wanted to just crawl under a rock and never come out.

Mickey pulled back and gestured out into the hall. “Boris, can we talk over here for a moment?”

“Oh? Um…s-sure!” Boris flushed and did his best to pull himself together. Mickey was even nicer than he had appeared on TV.
He followed the mouse out to the living room. The rabbits from before were gone. He hoped that older rabbit was okay. Bendy’s attack seemed to really bother him. Mickey took a seat on the couch and patted the spot next to him. Boris couldn’t help his tail wagging. Mickey was the best. So talented, kind, smart, this was so berries!

“Sit down, please,” Mickey asked.

Boris realized he was just staring with his tail going a mile a minute. “O-ok,” Boris said shyly. He sat and looked ahead so he wasn’t staring anymore. His ear twitched nervously. He was sitting with Mickey!

Boris was so distracted with his excitement that he didn’t really notice the troubled look Mickey was giving the floor. Before the mouse could speak, Goofy walked in. “Sorry, Mick. I seems to forgot how to open the washin’ machine for your tank top,” Goofy said apologetically.

Mickey sighed. “For the last time, you just press the big button on the far left.”

Goofy nodded and left. Mickey smiled and looked over at Boris. “Heh, he’s not the brightest, but he has a heart of gold.” Mickey still looked down though.

“O-oh! I-I don’t doubt it! Hehe!” Boris grinned.

“Anyway, I wanted to ask…do you…” Mickey frowned like he wasn’t sure how to continue.

“Say Mick,” Goofy called from the laundry room. “Why don’t cha gimme yur pants as well?”

Boris looked toward the doorway in surprise. Mickey blush and scowled. “We have guests, Goofy!” Mickey growled.

“Oh!” Goofy called back. There was a long moment of silence. “Hello, guests!” Goofy greeted cheerfully, still from the other room. Boris could imagine the big grin on the friendly face.

“Pfft hehehe,” Boris chuckled at seeing Mickey’s embarrassed look. “Hi, Mr. Goofy,” the wolf answered.

“So,” Mickey began again after a moment, “Like I was saying, do you have other family members besides you brother?”

Boris blinked and frowned a little. “No, he’s the only family for me.” That seemed to depress the mouse more. His shoulders dropped.

“And do you have a job?” Mickey asked.


“Oh! Great!” Mickey instantly perked up. He turned and smiled at Boris. “We sure use lots of gadgets in our acts and with someone like you in our team we’ll save lots of time!” He put a hand on Boris’ shoulder. “Don’t worry about payment. We’ll compromise!”

“Uh! M-m-me!” Boris jerked in surprise. Mickey wanted to hire him! Let him join the circus! The Fantasia Circus! HIM! It would be a dream come true. He’d be around all the people he looked up to. He would fix their equipment and watch the shows and travel the world. He would help bring smiles and laughter to visitors. It would be amazing…except…
Bendy.

“I’m s-so sorry, but I’m gonna have to decline!” Boris said. He couldn’t ever leave Bendy, not his big brother. They had a quest to complete, a mission to cure the ink illness. He couldn’t go off and have fun. “We, my brother and I, have a quest to—ah! Something!” Boris nearly slipped up. No one else was supposed to know they were going after the Ink Machine parts! That would have been bad! Still, Boris had to watch the smile drop off Mickey’s face into a disappointed frown.

He couldn’t believe that he had to say no to Mickey! This was the worst day ever! Boris silently lamented. Seeing the disappointment in Mickey’s eyes, Boris almost broke and told him, but…what if he thought they were nuts! Mickey wouldn’t be able to see the map, and he wouldn’t be able to handle the idea of Mickey thinking that of him! It would be the second worst thing to ever happen! He didn’t want to see the judgmental expression on his face like all those people in New Orleans.

“Hey Boris, you ready to go?” Bendy called. Boris guessed that the laundry was done and that Bendy was getting ready to leave.

So, instead of looking sad, Boris smiled brightly. There wasn’t a reason for him to be sad after all. He got to meet Mickey and his idol even helped him! “Oh, thanks for everything Mr. Mickey! You really helped us a lot today. I hope we’ll meet again soon,” Boris said. Bendy appeared in the doorway, fully dressed and ready to go.

“C’mon Boris,” Bendy said walking to the door.

“Okay!” Boris stood. “Thanks again!” Boris waved as he went to catch up to Bendy.

“Y-your welcome, b-but,” Mickey stood up. He half raised a hand to stop the young wolf, but he was already gone. He’d had such a bright smile. Did he not realize that he would lose his brother soon? Was he in denial? He was going to be alone.

And Mickey just let him walk away knowing that.

Mickey growled and threw his fist back, slamming it into the wall with a loud bam!

He had just met the kid, but it was obvious that he was kind, compassionate, and genuine. He had comforted his sibling through the attack with gentle actions. Mickey was sure he was very mature for his age, but he was still naive. The light in his eyes, the childish excitement…He wasn’t ready to lose his family. He was in some level of denial. That was clear. Did he have anyone to turn to? Anyone to reach out to for help? Could Mickey do anything to help him? Mickey lifted a hand and rubbed his arm.

Would he go silent, like Ozzy? Would the light completely die in his eyes too? Would there be anyone there to look out for him when it happened? There had to be something Mickey could do!

Donald came in after hearing Mickey hit the wall. The duck sighed and turned a knowing look on Mickey. “For the last time Mickey, you just can’t help everyone out there, no matter how hard you try,” Donald quacked. “We already have four hundred and twenty kids to watch out for.”

Mickey grimaced and turned to face his old friend. “But I just can’t--! He’s gonna be alone in this world. I want to--No! I need to be there for him!” He lifted a hand up to the duck, hoping that Donald understood.

The duck frowned. “You’re a lost cause!” he sighed and shook his head. “You can’t adopt every stray dog and save every cat stuck in a tree, Mickey. Let it go. They’re none of your business. You
just met them.” Mickey frowned. He knew Donald was just trying to look out for him. He seemed cruel, but he was right in a way. They had a lot on their plate right now with the circus and the kids. Mickey couldn’t be mad at him. They had been lifelong friends after all. Mickey knew that under all the cold crabbiness Donald cared.

Mickey suddenly jumped in realization. Ozzy had been in the room when... “Oh no! Ozzy!” Mickey threw a hand on the top of his head in shock. How could he forget that his brother had seen that! Was he okay? Did he--

“Calm down.” Donald put his feathery hands on his hips and lifted his bill. “He’s okay. He was acting kinda strange, but the kids helped him feel better, I guess.”

Mickey sighed in relief. Ozzy really didn’t need another break down. Thank heavens for the kids. They were an immense help with their father. Mickey wondered if some of them even remembered what Ozzy sounded like. How long had it been since his big brother spoke? Or even smiled? It was pathetic. Mickey was able to bring happiness to so many people…but he couldn’t get his own brother to smile. It’s like Ozzy didn’t even see him. Mickey had to admit that it hurt sometimes. When he was feeling selfish and down, he’d feel frustrated with his older brother…but then he’d remember everything Ozzy had done for him, and he knew that the rabbit loved him.

He had to support his brother through this. He had to watch out for his nieces and nephews. He had to keep going until things could get back to normal someday…or at least something close to normal.

Later, Mickey sat at the couch with a clean shirt on and a meal that he picked at. Goofy was putting his empty plate on the coffee table with a satisfied hum, and Donald was eating on his other side. He couldn’t get that kid’s face out of his head. “Do you think he’s ok?” Mickey asked his friends.

“Uh, who’s ‘he’?” Goofy asked confused.

“None of our business, Mick,” Donald said, knowing exactly who Mickey meant.

“Oh man,” Mickey fretted. “I knew I shouldn’t have let him go like that. Who knows what will happen to him.”

“Mickey no!” Donald practically whined.

“Don’t you remember how horrible my sister-in-law’s loss was?” Mickey scratched the back of his head looking downcast. “We all had each other after that, but he won’t!”

“Well, we’re not taking care of four hundred and twenty-one kids.” Donald frowned.

He wanted to help. He just didn’t know how. What could he do?

Chapter End Notes

I know the ending of this chapter was serious…but I can't help it. There were so many good typo puns in this chapter (apparently Tap has been writing at 2 in the morning more often than usual lately), and I haven't seen any in almost three weeks!

The typo theme this week was falling:

Bendy’s brow fell up in surprise. (Was he hanging upside down or something? Da-da-
da-da da-da-da-da Bat-Bends!)  

Boris hooked Bendy’s arm and fell through the living room and toward the door. (Just how is this room set up anyways?)  

The mouse’s glasses became a bit teary. (Wait, Mickey wears glasses?)  

And now...my personal favorite!  

*Mickey had gone to put Bendy and his own shirt in the wash.* (Mickey! Don't do it!)
Chapter Summary

And Bendy and Boris were having a pretty good day too...

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry!
Oh, I shouldn't say anything. I'm stressed with wedding stuff, school stuff, and oh boy this chapter! My brain is a scattered mess! Holy dogs! I'm so sorry. The ghost is sorry! ...But some of you saw this coming...at least...part of it.
TwT enjoy.

Mercowe: Geez, way to be cryptic.

As Bendy and Boris walked back to the apartment, the sun started to sink in the sky. Boris was still talking excitedly about the circus and Mickey. Bendy was tired, but happy. How long had it been since Boris was this giddy? It was nice.

“What about you, bro?” Boris asked.

“Uh?” Bendy blinked.

Boris’ brows furrowed. “You okay?”

“Yeah, yeah. Just spaced out bro,” Bendy said with a wave of his hand. “What did you ask?”

“I asked you if there’s anything you wanted to see at the circus.” Boris frowned.

Bendy pursed his lips and thought. He laced his fingers behind his head. Well, he had thought that there needed to be more hot dames. He sighed. “Man! I really miss the magician and his assistant.”

Boris frowned. “You’re just missing his assistant, bro.”

Bendy smirked. “Heh, yep! She was stunning!” Boris rolled his eyes. Bendy elbowed him. “C’mon bro, she was my childhood crush.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever.” Boris pushed him back with a laugh.

“You have your interests, and I have mine.” Bendy wiggled his eyebrows. Boris stuck his tongue out and made a face of disgust. “Just you wait. One day, you’ll be head over heels.”

“Never with you watching. You’d drive me nuts,” Boris said.
“Probably,” Bendy admitted with a chuckle.

The two walked through mostly empty lots and alleys. They’d have to pull on their disguises soon as they headed further into the city. Bendy was really getting tired of hiding his face, if he was honest. “Hey Boris, keep an eye out for anything we can get to bring home for dinner.”

“‘Kay, bro.” Boris grinned and then laughed.

“You’re still really happy,” Bendy noted.

“Of course! I got to meet my number one idol! And he hugged me!” Boris gushed. Bendy chuckled.

“Alright, it’s time we get you some chill pills,” Bendy said. “At this point, your tail is going to fall off.”

Boris snorted. They got to the end of a block when Boris paused at the window of a little bakery shop. “How about some rolls?” he suggested.

Bendy glanced at the shop. He looked to the butcher shop next door. Meat would be more expensive. He turned to the other side. It was just a candle shop. Whelp. “Okay, bro.” He reached into his side bag and pulled out some cash. They didn’t really have a bunch left. Still, they could afford food. “You go on. I don’t want to pull on the stupid disguise yet.”

“Bendy, you’ll have to put it on soon anyway,” Boris said as he took the cash. He tied a bandanna over his head and tucked his ears into it. He slipped sunglasses over his eyes.

“But that doesn’t mean I have to do it right now,” Bendy said. Boris shook his head and went into the store. Bendy went to the side of the building to wait. He stuck his hands in his pockets and looked down the street.

This part of Toon Town seemed old, a little run down too. There were weeds growing in the sidewalks, garbage in the streets, and a feeling of abandon in the old two-story brick buildings. In a way, it reminded Bendy of home, like one of these alleys could have been a spot he and Boris would nestle down to sleep in...and the butcher shop...Heh, it reminded him of that ham from forever ago.

Suddenly, hands grabbed the front of Bendy’s vest and swung him around. He slammed into the brick wall with a painful thud. Bendy barely had time to get his bearings, before he was nose-to-nose with trouble.

“Did ya miss me?” Cuphead grinned, an inch from his face. The taller man pulled Bendy up by his vest. Bendy grit his teeth, eyes wide with surprise. Cup chuckled. He lifted one of his hands and pointed a finger at Bendy’s forehead, right under his goggles. “Don’t worry, it’ll be quick and painless.” The tip of his finger started to glow. Bendy felt sweat bead down his face. He wasn’t just going to stand here and take it.

Bendy pulled back his leg, and nailed Cup where the sun-don’t-shine. The thug dropped Bendy instantly with a pained, “Oof!” His straw even jumped up and turned into an exclamation point. Bendy didn’t stick around. He turned on his heel and dashed down the alley.

“You little-!” Cup groaned, covering his injury and shaking in pain. He glared at Bendy’s retreating form. “That’s how you wanna play, huh?” he growled. Bendy saw the blue glow behind him. He pushed himself to go faster and tripped. He heard the shot go off and the blast went over his head, right between his hair.

Way too close!
The fall scraped him up and loosened his goggles. Bendy rolled over and sat up. Cuphead scowled and aimed again.

“Bendy!” Boris sprinted around the corner with Mugman right behind him. His disguise was gone. It looked like Mugs was trying to grab him.

Everything seemed to happen in an instant. Boris dashed behind Bendy. Mugs was running at them. Cup was just about to release another shot. Bendy reached for his shadows in a desperate attempt to save themselves from the blast. He had no idea if it would block it. Mugs dove for them. There was a flash of blue.

It all happened in an instant. So fast that Bendy wasn’t sure what happened.

Then Mugman collapsed, blood all over his shirt.

The deafening silence seemed last an eternity. No one moved. No one breathed. Bendy and Boris stared with wide, shocked eyes. Mugs didn’t move. The blood was beginning to pool around him.

Was he…

Cup had his hands on either side of his head. Eyes huge, mouth dropped open in absolute horror. He fell to his knees, looking at his brother. Bendy swallowed and looked from Mugs' still form to Cups' horrified one.

Cups dashed over to Mugman. “M-M-Mugs?” Cup croaked in a quiet, trembling voice. Cuphead lifted a shaking hand to his brother’s face. The hole in his chest was bleeding profusely, Mugs coughed up blood, tears streamed down his face. His eyes were unfocused. “H-h-hang in there, let me ju-just take you to—” Mugs eyes slid shut. “Hey! HEY!” Cup panicked. He was shaking so hard, he was rattling. “No! Open your eyes! Open them now!” He gently shook Mugs shoulder. The younger brother didn’t respond.

Cup carefully lifted Mugs, blood staining his shirt and jacket. He turned his back to them and took a step away. Bendy felt sick to his stomach. Boris shifted behind him. “S-sir,” Boris said quietly. “P-please let us help—”

“Hehe,” Cup chuckled and Bendy’s sick feeling turned to dread. “HaHAhahAHa!” Cups' laughter sounded deranged. Bendy’s eyes widened. Had this guy snapped? “D-did I say your death was gonna be quick and painless?” Cup asked. He was still shaking, holding his brother. He looked at them from over his shoulder. He was grinning, his wide eyes glowing red with madness. “My bad! I meant that I’m gonna enjoy tearing you limb from limb.”

The shadows around Cup withered in excitement and blood lust. Bendy’s dread turned to terror, and he grabbed Boris’ wrist, standing up. “Let’s get out of here, Boris! He’s going crazy!” Bendy pulled Boris toward the opposite end of the alley. Neither of them took their eyes off Cup as he laughed again.

Boris resisted a little. “B-but what about—”

“He’ll help him out on his own.” Bendy cut him off and pulled him a little harder. They shouldn’t hesitate here. “It’s not our problem,” Bendy said quickly. They got to the end of the alley and started to run. Bendy’s goggles slid into his eyes, and he yanked them off impatiently. He kept a tight grip on Boris’ hand as they ran.

He couldn’t believe that he had just seen that. What the hell were the shadows reacting to? Was it that guys craziness? His bloodlust? Bendy wasn’t sure. He had seen people angry before, but he’d
never seen the shadows react to someone else like that.

Well, except that other demon guy. What did it mean? Was he a demon? No, that wasn’t it. Did Cup just lose his mind in front of them? Did the shadows feed off madness? Rage? Bendy didn’t know. AND THAT BLAST! That was meant for them! That was supposed to be him and Boris bleeding on the street! He knew saving that guy back in New Orleans had been a mistake! He knew that this would happen! He knew it. He knew it! And he still let it happen! That guy could have killed Boris! That goon had nearly killed him! If Bendy hadn’t tripped back there, Boris would have run out on a very different scene. They probably would have shot him right after.

Bendy suddenly noticed the wolf pup was sniffling behind him. He went one more block and found a secluded spot to stop and look at Boris. The wolf was weeping huge tears and sniffing a stuffed nose. Bendy scowled, great!

“For the love of...why are you crying, Boris? They both deserve to die!” Bendy barked. Those two had tried to kill them after all. They were only people on the planet that seemed to have a chance at getting the machine together. A lot of people were relying on them. Though, in the end that didn’t matter to Bendy as much as Boris. Bendy couldn’t forgive them for trying to kill his brother. To hell with everything that happened before. Bendy didn’t care. They both deserved it for going after Boris. Bendy didn’t want to imagine what it would have been like if that blast had hit Boris.

That only seemed to make Boris cry harder, though. Boris tried to brush the tears away and look at Bendy, but more came. “B-but they didn’t seem all that bad! Something or someone is making them do this! Remember Bendy? Mugs told us that!” he sobbed. “I-I didn’t want--and that poor guy, he ju-just shot h-his own brother!”

Bendy frowned, his brows furrowed. Bendy’s feelings aside, this wasn’t helping Boris. The wolf was infinitely more sympathetic than Bendy. Forget his anger, Bendy needed to do something to help cheer the wolf pup up. Boris crouched down, practically sitting in front of Bendy, tears still running down his face, and ears pinned back.

Bendy took a breath and smoothed out his features. He gave the wolf a sad little smile. “Aww, it’s ok Boris. It’ll be alright.” Bendy petted his head and ears like he did when Boris had been smaller. “They’re both strong goofs. They’ll be ok.” And hopefully they’ll never come after us again. Bendy was fine never seeing either of them. Boris sniffled and wiped his nose with the back of his hand. His tears slowed a little, and he nodded.

Bendy pinched Boris’ damp cheeks and nuzzled him. “Now, where’s my happy widdle wolfy?”

Boris mumbled. It sounded funny with Bendy’s hands pinching his cheeks.

“I can’t hear you!” Bendy nuzzled him again.

“Here I am!” Boris said louder.

“There’s my widdle wolfy!” Bendy smiled. It seemed to calm him down. At least now they could get back to the apartment without anyone noticing them. “We better cover up and slip back to Xedo’s place.” Boris nodded and sniffled one more time.

“I lost the glasses at the bakery,” Boris said. Bendy pursed his lips thoughtfully. He gave Boris his glasses. He was sure the hood would be enough to hide him.

The rest of the walk back was nerve wracking and quiet. Every person on the street had Bendy tense. He was ready for the cup guy to pop up again at any second and go nuts. Twilight came by
the time they reached the building. The boys made it up to Xedo’s apartment, completely exhausted. Bendy let out a sigh and opened the door. The two dragged themselves to the living room only to make eye contact with the last people they ever thought would be there.

Bendy froze mid-step and Boris bumped into him. They seemed just as surprised to see the boys.

“Well, well, well. Look who showed up to the party.” Detective Rachel Ringtail said with a sharp toothed smile.

“Hello Bendy, Boris. Nice to see you again.” Detective Joan Featherworth took a drink from her cup of tea.

“Uh.” Bendy was so thrown off that he didn’t know what to do. Why were they here? How did they find them? What was going on! Couldn’t they get a break today! He just wanted to take Boris to the circus for Pete’s sake!

Bendy looked up to Boris. The question was obvious. Run?

“I suggest you come quietly,” Featherworth said like she was reading Bendy’s mind. “You don’t want to get everyone here in more trouble than they already are, do you?” Bendy looked up and around the room. Wiston looked horrified. Xedo had his arms crossed and watched the room coolly. He didn’t seem pleased at all. Alice was here, watching with wide, worried eyes, and to his surprise Holly was there too. She was hugging a couple books in her arms as she watched the exchange.

If they ran, what would happen to everyone here? “What are you doing here?” Bendy asked. The detectives were already on their feet. The tension in air was so thick you could cut it with a knife.

“You are under arrest. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and may be used against you,” Featherworth said and pulled out a pair of handcuffs.

“Isn’t it ‘will be used against you?’” Boris asked nervously, scooting back a step.

“This is a special situation. Please cooperate, and we will explain,” Ringtail said also pulling out handcuffs.

“Must you put them in handcuffs?” Xedo suddenly asked.

“I’m sorry Mr. Tiptail. There are some things we can’t overlook.” Featherworth glanced over at him. “But I believe if you cooperate with us, we will have enough evidence to clear the boys and the doctor.”

“Woah,” Bendy said, confused, raising a hand in a stopping motion. “Wait a minute, what’s going on here?”

“The detectives came to me for more information on their case,” Xedo explained. “It seems more is going on than we had originally thought.”

Ringtail sighed and nodded. “It’s all became a big mess, and you boys are the scapegoats.”

“What!” Bendy growled.

“We aren’t going to let that happen,” Featherworth said.

“Wait, I’m confused. What’s going on?” Boris asked nervously.

“We have some dirty politician and some dirty cops. That’s what,” Ringtail growled and bared her
teeth. She seemed to fluff up in aggravation.

Featherworth sighed. “They’ve been making our case impossible: denying us access to information and resources, trying to curb our personal opinions, not to mention the attempts on Oddswell—”

“Someone been trying to kill Dr. Oddswell!” Xedo demanded. Holly dropped a book, eyes wide, and the two of them exchanged a look. Featherworth twitched.

“Actually, plural. Multiple people. We’ve been able to stop them at every turn, but it’s not good,” Ringtail said and rolled her eyes. “The lizard is excited about it because he thinks it means he’s close to something the bad guys are trying to protect.”

“Yeah, he’s a weird guy,” Featherworth admitted with a shake of her head.

“Do you have any idea who’s trying to kill him?” Holly suddenly cut in.

“Two were other prisoners, but one was an officer. The chief is very concerned,” Featherworth said.

“And you want to bring my brother and I into that?” Bendy asked flatly. Yeah, no, he had enough. Bendy grabbed Boris’ wrist and booked it to the door.

Just as Bendy was opening it, a book hit the door with a loud bang, slamming it shut. There was a shriek from one of the girls. Then Bendy was pinned to the floor on his stomach.

“H-hey! Be gentle with them! They don’t deserve this!” Alice said.

“Wait, Alice,” Xedo said.

“But! They aren’t guilty! We all know that! Everyone here knows these two haven’t killed anyone! Why aren’t we doing anything?” Alice demanded.

“It’s the justice system. We can’t interfere without getting arrested ourselves,” Xedo explained.

“This isn’t justice!” Alice huffed. “This makes a sham of justice! It’s completely nonsensical, preposterous! I can’t just stand by while innocent--”

“Alice, don’t get in trouble because of us!” Boris said next to Bendy. Bendy’s hands were already behind his back. How did this dame move so fast? Featherworth locked the handcuffs and helped him up by his arm. Ringtail was doing the same to Boris.

“He is right.” Xedo had a hand on the woman’s shoulder. She looked angry. Xedo seemed to be restraining her with his hand. Next to them, Holly looked uncomfortable, conflicted. “There is an order to these things, my dear. You have to be patient.”

Featherworth pushed Bendy back into the living room.

“Didn’t know you ladies were so rough.” Bendy smirked.

“Save it. We’ve heard it all.” Ringtail frowned.

“But it’s not right!” Alice exclaimed as she watched.

“He’s right, miss. If these boys are innocent, and we are sure they are, then they’ll get out in no time,” Ringtail said. “It’s just getting the paperwork done and all.” Featherworth frowned at her partner.
Featherworth turned as Holly touched her lightly on the shoulder. “If you stick them in that jail, they’re going to be in serious danger. It’s not safe there.” Her lips were pressed together tightly.

The bird detective raised a brow. “We’ll keep them safe, just like Oddswell. You can trust us.”

Holly raised a brow. “Just the two of you? Against the mob? That’s comforting.”

That got everyone’s attention. “Who said anything about the mob?” Wiston asked with one ear up. Bendy felt this was getting from bad to worse.

Holly’s face scrunched up. “How do I say this? The commissioner is the one sending the hit men. He’s taking bribes from the mob, although I don’t know why they would want Oddswell dead. Maybe they were hired to do it.” Holly shrugged. “I overhead the commissioner threatening Fairfax when their first attempt failed. He’s in on it too. He’s the busboy between the mob and the commissioner.”

“Fairfax did what!?” Xedo gasped. The fox’s tail fluffed up in agitation. “I knew he could be a crooked fellow, but this! This is outrageous! And the commissioner!”

“It seems things are working in a bigger system than we had originally feared,” Featherworth said coolly.

“It’s not only that,” Holly continued, “I saw Fairfax passing bribes to the mayor too.”

“What!” Xedo barked. “Is there no just authority left?”

The young ex-student folded her arms. “Well, I’ve been looking for the last month, but I’ve yet to find one.”

“Excuse you,” Ringtail snipped and frowned.

Bendy snorted at that. It wasn’t like he hadn’t dealt with bad cops and cruel authority figures before. Sure, it had never been a mayor, but how different could that be? And if the mob was anything like the guys they had been facing recently, Bendy believed they could get by. They had so far.

“Detective,” Featherworth called. Ringtail and Featherworth shared a serious look. Bendy was sure they were having their own silent conversation. “How do you know that?” Featherworth asked Holly, all signs of her usual gentleness and calm gone.

Holly swallowed when she saw Featherworth’s expression, trying to smile, but failing as pure nervousness started to overcome her expression. “I’ve...been following Jeremy Fairfax for the past few weeks. Pretty much ever since he wrote that article on me.”

“That was a month and a half ago,” Xedo stated. Holly cleared her throat. Bendy raised a brow and looked over to her judgmentally.

She shrugged in response to his look. “I didn’t have anything else to lose...And it was an honest accident when I overheard that they were trying to kill Oddswell. After that, I couldn’t very well just walk away and pretend I didn’t hear anything.” Her brow furrowed. “And Fairfax is fishy. If anyone bothered to look into him, they’d realize that quickly.” She looked at Ringtail and Featherworth. “Also, I forgot to mention that I think that Fairfax’s connection to the mob is the Toon Times editor in chief, Robert Sykes. His brother, Bill Sykes, has been involved with shady things for a long time. I figured that out just by looking up his public company records. Some of his best competitors just up and disappeared, out of nowhere. I’ve also seen him meeting with people who are known mob affiliates.”
Xedo sat down and his face fell into his hands. Wiston looked between Holly and Xedo with large eyes, like a lost kid.

“We know about the Sykes brothers! The commish is in with the Sykes brothers!?” Ringtail threw her hands up in aggravation, her tail lashing back and forth.

“And you’re arresting these boys instead!” Alice scowled.

“There’s no proof,” Featherworth said. “We haven’t been able to pin anything on the Sykes brothers. The chief has been on them for years...but this news about the commissioner and mayor. This is a new concern. A very troubling one.”

The raccoon sneered. “Like we should be surprised. I never liked that pompous egotistical--”

“Ringtail, please,” Featherworth cut off her partner. Bendy had a sinking feeling about all of this.

“It’s like all the dirt disappears! It’s gotten ridiculous!” Ringtail swished her tail. Boris shifted uncomfortably in his cuffs. “Like magic!”

Holly rolled her eyes. “What do you expect when the commissioner is their lapdog?”

“You’re right. If it’s him, then we have a lead,” Featherworth said and narrowed her eyes. “But something still doesn’t sit right with me. I’ve been suspicious that real magic has been involved lately.”

Bendy narrowed his eyes at the crow. Then something clicked in his mind, like a puzzle piece falling into place. “You didn’t lose more evidence, did you Feathers?”

The crow grimaced.

“Not like the journal?” Bendy continued to press with narrowed eyes.

“That had evidence of a break in. This time it all was just gone!” Ringtail huffed.

“What’s all gone?” Boris asked, tilting his head.

The raccoon looked pained, like she’d bit into glass. “Well...in light of the news you’ve shared with us and finding out that ink illness is actually a real disease...”

“What?” Xedo asked lifting his head.

“Oddswell’s research. It’s all vanished without a trace,” Featherworth admitted and turned sharp eyes on Xedo. “And that’s sensitive information.”

“O-of course,” Xedo said startled.

“What!” Bendy and Boris shouted.

“What, like the whole stinking library? That observatory was full of stuff!” Bendy said. That was ridiculous. Where could everything have gone?

“Joan, it’s time we go.” Ringtail pointed to the clock on Xedo’s coffee table.

Alice took a step forward. “Considering the situation, I don’t think you should take Bendy and Boris.”
Bendy gave her a half smile. Look at that, the dame was really sticking up for him.

“I’m sorry. We can’t do anything else but take them,” Featherworth said. Boris gulped.

“What if I testify as a witness? I heard the commissioner plan murder!” Holly called after them as they headed towards the door.

“We would still have to take them until the court date,” Featherworth explained patiently. “I’m sorry.”

“Besides, we’ll need more than a single witness if we want to do anything against that guy.” Ringtail frowned.

“What if I found you more evidence?” Holly persisted.

“Do it without breaking the law, and you’re good!” Ringtail gave her a thumbs up.

“Rachel, no!” Featherworth chastised her partner and turned back to Holly. “We appreciate your enthusiasm, but this is best left to us. This is dangerous work. Be ready to give your testimony and be patient.”

Alice huffed. Featherworth took Bendy’s arm again as she turned and directed him toward the door. Boris and Ringtail were behind them. Bendy considered breaking away, but he couldn’t leave Boris. The handcuffs also would make escaping difficult. He thought about using his shadows, but that didn’t seem like the best idea either. The cuff locks were too fine for him to figure out quickly, and he’d never had the control for that kind of delicate work with his Talent. It seemed that he would be going with the officers.

He looked back at the worried faces in the group. Xedo was frowning, and Wiston twitched next to him. Alice watched them go, anger lighting up her pretty features. Holly still looked conflicted, but she had a determination in her eyes that was starting to become familiar. He gave them all a half smile. “Don’t worry. This will be easier than a giant snake. It’ll be a vacation! Just...make sure we can come back to work soon.” He winked and then was led out the door. Had that made any sense? He didn’t know.

Bendy and Boris were brought back out to the street and helped into a car. The detectives jumped in, and they headed to the jail. Boris fidgeted nervously. The cuffs made sitting awkward and uncomfortable.

“It’ll be okay, Boris,” Bendy said.

“Yeah,” Boris whispered quietly, his ears pinned down.

“We’ve faced much scarier things,” Bendy said.

Boris shook his head. “It’s not that.”

“What?”

“I’m worried how long this is going to take,” Boris admitted. “What if...” He glanced at the two women upfront. Bendy was sure they were listening in on them. Boris swallowed. “What if something comes up, and we can’t go? Will our chance disappear?”

Bendy pursed his lips. “I don’t know, bro. I hope not. I know everyone will do all they can to get us out of this as fast as possible.” Boris nodded.
It wasn’t long before they stopped. “Alright,” Ringtail said as she hopped out and opened the backdoor. “Show time, boys.”

The detectives led them into the building, and as soon as the other cops spotted them, they started cheering and clapping. Bendy blinked in surprise. People started sticking their heads out of rooms and around corners to see what the commotion was about, only to join in. When the detectives started walking them through that Bendy finally understood what was going on.

“Nice job, Featherworth!”

“Ringtail! How’d you do it? Where’d you find ‘em?”

“Congratulations, detectives!”

“Told you the girls would nab them! Pay up!”

Featherworth frowned. “Is that a bet?”

“No, ma’am!” two officers said quickly. Ringtail laughed as the crow narrowed her eyes at them.

“Think they get promoted?”

“They’ll at least get a medal for this one.”

Bendy scowled. He was being shown off like a trophy from a hunting trip. Worse, Boris was in the same boat. Could he really trust these dames to keep their promises? Sounded like they were going to have a pretty good ride catching the ‘infamous Bbros’ and ‘saving the public’ or whatever.

The boys were lead through the cheering crowd as many patted the detectives on the back and congratulated the women. They headed toward a plain looking hallway. A burley dog suddenly stepped in Featherworth’s way. “Chief.” The bird nodded.

“Well done, detectives. Get them processed and into interrogation rooms,” he gruffed.

“Yes, sir!” Ringtail said. The boys were taken into a back room. They had their things taken, including Bendy’s bag and everything in their pockets. Ringtail raised a brow at Bendy’s pills, but said nothing.

“I’m gonna need those,” Bendy said.

“What are they?” Ringtail asked.

“...Pain meds.” Bendy reluctantly answered.

“Are they from Oddswell?”

Bendy took a deep breath and nodded. Ringtail raised a brow. She glanced around at the other officers. “Don’t know. We’ll see,” she said. The moment all others were looking away, the detective slipped the bottle into her pocket and winked at the demon.

And of course, Bendy and Boris watched where the map went with sharp eyes. It was like seeing two starving dogs watching a steak.

“You ladies aren’t putting our stuff in evidence, are you?” Bendy asked nervously.

“Considering recent events, we have special circumstances to work with--so no,” Featherworth said.
Featherworth took their prints and put them into the records. They had their rights read to them. Then Ringtail started on a list of what they’d been accused: suspects in murder, arson, theft, breaking and entering, evasion of police, ect, ect. Bendy tuned them out quickly.

Next, he had to stand in front of the stupid mugshot height chart and have his picture taken. He gave the cheetah that was taking the picture a dirty look when he angled the camera down. He turned to the side with the same scowl before he was brought out into the hall. Boris joined him in a minute.

“Okay, boys. Now, we have some questions for you. Then you can turn in for the night, before you head out,” Ringtail said, pointing to Boris. The detectives directed them back down another hall.

“Head out?” the wolf’s ears fell.

“What are you talking about?” Bendy demanded. He stopped in his tracks and looked at the raccoon behind him.

The woman raised a brow at Bendy. “Well, he’s a minor. He’ll be in juvie until your cases get looked at by the courts.”

“Juvie!” Bendy barked, his heart dropping to his feet. “You mean, you’re separating us!”

Featherworth frowned. “It’ll be safer for him.”

“None of this is safe, you crazy broad! You think you can just use us as stepping stones in your cussing careers? You think I’ll just stand around quietly while you take Boris!” Bendy grit his teeth, and his eyes flashed red.

“Bendy!” Boris gasped.

“Calm down,” Featherworth ordered. “I know you’ve had a bad history with police, but I promise you, we are on your side. This is the best we can do without people getting suspicious!”

“Taking Boris away isn’t the best of anything!” Bendy snapped. They couldn’t!

“Alright! I’ve had enough of you mouthing off to my partner!” Rachel’s hand landed on top of Bendy’s head with a thump!

“Ow!” Bendy winced and ducked. Ringtail’s curled her fingers and used her claws to stop Bendy from pulling away.

“Listen here. I have had it up to here with your whining.” Ringtail turned Bendy’s head to face her. Her teeth were bared, and her eyes were narrowed. She got an inch from his nose. He had to angle his head back. “We are risking our careers to help save your hides! Your neck isn’t the only one on the line here. Everyone back in that apartment, that crazy doctor, and us, we are all at risk here. They’ve been trying to kill us too, ya brat! Open your eyes, shrimp! The whole world doesn’t revolve around you! We’ll will make sure the pup is safe! You try anything, and I mean anything, and we won’t be able to keep that promise! You both will be taken out of our hands. Hear me? We’ll get both of you to your release dates or stars help me--!”

“Thank you, Rachel,” Featherworth cut her off before her voice got too loud. Both Rachel and Bendy glared at each other for another moment before she stepped back. “Now then. Let’s have a chat. It’s getting late, and I’m sure we’re all getting tired,” Featherworth said in her calmest tone. Ringtail turned with Boris at a near door, while Featherworth kept Bendy walking.

Bendy looked back at Boris. Boris’ eyes were huge with fear and worry. “Bendy,” his voice shook.
“It’ll be alright,” Bendy said. He couldn’t even convince himself. His voice was shaking just as bad as Boris’. Boris nodded, not looking any less scared. The door opened. Would this be it for a while? “It’ll be alright, bro!” Bendy called out with fiery determination.

They would see each other again.

Bendy would make sure of it.

Chapter End Notes

Tap: I'm sorry...
Mercowe: No, you're not.
Tap: Yes, I am!
Mercowe: No. You're not.
Tap: Yeah. I'm not...But I should be!!!
*Mercowe looks at the readers.* This is how our conversations usually go when bad things happen in the chapter.
Hello! Hello!
How are you today? My week has been insane, and there is no sign of it calming down. Oh, well. Mercowe and my honey are keeping me sane...ish...Okay, it's hard to keep a ghost sane. It's not their fault. *Sigh* WHELP IGNORING LIFE--

Many of you were upset with the detectives for what happened last chapter. A lot happened. I'd say things have now calmed down...but...heh. ^^ I'm excited to show you what's next, so please enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

To say the news of the B Brothers capture was a big deal was the understatement of a lifetime. The city was in an uproar. Celebration, speculations, gossip, and more all came flooding the public places. Alice grew fed up with it only halfway through the day. Several people in Betty’s store gave their opinions on the ordeal, and Alice had to restrain herself a few times. She was a bit surprised by her hot-tempered reaction. Usually, she was more forgiving then this.

But after knowing everything those two had gone through, she couldn’t help feeling a bit defensive on their behalf. Also, having her miracle involved made her feel responsible to some degree. If she’d had her halo last night, she might have been able to do something to help the boys escape...But that would have crossed a line that angel’s weren’t supposed to break while on the Surface! She had never felt so helpless! It was all a terrible mess.

Still, it made her angry that those dull-witted people believed that knowing a couple of simple facts made them social experts on the boys motivations...Okay, so maybe they did know more about their legal system than Alice, but that didn’t make their judgement fair. Anyway, they thought they had somehow discovered the perfect answer in their shallow knowledge. Without looking any deeper for another explanation, they closed off their minds to further inquiry, instead, bickering over what they perceived to be righteous condemnation.

They’d said Bendy and Boris should be locked up for good, forced to spill mob secrets, or even executed! Alice was horrified with how barbaric the Surface was! How dare they! They didn’t know anything and some of them wanted those boys dead! What kind of people would think such a thing!

Betty noticed her agitation and had her go out on a few more breaks than normal to cool off. They
talked, and Betty assured her that the boys wouldn’t get executed. Betty was a good person, a little odd, but good. Alice couldn’t understand her need for dazzling outfits that showed off far too much of her body— in Alice’s opinion. She had a good heart and a strong character, though. She didn’t let herself get pushed around… unless it was her boyfriend. She was a pushover for the guy. She admitted it, but he didn’t mistreat her or anything. He was just prone to bad decisions sometimes, and she was one of the people that always had to bail him out.

Then she started ask about Bendy and Boris. How long Alice had known them? Were they always getting into trouble? What was her relationship with them? Alice was embarrassed to say, she hardly knew them. She didn’t know what they were to her. Were they her charges? She wasn’t a guardian angel… Acquaintances? But Bendy had gotten into fights to protect her and her coworkers. She had lost her job to help them, so didn’t that make her relationship with them a little closer than that? Were they friends? That didn’t feel quite right either for some reason… At least she knew that they had the biggest knack for getting into trouble. Seriously, every single time she met Bendy, he had been getting into something. After Betty went back to the front, Alice had a moment to herself to reflect. She sat on a box of books and stared at the floor.

Now that she thought about it, it was kinda odd that she had become so invested in the boys and their quest. At least— so quickly. Helping the Surface in a time of crisis was normal for an angel, but becoming as emotionally attached as Alice was, wasn’t. Like a doctor, most angels kept their work with the Surface at an emotional distance so that they would act rationally. To say Alice was any kind of rational since last night would be obtuse. But why? What was it about those two that got to her?

Maybe it was because they kinda reminded Alice of herself when she had been back in the Upper. They were underdogs, at the bottom rung, fighting to prove themselves. They had the same determination and had a lot at risk. Alice frowned. Well, she wasn’t risking her life like Bendy, but she was risking her position and family. If she didn’t come home successful, with her wings, she wouldn’t be able to return to the Sanctuary where all her family lived. She wouldn’t ever serve as an archangel like her parents, siblings, and grandmama did. She would have to live outside, in the Upper or on the Surface if she chose to. She’d probably never see her family again if that happened. Well, maybe grandmama and Mary would visit occasionally, but the others would be far too busy. And her failure would be a huge embarrassment to the family. Fail and fall were just a letter apart, after all. There had never been an angel in line to be an archangel, with one of The Ancient Gifts, that had failed their Act of Charity.

Alice dropped her chin on the palm of her hand with a sigh. Then again, there had never been an angel in the line to be an archangel who’d had a faulty Gift either. She was a wonder of firsts for the angel community.

She shook her head. What was she doing? She hadn’t failed! She could still get this act done! Her hand went to the little pouch she had hidden in her shirt. She still had two miracles left, after all! She was just feeling low because that sweet wolf Boris was locked away in a cell, and because she’d had to leave the casino before she found her halo. With it this far away, she could barely make a spark with her powers. She could write out the strings of angel runes to perform her work, but that would take forever.

It seemed like everything was falling apart right now, but that was fine. Alice stood up with a renewed fire in her eyes. Bendy and Boris would get out. She would get her halo. If they could get their machine parts, then she could get her Act of Charity. It was just a matter of time and hard work. Alice nodded to herself. Xedo, Wiston, Grandma Gopher, and that Holly girl were all determined to free those boys. She had to have faith in them…since she had practically no idea how the legal system worked down here.
Alice snorted and went back into the shop to continue working. She and Betty were able to stay busy for the rest of the day. People were in and out, picking up supplies for camping, food, tourism, and a whole slew of other things. One gent was even getting an eye patch for some reason. No idea why, he had two perfectly good working eyes. It seemed to slowly be getting busier as the day went on. A lot of gentlemen stopped by the shop to talk to them. After working at the bar for so long, Alice didn’t have to use her imagination much to see their game. Many of them were charming sweet talkers. Betty and Alice professionally curbed all their advances without too much of a fuss.

After that, they were able to end the work day. They closed the doors and were taking stock when Betty rushed up to her with a click of her heels. “Alice, can I ask a favor of you?” Betty asked.

“Sure!” Alice smiled.

“There’s a bar three blocks over. Could you run down there and ask if we can have a case of bottled water from them? We’re out and the next shipment is gonna take a while. Pay Ramy, and he shouldn’t give ya any trouble. We’ve traded goodies often enough. He’s a good fella.” Betty returned her smile and slipped a few bills in Alice’s hand.

“No problem, Betty. Water-ver you wish is my command,” Alice said, heading for the back door with a wink. “I’ll be back in a few.”

Alice didn’t take long to get to the bar. Upon walking in, Alice decided it was a shady establishment. She could feel the cruelty, greed, and hate. It was also fairly busy. One would think the atmosphere would deter people... The Surface was weird. She promised herself that she would get out quickly, then made her way to the bar counter.

She heard a wolf whistle and turned to give the man a dirty look. He and his buddies laughed and called her over. She flipped her hair over her shoulder and walked the length of the bar with a ram behind it.

“Excuse me,” she said. The ram looked up from the drinks he was making. “Are you Ramy?” she asked. He rolled his eyes and nodded. Alice pursed her lips but continued to speak regardless. The sooner she was done here, the sooner she could leave. “Betty sent me for a case of bottled water.”

Ramy’s attitude completely changed at the mention of Betty’s name. “Oh! Are you the new girl she hired? Of course! Sure!” Ramy blinked and looked down at the drinks in front of him. “It’s busy, right now. If you want, you can wait while I finish up or you can go get it yourself.”

“Don’t let me trouble you. I can get it.” Alice shook her head. She didn’t want to stick around here for long.

“Alright miss...”

“Alice.”

“Miss Alice.” Ramy nodded and gave her a long look. “Sorry. It’s been a long day. The stairs to the left lead down to the ceiler. The water is there at the foot of stairs.”

Alice smiled. He wasn’t so bad, and Alice understood a long day behind a bar counter. “No worries. I get it. Bar work can really take a shot at you sometimes. Thank you for the help.” She put the cash on the counter and headed to the door he pointed out.

Alice opened the door that led to the dim basement. She stepped carefully down, aware that her heels weren’t the most practical things for stairs. As she got closer to the bottom, she heard voices. She guessed that more people worked here and was determined to stay out of their way.
“Look, here rat. I am only gonna offa dis once. Ya try anythin’ wi’ me an’ I’ll string ya up.”

Alice frowned. Sounded like an argument. She reached the bottom and looked around for the water.

“Hey, I’m a mouse, pal. And how do I know you’re being real here? I mean, you just happen to have the one thing he wants, and all he gotta do is get that little dame out of the bird cage?”

“An’ da doc. I wan’ ‘em both.”

Alice paused. That accent…It sounded familiar.

“And you’ll just give him this...whatchamacallit?”


Alice peeked around the box and spotted a tall, lanky rat, or mouse?...and Avery. What was he doing here?

“I don’t get it. What’s the big deal with a doll?” the mouse asked shaking his head.

Avery scoffed and shrugged. “Don’ ask me. It’s a bit odd, but I can’t believe de nonsense everyone pinned on dis ding. Sounds too fairytale ta me.”

“Yeah? What they saying?” The mouse smirked.

Avery huffed. “It’s some sorta magic ding dat’s suppose ta cure dat ink illness.”

The mouse raised his brows, looking skeptical. “It’s a doll.”

“Don’ look at me. Dat’s what I’m sayin’.” Avery swung his hand out with his palm up to show he agreed. “Dey’re makin’ it sound more important dan de doc an’ my girl an’ awl de hard work dey’ve done. It’s awl crazy ta me.”

Avery! Did you have no faith!

“So, you have no hang ups trading it away for that nurse and docs freedom?” the mouse asked.

“Nah,” Avery said. “Dey’ll be sensible an’ make a cure once deir free. Anyone gets in my way, I deal wit’ dem.”

What! No, no, no! That thing was the real deal! Alice was sure of it! The map was powerful, even if it was inaccurate. The items it revealed had to be things that could cure ink illness. That’s how miracles worked. It provided a way. The map was the way. The machine pieces were the way. If the answer had been with the doctor, then it would have directed Boris that way.

The mouse shrugged. “Alright. Makes no difference to me. I’ll get paid as long as you show up with the thing.”

“Danks Mortimer,” Avery said.

Oh no! The wolf was going to betray them! He was making a huge mistake! Alice had to get to that doll before he did!

But she had no idea where it was! It could be anywhere in that huge house! She wouldn’t have a bunch of time to look for it either! Avery and the mouse-rat were parting ways. Alice flinched and quickly spun around, tip-toeing up the stairs as quietly and quickly as she could.
She went out the door and quickly walked to the exit. Ramy waved at her, looking a little confused that she didn’t have the box of water with her. She waved and smiled back, but didn’t stop to explain. She hurried to the door and rushed out, only to bump into someone. She nearly fell over, but a pair of gloved hands caught her by the shoulders and steadied her.

“Hey, cussing watch it!” a rough voice growled. She looked up to the person she had bumped into. He was tall, thin, but Alice could tell how strong he was from his grip. She blinked dumbly at the sight of a cup that was in place of his head. A striped, bent straw stuck out of his head, and he had hair(?) that nearly covered one of his large eyes. He glared down at her with dark shadows under his eyes. That wasn’t what made her freeze in terror, though. “You nearly bowled me over, you crazy broad.” There was so much anger and hate! She could feel it. Bloodlust and despair! It took her breath away. He pushed her away a bit and walked around her. A burning smell came from his gloves when he pulled away.

“I-I’m sorry!” Alice whimpered.

“Whatever. Stay out of my way!” the man growled before pocketing his hands and walking into the bar. Alice shivered and rubbed her shoulders where he had been touching her. There had been some dark things Alice had experienced on the Surface, men with evil intentions. Women had envied her, hated her. People had tried to take advantage of her. Black Hat who had threatened her.

But that…

He had practically been mad with bloodlust and despair. She had never felt anything like it. She never wanted to again!

Alice broke out into a run back toward Betty’s shop. She didn’t stop until she got through the back door and locked it behind her with shaking hands.

“Alice! What happened? You’re as pale as a ghost!” Betty came up to her with quick clicks of her heels. She lifted Alice’s chin gently. “Are you okay?”

“Be-Betty! I-I.” Alice took a breath. She didn’t have time to think about what had just happened. She had something she had to do.

“Poor thing. You must have heard the news!” Betty was suddenly giving her a tight hug.

“News?” Alice asked.

“Why, yes! I just heard myself! Some mad man attacked the jail! The cops are going nuts. He got away somehow and is running around the streets somewhere!” Betty said.

“What!” Alice gasped. “Did anyone get hurt!” What about the boys!? Had they been there? Oh stars, no! How could it get worse? Alice found herself sinking to the floor. She was overwhelmed. Her body was going numb.

“Hey, it’s okay. Shhh, it’s okay. Only a few of the coppers were hurt. No one was killed, but it was bad, I guess. At least that’s the word on the street. I think the telly is starting a report on it now,” Betty said, kneeling next to Alice. “Do you want to watch it with me? I could get you something to drink.” Betty pulled back and looked at her with understanding eyes.

Alice took a deep breath. The boys were okay. They were fine. Her heart rate calmed just a tad. Alice didn’t have time to watch the news! She had to get the doll before Avery did! For all she knew, that wolf was heading over there right now! What was she going to do? The only people that knew where that thing was were Avery, Bendy, and Boris.
Wait! That’s it! Alice shot up and raced to the phone that was in the front, under counter.

“Alice?” Betty sounded startled.

“Sorry! An emergency came up!” Alice called back to her. Alice quickly dialed the phone for the doctor’s house and tapped her fingers on the counter impatiently.

Betty walked up to the counter with a worried look in her eyes. “Alice I understand, but there’s isn’t much we can do about--“

“Hello?” an old voice asked over the phone.

“Grandma Gopher!” Alice squeaked and cut off Betty, then cleared her throat. She couldn’t sound hysterical. “Listen, something terrible has happened.”

“Oh? Who is this?”

“It’s Alice,” she said impatiently.

“Oh Alice, the nice girl that was with the boys. Yes, I heard about the jail. Simply terrible! Good thing everyone is okay. I don’t know what--“

“Listen Granny.” Alice cut her off. She didn’t have a lot of time. She’d feel bad later. “I need you to do something for me. It’s an emergency.”

“What can this old lady do?” Granny asked, her voice becoming as serious as Alice’s.

“Is Avery there?” Alice asked. Betty watched her with concern. Alice mouthed a request for Betty to grab her bag from the back. Betty raised a brow, but turned to do as requested.

“Why no. He left to run some errands for me,” Granny answered, a bit confused. “He shouldn’t be back until tonight, if you want me to give him a message.”

“Do you know where the doll is?” Alice asked, her voice shaking. Adrenaline was working its icy fingers back into her system with the stress.

“Why no, but I don’t see--“

“Okay. When he gets there, don’t let him out of your sight, and don’t let him leave again,” Alice said quickly.

“What? Why wo--“

“It’s an emergency, Grandma Gopher! I don’t have time to explain.” Alice’s voice cracked in panic. The other line went quiet. “Please! Just don’t let him leave, and don’t take your eyes off him. Trust me. I’ll be there as soon as I can!”

Betty came back with Alice’s purse in her hand. Alice smiled at her gratefully.

“What is going on Alice?” Granny asked.

“I will tell you as soon as I can. Be safe, and don’t ask Avery about this. Just stall for time until I can get there,” Alice said. She prayed the old woman would trust her. She’d known Avery longer than she’d known Alice. There was a chance she wouldn’t understand.

“Alright, Alice. I’ll do what you ask. It sounds very important, but you better be quick,” Granny
Gopher agreed. She sounded uncertain.

“Thank you, Granny!” Alice said and hung up. She took her bag from Betty.

“I got to go,” Alice said.

“Is everythi--”

“No, it isn’t, and I don’t have time right now,” Alice said, walking to the front door and unlocking it.

“Can I--”

“Sorry, Miss Boop, I’ll explain later!” Alice was out the door and down the street before Betty could say anything else. Alice waved down a cab as she speed walked.

“Where to, Miss?” the cabbie asked.

“The police station,” Alice said. She fidgeted the whole ride over. She hoped this wouldn’t take long. She hoped the boys were okay. She hoped she could beat Avery to the doll or that Granny would be able to keep him occupied until she could get there.

When they pulled up to the station, the street was a swarm of news reporters. Alice tossed the cabbie some money and didn’t bother with change. She pushed her way to the entrance. There were officers there that kept the reporters back.

“Back up! The chief will give you vultures a statement when he is good and ready!” a wolf growled.

Alice went ahead, but he stepped in her way. “Hey! What did I just say?”

“I’m not a reporter!” Alice said. “Are Detective Ringtail and…” Oh, what was her name? “Featherworth here?”

The wolf furrowed his brow.

“Please? It’s an emergency. I need to see them,” Alice said.

The wolf police officer huffed and stepped out of her way. “Yeah, they’re here.”

“Thank you.” Alice quickly went in and requested the detectives at the front desk. The place was a madhouse of papers and officers flying this way and that. The cheetah at the desk told her they were busy. Alice had to insist that it was an emergency, and that they would want to talk to her now. The cat looked at her skeptically. Alice continued to press until he got up and went to fetch them.

She stood there with her toe tapping. She glanced at the clock. It’d been a quarter of an hour since she overheard Avery. It felt like an eternity before the crow showed up. Her feathered brows furrowed in confusion, but her beak frowned in apparent annoyance. The cheetah was right behind her.

“Hello. What can I do for you?” Detective Featherworth asked.

“I have to talk to Bendy and Boris,” Alice said. Both cops’ brows flew up. The cheetah snorted. “It’s an emergency.”

“I’m sorry miss, but they aren’t getting visitors right now,” Featherworth said.
“Lives depend on me talking to them. I only need a minute,” Alice said. “You can’t keep them from seeing people.”

Featherworth narrowed her sharp eyes on Alice. It was like she was trying to see through the angel. Alice lifted her chin in challenge. If this bird thought Alice would just turn around and leave, she had another thing coming. “Come with me.” Alice followed the officer out of the busy area and into a side hall. “Explain to me why you need to see them?”

Alice grit her teeth. “I don’t have time to.”

“If lives are at stake, I think you do. Is this about the jail break-in?”

“What! No!” Alice gasped and scowled. “There is something important I have to get and only Bendy and Boris know where it is. I need to ask them where it is.”

“And lives depend on it?” Featherworth asked skeptically.

“It may be tied in with ink illness. Now, can you take me to them or not?” Alice demanded.

Featherworth studied her for a moment. Alice bristled. “It’s imperative that I get this item.”

“What’s the rush?”

“Someone else is going to try to nab it!”

“Stealing it?”

“Not exactly.” Alice deflated. This was a mistake. She should have just gone to the house and turned the whole place upside down. She was wasting time! Featherworth gazed at her like she was a puzzle. She must have seen the panic in her eyes because the bird started to walk down the hall again.

“Follow,” she said. The cop opened a door and stuck her head in. “Something’s come up. I’ll be back in a few.” A muffled voice answered her. She shut the door and turned back to Alice. “You can explain more in the car. Bendy and Boris at in separate facilities. Bendy is closer. C’mon.”

Featherworth led Alice to the back of the building. They…were separated? Alice furrowed her neat brows. Was that a good or bad thing? Shouldn’t they be together if they were arrested together?

They went to a back street and got into a car. “I’ve had to park back here today since the newsies have been having a circus,” Featherworth explained. “Now, what is this item?”

“I can’t say,” Alice stated as she adjusted herself on the seat and they started driving.

“How can it help the illness?” Featherworth asked with her eyes on the road.

“It could help with getting a cure,” Alice explained carefully. “It’s our best chance, especially with the doctor gone.” She didn’t know how much she should say. Xedo hadn’t gotten the Ink Machine story out yet, and the boys’ quest was a secret. Heavens, she may have already said too much.

“We’re hoping to get that resolved next week. Anyway, someone is planning on taking it, but is not stealing it,” Featherworth said.

“Yes?” Alice answered uncertainly. Could you steal something bonded to you? Did it technically belong to Bendy and Boris? Alice wasn’t sure. “He’s going to betray us and trade it off to someone else.”
“Who?” Featherworth asked.

“I don’t know,” Alice said quickly. “All I know is that he is trading it to get the doctor and nurse free.”

“From jail? Was that what the break-in was about? But the doctor isn’t there, and they didn’t go after Red Hood. Maybe they aren’t connected then,” the crow speculated to herself. She glanced at Alice. “Who is this traitor?” Featherworth narrowed her eyes.

Alice didn’t feel like it was wise to tell her Avery’s name for some reason. “I don’t think the break-in and this are related. That happened before he set up the meeting. I overheard him making the deal. I think they wanted to try a more…legal way of letting them out.” Legal was the right word, right? Alice didn’t know, but she didn’t think Avery wanted Red to be a wanted criminal that escaped jail. They wouldn’t be able to work if they were wanted.

“Yes,” Featherworth said slowly. “But what’s his name? Why would he betray your group?”

Alice bit her lip for a moment. “Avery, the wolf. He’s Red Hood’s boyfriend.” The crow hummed. A tense silence filled the car as Featherworth took a turn onto a street that led into the hills and the outskirts of the city.

“If it’ll show us which cops are dirty, maybe we should let him take it. He shouldn’t be able to free them with this trade, so something is up. If we caught them in the making, we can nab them all. Do you know where the trade off will happen?” Featherworth asked.

Alice shook her head adamantly, “No! The item is too important to risk losing. Not even for a moment. If you want dirt, get it some other way.”

“But it might be the only way to catch those that are keeping the doc, Bendy and Boris locked up. They might be the ones that took all of our evidence.”

“No,” Alice said with conviction. She wasn’t going to let that doll disappear after everything the boys had gone through to get it. “They’re meeting at midnight at the old train station, but the item will not be there.”

They continued in silence for a time. “Why are Bendy and Boris separated anyway?” Alice asked as she watched the houses slide away. The sun was inching toward the horizon. She wouldn’t have a lot of daylight soon.

“Well, because their age differences for one reason. Boris is still a minor, so he had to go to a juvenile facility, and we figured that they would be targeted like the doctor has been, so we sent Bendy to a little-known jail out here. We think the attack on the jail was for the boys, but the assailant fled when he realized they weren’t there.”

“Have you found the guy yet?” Alice asked with wide eyes. The attacker had been looking for Bendy and Boris? So, it was as bad as she feared it would be. She scowled at the officer. She didn’t understand the Surface’s system. This person was supposed to be an agent of justice, yet she had locked up four innocents and even endangered them!

“No. We are having difficulty identifying him. For some reason everyone seems to have a different description of the attacker. The only thing we’re sure of is that they use a blast of magic,” Featherworth said. “Either way, only a few individuals know the doctor and boys locations. They should be safe until their court dates come up.”

“Court dates?” Alice asked. She hadn’t heard about this. Was the court here like hers back home or
was it as backwards as everything else here?

“Yes. We pushed for the boys’ date at court to be as soon as possible. My partner and I are sure we have enough evidence to at least prove their innocence. If everything goes smoothly, then they should be able to walk that same day,” Featherworth explained.

“When!” Alice demanded with a bubble of hope. This was the best news she had heard all day.

“Two days from now.”

They came up to a tall fence with barbed wire at the top. The officer at the gate looked in on them both before waving them through. They parked and entered the building. It seemed cold, bare, and unfriendly. The floors were concrete. The walls were painted cinder blocks. There was a desk with a thin, older man behind it. He had a thick mustache that nearly hid his mouth. His hair was grey and he had a few wrinkles and crows’ feet at his eyes. It was obvious that he smiled often. He glanced up at Alice and the detective.

“A little late for visitors,” he commented.

Featherworth shrugged. “When does work ever make visiting convenient.”

The man chuckled. “True. How are things?”

“Busy.” Featherworth frowned.

“So, I’ve heard,” the man said. “Made the paper again too.”

The crow scoff and rolled her eyes. The old man laughed at her reaction. Alice blinked at the odd interaction. “How’s the new guy?” Featherworth asked.

“The one you brought in? Quiet mostly. Been doing an awful bit of thinkin’ by himself,” he said and scratched his cheek. “Hasn’t been a problem yet, but you know how the quiet ones can be.” Alice blinked again. Uh?

“Well, hopefully her visit will help get a spark in him.” Featherworth gestured to Alice. The angel had fidgeted the whole time they had been talking. She wanted to rush, just run in and find Bendy herself, but she didn’t know what to do here or where to go.

“Right, right,” the man said and pulled out a document and a pen. “Name?”

Alice blinked at him. She glanced at the crow, who just raised a brow at her. Alice turned back to the old man. “Alice.” She glanced at his name badge. Richard.

“Address?”

“Two six nine Funtastic Drive. Apartment three,” Alice said, trying to not wring her hands.

“Have you ever committed a felony, Miss Alice?” Richard asked.

“What! No!” Alice gasp and looked to the crow in question.

“It’s just protocol for visitors,” the crow said simply.

“Are there any protective orders against you?” Richard asked.

“No.” Alice scowl. They were just wasting her time! She had to get moving! It had almost been
forty-five minutes since she had been at that bar!

“There is no warrant out for your arrest?” Richard asked. There would be if he kept Alice standing there for too long!

“No.”

“Have you ever been victimized by the inmate?” Richard asked.

“What? No, no! Can we move this along a little faster?” Alice sighed.

“One last question.” Richard lifted his pen. “What is your relation to the inmate?”

“Re-relation?” Alice stammered in confusion.

“Yes. You understand that Bendy is under protection at this time. It’s rare that we allow any visitors. Close family are usually the only ones allowed in.” Richard gave the detective a questioning look. The woman didn’t seem to react. Alice swallowed. If she gave the wrong answer, would they turn her away? Couldn’t she just say she was a friend? She also glanced at Featherworth. The bird’s eyes seemed to be sending her a warning. Alice took a deep breath before turning back to Richard. She couldn’t say she was his sister or anything. What was believable? She had to see him! It was life or death here! She couldn’t go back to the house with no clue where to look.

Richard looked at her with half lidded eyes. “Miss--”

“His girlfriend!” Alice said before she could think it through. Her eyes widened, and Richard’s brows shot up in mild surprise. There was an awkward silence before Richard broke it.

“His girlfriend?” he asked slowly.

Alice screamed internally. Oh, sweet stars above! WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS SHE THINKING!

Chapter End Notes

...And that is how you trick Alice into saying she's Bendy's girlfriend. Good job, Tap. You are my hero. Even though this next chapter is going to be intense, it's gonna be good. :D

Speaking of intense, this week was crazy for both me and Tap. I spent the first three days of this week on a retreat for my business class and hooboy, I got fried and earned tons of aching muscles. So, we've been keeping each other sane this week. Tap is such a good friend. When I got back from my retreat, she had made me dinner. It made my day!

Anyways, I didn't find any good puns in the chapter this week. Dang. *Snaps fingers* Tap's getting better! :D
Hello lovelies!
Surprise! Early chapter!
I am exhausted. School is trying to end my afterlife, and so far it's succeeding. x-x
But these chapters revive me. Anyway, Mercowe and I are going to Yellowstone Park tomorrow, so we decided to post this early and not worry about it! ^^ Enjoy!
Oh! Oh! And there's a bonus present at the end \^3^/

“Yes, I’m his girlfriend.” She smiled. “With all the news going around and everything, Bendy didn’t want people to find out. He didn’t want me in danger or slandered.” She felt a shudder go up her spine. Robert looked her up and down.

“Well, he’s a very lucky man. You’re almost as beautiful as my wife.” Richard smiled warmly. Alice reflected the smile while she withered on the inside. Stupid! Stupid! Stupid! His girlfriend! That was the best she had? What would her family think! Heavens! What would Bendy think! She couldn’t do this!

“Thank you,” she said. Richard put down the pen and lifted his hand to gesture to his left.

“Right this way, Miss Alice,” he said and stood to guide her. Featherworth followed quietly. Alice couldn’t bring herself to make eye contact with the crow now. She fought to keep the embarrassment from showing on her face. They went down several long hallways and passed guards that looked her over coldly. To her horror, she had to be patted down for weapons and her purse was checked. She nearly screamed when they found her miracle pouch. She had to remind herself a dozen times that there were runes to conceal the miracles. They looked like two marbles when the guard opened it. He gave her an odd look, but she only smiled and shrugged.

This whole escapade was going to age her a thousand years! By the time she got back to the house, she was going to look like her grandmama!

Finally! They got to a hall of cells. Many of the men on the other side of the bars watched her, the detective and Richard. Some whistled and cat called her as she passed. She was too nervous about Avery, Granny, the doll and her getting caught in a lie to even notice them. What did they do to liars? Would she be locked up for lying to them? Her eyes jumped from cell to cell looking for the demon. She had a death grip on her purse as they went to a second hall and then a third. They were so bare. No pictures, no furniture, nothing to make it feeling welcoming at all. The feelings from the
inmates was equally distressing. The place was full of regret, sorrow, anger, fear, and boredom. Alice didn’t like it one bit. The men were all wearing striped uniforms. Some were burly, some thin, some fat. Some were young. Others were old.

It wasn’t until they nearly got to the end of third hall that Alice’s eyes landed on Bendy’s small form. He was laying on his cot with his hands behind his head, staring up at the ceiling. It was strange to see him wearing the same striped uniform as the other inmates. His head looked bare without his goggles. She stopped short as the other two kept walking toward the bars.

Richard tapped the bars of his cell with a baton. “Look sharp buck-o, your little lady friend came to see ya.”

Bendy lifted his head with a scowl and a skeptical brow raised. He saw Featherworth before he saw Alice. His eyes turned icy and maybe even flashed red for a second. “Ah, so am I free, or are you here to tell me that you’re giving me back my brother? If it’s neither of those, I don’t wanna hear it featherhead. I made the deal. Leave me alone until you get results,” he snarked. He turned on his side, away from the detective. Alice could feel his anger from where she stood. His dark essence was freezing and curling out of the cage to sink into the floor, walls, and other cells. It was dreadful.

Not only would she have to pretend to be his girlfriend, she would have to do it while he was this angry! She didn’t know if she could even approach the cell with that much cold without reacting badly in some way. Wait…she had to pretend to be his girlfriend!

“I’m sorry Bendy, no. We are working on it. We’ll keep our deal.” Bendy snorted at her. Featherworth smirked. “But I’m not the one here to see you.” The demon flicked his tail, but didn’t move to turn over or say anything.

“Now, is that any way to act when your girl is here?” Richard asked, a little annoyed.

“My girl?” Bendy propped himself up on his elbow to look back at them in confusion. “What are y-”

“Hello, Bendy.” Alice quickly stepped forward and grabbed one of the bars without a second thought. The cold hit her like a brick. She really hoped the tension on her nerves wasn’t obvious in her voice. She had no idea what face she was giving Bendy. Could he see her wigging out? Did her goosebumps show? Was she shaking at all?

Bendy choked, and his eyes widened so big that Alice thought they might just fall out. “A-Alice? What in the name of the moon are you doing here!” Bendy said. He shot up from his bed and looked from Richard to Featherworth and back to Alice. “What’s goin’ on?”

“I came to talk to you,” Alice explained. She knew the worry was showing through now. “Something came up, Be--” Feathers! What would she call him if they were together? Not just his name, right? At least that’s not what happened in the few romance pictures that Alice had seen at the theater. Most couples had pet names for each other. But what was she supposed to say! She had never been with someone long enough to call them a name. Heavens, she had hardly dated! Ahhh! Her mind was blank! Bendy, Ben, BB, Bends. Okay yeah, Bends. It would have to do. “Bends.” She stumbled over the correction.

Bendy tilted his head and just stared at her. He seemed completely lost.

Richard tsked. “Your girl comes all the way out here, and you’re staring at ‘er like she’s grown a second head.” He shook his own head. “Kids these days.” He took a step back. “Anyway, you have twenty, little miss.” Featherworth followed his lead with a smirk, and the two moved back far
enough to allow something close to privacy.

“Thank you,” Alice said over her shoulder. Richard’s words seemed to snap Bendy out of his confusion a little. He approached the cell bars and leaned closer to Alice.

“Alice, what is going on? Please tell me this time,” Bendy demanded. “Why is he calling you my girl? Why are you here? Is this all just a really weird dream?” His large eyes went from her to the detective and back.

“I had to lie so I could see you,” she whispered back. “Lean closer. We need to be convincing…and it’s about the ‘you know what’.” Bendy blinked at her serious tone and hesitantly leaned a bit closer. Alice caught his hand and brought him up to the bars. She pushed aside her repulsion and focused on the warmth of his hand instead of the cold of his essence. Somehow, that seemed to help her shivering. Bendy moved to pull his hand back in surprise, but Alice laced their fingers together and brought her other hand through the bars to completely enclose his hand in both of hers. She glanced back out of the corner of her eye to make sure the guard and cop were far enough to not overhear.

When she focused on Bendy again, he was looking between their hands and her face with a small flush spreading across his cheeks, his eyes as wide as saucers. “A-Alice?” he asked, a bit flustered.

Alice grit her teeth against her own blush of embarrassment. She didn’t have time for this! Don’t think about it.

“I need to know where the doll is, Be-Bends,” she said, quietly choking on the nickname. That seemed to get him to focus again. His face became serious, and he leaned forward to whisper.

“What happened?” he asked, his tail was flicking back and forth like a predator. His eyes became piercing, but not harsh.

“It’s Avery. He’s planning to trade the doll to get the doctor and nurse free,” Alice said.


“Shh,” Alice shushed, slightly hysterical. Bendy looked at her, taken aback. His energy calmed. Alice was able to breathe again. She glanced back at the others with a strained smile before turning back to Bendy.

“Sorry,” Bendy apologized dropping his eyes to their joined hands for a long moment.

“Got quite a grip there,” Alice said. Bendy looked back up. “But before the news crushes you, hear me out. Avery doesn’t believe the machine has the cure. He thinks he’s doing the right thing.”

“That doesn’t matter!” Bendy hissed. “If we lose that doll, it’s all over.”

“I know, so I’m going to go get it before he does,” Alice said, hoping she already wasn’t too late.

“Won’t that be dangerous?” Bendy raised his brows in surprise.

“Like you said, we can’t afford to lose it,” Alice said and smiled. “Besides, I know how to take care of myself.” Bendy frowned. He didn’t seem convinced. “C’mon. I don’t have a lot of time.” Alice lifted their linked hands in front of her, like they were praying. “Trust me. I can do this.”

“Maybe I could break out of here and--” Bendy began to suggest.
“No,” Alice disagreed quickly, cutting him off with a small shake of her head. “You’ll only get into more trouble, and then, it’ll even be longer before you’re free again.”

Bendy sighed and closed his eyes a moment. His cold essence seemed a bit warmer compared to the coolness that Alice had felt back when she had helped him at the casino. She was able to relax a bit more. It was almost pleasant, like the coolness of the early morning when there was still dew on the grass. She shook off the distraction when Bendy opened his eyes again and gave her a piercing look. “Don’t do anything dangerous, okay?” Alice nodded. “Remember that room you found us in the other day?”

“That odd study?” Alice asked.

“Yeah, there’s a row of journals on the far-left bookcase. Third shelf from the bottom. It’s behind those books,” Bendy said.

“’Kay, that should be easy enough,” Alice said. Left bookcase, third shelf, behind journals. She could remember that. A thrill of excitement went through her.

She went to pull away, but Bendy didn’t let her hand go. “Hey. Be safe and...uh, thanks.” Bendy looked so serious, it surprised Alice. “You didn’t have to come here or try to do any of this.”

Alice huffed. “What kinda person would I be if I didn’t do anything? How little do you think of me?” She smirked to show that she was teasing. Bendy’s face relaxed. “Now, I better go. I don’t know how long I have before Avery will show up to try and take it,” Alice said, again praying that he hadn’t already. Alice went to pull back, but paused at the mischievous look Bendy was giving her.

Bendy glanced at their hands and then back up to her with a cocky half-smile. He gave her hand a gentle squeeze. “You’re supposed to be my girl, right? Aren’t you supposed to give me a goodbye kiss?”

Alice’s mouth made a little ‘o’ of surprise before she scoffed and rolled her eyes. “Don’t push it, buster.”

“Aw, but you’re the one that said you can’t have your cover blown,” Bendy pointed out. Alice scowled. Oh, he really could be cheeky if he wanted to. She’d almost forgotten about this side of him. He had been so focused on everything going on in the city. Even when they were all relaxing, eating dinner at Xedo’s he’d had his guard up. He only seemed to drop it because of the Warners’ teasing or when he was just focused on Boris.

Now looking at him, Alice remembered this was the part of him she’d had to deal with back at the casino. He was the smart-aleck demon that showed up every once in while to bother her with his essence and annoy her with his teasing and questions. Alice could never quite understand what his interest in her was. At first, she’d thought it was just because he’d recognized her as an angel and wanted to give her a hard time. When that had proven wrong, she’d figured it was because he thought of her as a game, like those other schmucks at the bar. When he’d shown that he was more of a gentleman than that, he’d completely thrown her for a loop.

The more she got to know this little demon, the more confused she became. He contradicted most of what she knew of demons and had such a wide spectrum of characteristics...Honestly, she could not, for the life of her, figure out what was going on in his head most of the time.

At least she knew he was teasing her now.
Bendy raised a suggestive brow. Ooooh, if only Alice could get him back, but she didn’t think she could do much now. Later. She’d do something clever later. “Sorry, ‘love’ but the bars are in the way,” Alice said sarcastically.

Bendy furrowed his brows and gave the cell bars a look over. A small frown overcame his cocky half smile. “Guess you’re right,” he sighed dramatically and shrugged. “We’ll have to kiss when I get out.” Bendy smiled again when he looked back to the angel. Alice snorted. “Until then.” Bendy unlaced their fingers and turned her hand, keeping eye contact with her as he kissed the back of her hand before releasing it.

Alice yanked her hand back in surprise. Her face burned with heat, and her jaw dropped. Bendy lifted his now free hand to partially hide his chuckles as Alice gapped at him. What in the world! “Y-y-you!” she sputtered.

“Now, be safe, babe, and let me know what happens as soon as you can.” Bendy winked and gave her a teasing smile. Alice could feel someone approaching from behind.

“Are you ready to go?” Richard asked pleasantly. Alice nodded, though she wasn’t sure if she was nodding to Bendy or Richard. Bendy kept a small smile on his face as Alice turned to go.

She paused and looked back. “I should be able to let you know by tomorrow.”

Bendy blinked, then gave her a curt nod. The worry was obvious in his eyes. He lifted a hand to the bars. Alice swallowed and turned away to leave. She could feel his eyes on her. She didn’t really consider how much this would worry him. She hoped he could be patient and not do anything rash.

It wasn’t long before her and Featherworth were back in the car and heading into Toon Town central.

“So, have you been dating long?” Featherworth asked. Alice frowned and looked at her. The crow was looking at the street. Her feathers and beak made it a little difficult for Alice to figure if she was just curious or if she was digging for something.

Alice was so done with pretending. She inwardly sighed to herself. She couldn’t tell the truth, though, without having problems contacting him tomorrow. Still, she hated this. “Not long.” Alice made it sound like she was admitting something.

“How did you meet him?” Featherworth asked lightly. Alice narrowed her eyes. She didn’t trust this. There was a moment of silence before the crow chuckled. “Don’t worry, I’m not interrogating you. I’m just curious.”

Alice huffed and crossed her arms. “I won’t get in trouble?”

“If we wanted you in trouble, we would have arrested all of you when we got Bendy and Boris.” Featherworth smiled.

She guessed that was true. Alice didn’t understand how their justice system worked, but that didn’t mean the detective was a bad person. Alice shouldn’t hold her accountable for everything. She had helped the angel find Bendy and talk to him after all…

“He showed up at my work. I was a bartender at the time,” Alice explained after a moment.

“Love at first sight?” Featherworth sounded amused.
Alice rolled her eyes. “Yeah, right.”

“Oh?” Featherworth was definitely smiling. “So, you didn’t like him at first?”

“No! Of course not!” Alice said, her face turning red.

“So, when did it change?” the crow asked. Alice grumbled to herself. She didn’t like him. It was disgusting. No! But…she could think of when she’d stopped disliking him.

“Well, it was a bunch of little things. He stood up for me a couple of times. I liked how he treated his brother. And I just…learned more about them both,” Alice said.

“A real gentleman, eh?” Featherworth teased.

“Hardly.” Alice was completely fed up with this.

“Sorry, it’s not often I get to talk to someone about relationships,” Featherworth admitted after she stopped chuckling. Alice huffed again and turned to look out the window.

“So, you aren’t dating?” Alice asked, trying to turn the conversation away from her and Bendy.

“Unfortunately, work doesn’t give me much time for myself,” Featherworth said. Alice hummed in understanding. “You know, when you told him that you and Bendy were a couple, I couldn’t believe it. You two don’t seem like a…match.” Alice frowned at her words. Of course, they don’t. He was a demon, and she was an angel. They were polar opposites! “But, after seeing you two together, I take it back. You two are cute together.” Alice was grateful the detective couldn’t see her face because it was twisted in mild disgust and complete disbelief. Not in a million years.

Alice rubbed the back of her hand, feeling the ghost of his warm lips. Nope. Never.

A little bit later, the two women got back to the city. Alice thanked the detective and quickly made her way to the house. She thought about telling the officer the situation, wondering if her help would be useful. Then, the angel remembered that the fox journalist warned that they should keep the boys’ quest and the machine pieces a secret. After this betrayal by Avery, Alice didn’t think she should tell anyone else.

With that thought in mind, she made her way to the house. She glanced behind at a car that was sitting across the street. Mr. Tiptail had said that the house was being watched, didn’t he? Watched by the police or someone else? Alice felt unease as she knocked on the door. She waited a moment before opening the door. She didn’t know if Avery had beat her back or not. He probably had.

“Hello? Granny Gopher?” Alice called.

“We’re in the kitchen!” Granny called out cheerfully. We? Alice shut the door and made her way into the large kitchen. There Avery and granny were making dinner with two other people. Alice guessed that they were other people who had ink illness or friends. Her heart twisted in anxiety at seeing Avery, but also relief. “Hello, Alice! How are you?” Granny walked up to her and pulled her into a hug. Alice had to lean over to hug the old gopher back.

“Oh, I just forgot something here from the last time we visited.” Alice smiled her best smile. “This was the only time I had to drop by and grab it.”

“Ah, what’s this?” Avery came up and smiled. “You forgot something? Need any help finding it?”

“No, no.” Alice waved her hand back and forth. “I have a pretty good idea where it is. I’ll just be a second and then get out of your hair.”
“Would ya like to stay for dinner?” Avery invited. He leaned over, getting a bit too close for Alice’s comfort. He was pretty tall. This close, he felt intimidating even though he was trying to be charming. Alice took a tiny step back.

“Uh, no, I don’t want to impose,” Alice said.

“Ya wouldn’t impose none! You’d be a delight to have,” Avery protested.

Alice forced a chuckle. “That’s kind of you, but I really shouldn’t. People are expecting me.”

“Then, don’t let us hold you up dear.” Granny offered her an out. She gave the angel a cryptic smile. Alice knew that she owed the old gopher an explanation, but right now she had to get to that doll!

“Thanks, I’ll only take a moment.” Alice turned back around for the staircase.

“You sure I can’t help?” Avery called. “I think I need to grab something too, now that I think about it.” Alice felt panic freeze her heart.

“Avery, I need your help with the stew,” Granny said.

“I can help,” one of the other people offered.

“It only needs to cook anyway.” Avery frowned.

“But,” Granny stalled. Alice was already heading up the stairs. It didn’t sound like she had a lot of time. Avery didn’t seem suspicious of her, so he mustn’t have seen her at the bar. Thank the heavens. Still, she didn’t know how long that would last.

Heart racing, she quickly went down the hall, through the lab room, and into the odd study. She didn’t waste any time. Finding the bookcase and journals, she pulled out several. The doll peeked out from behind them. Alice reached back and quickly pulled the doll out from behind the books. It was the same wolf doll it had changed to that day. The girl quickly put the journals back. That done, Alice had nearly pocketed the doll when she froze.

Wait.

It wouldn’t be safe with her.

She had to run from Avery and possibly that car outside. Avery would know it was her the minute he came up here, and that sounded like it was going to be soon, too. If she got caught, the doll would be lost. Alice couldn’t risk it. She couldn’t let everyone down like that. She could stop Avery…the doll was supposed to be tied to the person, right? Bendy had seemed to be in pain when that imp had taken the doll. She could do something to the legs…?

She lifted the doll’s legs and looked at them. She imagined twisting them and finding Avery with broken legs downstairs. She shivered and shook her head. She couldn’t do it. Not even to someone that acting like scum…

*But what was she supposed to do!*

She couldn’t take it. She couldn’t hand it off to Granny with Avery right there! She couldn’t hand it over to those strangers downstairs either. They probably had no idea what it was. She paced the room, trying to think of what she could do. She bit her lip and looked at the doll.

It was cuter when it was Bendy.
She did not just think that.

Wait, she could hide it again! What if it didn’t leave the room? Avery would assume she took it and chase after her. That would be perfect! Then, Granny could get it out, maybe take it to Mr. Tiptail’s apartment? Alice looked around for a good hiding place. Not the chairs, or the table. Not the other books, and none of the boxes. She spotted an old vase that had ancient runes on it. It was in pretty good condition. It wasn’t an obvious hiding place…but she was sure she could do better than that.

Then, she thought she heard heavy footsteps climbing the stairs. She flailed and looked back to the vase. Quickly slipping the doll in, she headed to the door. She got to the hall leading back to the staircase when Avery appeared. He looked a little surprised. “Oh, hello, doll. Didn’t expect ya ta be in ‘ere.”

“I accidently left my...” what was believable? “lipstick up here when I went to get the boys the other day.” Her voice wavered on the last word. She hoped he didn’t notice. Avery raised a brow.

“You’re real close ta dose two, aren’t ya?” he asked. She fought the urge to run or panic. She was cornered, alone. Did he suspect her?

“Ye-yeah, I sure am! They’re great fellas,” she said. Anything to make him leave her alone.

The wolf hummed. “Well, if ya eva had some free time, I’d love for us ta go an’ get somedin’ ta eat, yeah?”

Oh great choirs above, why? Alice fought the urge to treat him like the drunks she had to dealt with back at the casino. “Maybe some time,” she said with a smile. Wasn’t he betraying everyone for his girlfriend? What was this two-timer on about? Did he really think he was this smooth? Alice took a deep breath. Calm, centered, she could do this. She was almost home free.

“Dis weekend?” Avery asked with a...well, a wolfish smile.

“Sure, I’ll call you and let you know when I’m free in the evening,” Alice said. Never.

“Berries!” Avery reached out. Alice flinched when he grabbed her hand. He lifted it and kissed the back of it. Disgust shot up her spine, and she quickly withdrew.

“Well, I have to get going. Real busy. I’ll see you later Avery.” Alice slipped by him and waved as she hurried down the stairs. She heard him chuckle and felt his eyes follow her as she walked. She made it back to the kitchen where Granny was standing, waiting. The two guests were setting up the table.

“I’m sorry, dear. He slipped me,” Granny said. “What’s all this about?”

Alice glanced at the two, then back at the gopher. “Do you have some paper and a pencil? I have to jot something down before I forget.” Smooth and casual. Alice, you got this. Granny raised a brow, but pulled out a small pad and pencil. “Thank you.”

As quickly as possible she wrote, ‘Doll in vase in study. When he’s gone, get it to Xedo. Don’t let anyone see it. Black car out front may be watching. Don’t tell anyone. Avery’s betrayed us.’ She then wrote Mr. Tiptail’s address. Folding it, she hugged Granny. The old gopher woman gave her a confused look.

Was this the best she could do? Without her powers and without using a miracle, yes. She would lead him away and give Granny the chance to save the doll.
“Thank you!” She passed granny the note so her guests wouldn’t see and walked briskly to the back door. There was a crash from upstairs that caused everyone to jump. Alice shared an alarmed looked with Granny Gopher before twisting the doorknob and racing out onto the back porch. It was twilight now, the daylight would be completely gone soon.

“Stop!” She heard behind her. “She’s stolen it!”

Of all the low—he was accusing her! Alice didn’t let that slow her down. She ran to the back gate, pushed it open and bolted down the alley between the backyards of the Old English homes.

“Stop, ya floozy! Gi’mee dat doll!” Avery shouted after her. She did everything she could to race faster. Alice made it to the end of the alley and onto the street. Then, she turned toward Betty’s shop without stopping. She thought she heard him behind her, but she didn’t dare look. Instead, she focused on breathing and keeping her feet moving as fast as she could.

Another block away, she started to pant for breath. She needed to see if he was still following. With her heartbeat pounding in her ears, she couldn’t hear his footsteps. She dared a glance. He wasn’t far behind her.

“I said stop! Ya crazy broad!” Avery barked. Panic and adrenaline gave Alice a boost as she found herself going faster. What was she going to do? At this rate, he’d catch her! If only she had enough magic for a simple glamour! Or even her wings! Flying sounded amazing right now!

She ran and ran. For a second, she thought something brushed her hair. She imagined him breathing down her neck. Right behind her. Turning a sharp corner, she nearly ran into a fruit cart and its owner, who seemed to be closing up for the night. She spun and barely managed to dodged it. Avery didn’t. There was a crash and yelling. Someone shouted. “My cabbages!” Then Alice was too far to make much more out.

Maybe, she could lose him! Her lungs were screaming, and her legs were on fire, but she didn’t dare slow down. She did glance back again. Avery was now a half block behind and gaining. How could she lose him! Think, Alice! She wouldn’t be able to outrun him. She couldn’t hide in the shadows. He’d probably be able to sniff her out like Boris had with that imp in the casino. He was physically faster and stronger than her. She wouldn’t be able to beat him in a fight, even with her self defense skills. She could never beat her siblings, and she doubted she’d be able to beat him. Maybe shake him if he catches her just on surprise, but then it’ll be back to the chase.

She got another block and a half. She was almost to the Betty’s store. She was sure she could get help. Betty lived above the shop and there were several items that she could use as a weapon.

“Ya can’t escape, girly,” Avery panted. He sounded so close! Alice rounded another corner and nearly slammed into the person on the other side.

“Wha-”

“Sorry!” Alice kept sprinting. She couldn’t afford to stop.

The next moment, she heard the hiss of a can behind her, and there was a yowl of pain. Alice looked back to see a girl with her arm raised, holding a small spray. Avery rolled on the ground, clutching his face.

“Oh, I am sooooo sorry!” the girl behind Alice clasped her hands together. “I thought I saw a bee. You really shouldn’t be running down the street, you know.” Alice thanked the heavens for the good fortune and the girl. Whether she had really made a mistake or not, she had saved Alice. The angel
wished she could see the girl’s face so she could thank her later, but the gloom of the coming night didn’t allow it, and Alice couldn’t afford to turn around.

Alice continued until she finally got to the shop door. Unlocking it, she entered and slammed it shut behind her. As she leaned against the door, her legs shook. She had made it! She had made it? Holy heaven above, she had made it. She sunk to her shaking knees and just...breathed. Reaching up, she relocked the door before completely sinking onto the cool floor. Her hair was a soaked mess of sweat. Her skirt and blouse stuck to her uncomfortably and her legs pulsed with every beat of her pounding heart. She never wanted to move again.

The light turned on. “Who’s there?” Betty Boop demanded from the back of the shop.

“Be--” Alice tried to speak, but to no avail.

Betty came to the front and gasped. “Alice!” Something wood hit the floor, and then Betty was kneeling next to Alice, trying to brush her hair out of her face. “What happened? Are you okay? Are you hurt? Where did you go?”

“Betty,” Alice swallowed. Her throat felt like sandpaper.

“I got you,” Betty said. “Oh, dear.”

“Water,” Alice croaked. Betty helped her sit up and then stand.

“Let’s get you to the apartment, and I’ll get you a glass,” Betty promised. Alice could barely walk. The adrenaline was wearing off, and the shock off running for her life was catching up to her. She felt sick to her stomach. Her foot hit the bat that Betty had dropped upon finding Alice. It rolled across the floor and bumped into one of the shelves. In broken sentences, Alice tried to explain what she had been up to while keeping Bendy and the doll a secret. She was able to get through that she had been chased by a wolf, and that he was planning to steal something important.

“Oh my, well I have plenty of spots for valuables, Alice. Nothing will be taken from here,” Betty assured her. Alice gave her a weak smile. “You don’t have to worry now. Stay the night and head home in the morning.”

“Thank you, Ms.Boop. You are so kind,” Alice said.

“Nonsense, and call me Betty.” Betty waved off Alice’s thanks with a smile. The women made it up to the apartment with little problem. Betty lent her a night gown and a spare bed. Alice was so tired, she didn’t even think of complaining about how skimpy the night gown was. Alice collapsed on the feather mattress with a sigh of relief. A few lingering worries hung over her exhausted mind. Would Avery find her? Did Grandma Gopher get the doll to safety? Did she do the right thing?

These thoughts and memories played in her mind until she drifted off into a troubled sleep.
So, I have to share something that happened while I was editing that was completely hilarious.
I was working through the part of the chapter where Alice is thinking about how she used to dislike Bendy. I noticed that little red squiggly line underneath the word, "dislike" and was confused, because it was spelled correctly. I right clicked it to see what autocorrect was suggesting...

It said **like**.

Autocorrect thinks that Alice should like Bendy. Autocorrect ships it. :'D

Hello! It's TAP again! XD So what did you think? Liked it? Curious what Bendy thought? Good. Cause you can see it! Over on **Inky Extras**! If you're curious what the demon had going through his head with Alice's oddness, go check it out!
Until next time you wonderful readers! Mercowe and Tap out!
Alice woke up with a start. Thunder rolled, and it seemed the building shook with the force. Alice’s heart was racing from the abrupt wake up call. She looked around, and after realizing she was alone in Betty’s spare room, relaxed. She stretched her arms and back, getting up. She blinked at the low-cut gown she wore. The amount of her legs that was exposed gave her a light flush. Way too much skin for comfort. Alice pulled on a big fluffy robe over the nightgown and peeked outside. The rain and fog made the street look ghostly and abandoned. It was a dreary, dark day. Another crack of lightning lit up the sky before a heavy roll of thunder followed. Alice sighed to herself. She would have to go out in that today.

She left the room to find Betty cooking in the kitchen. “Oh my! Did the storm wake you up too?”

“Yes, Mi-I mean Betty.” Alice corrected herself at the last minute. Betty’s smile became dazzling before she turned back to the eggs she was working on.

“So, you wanna tell me more about what happened last night? You were so out of it I could barely understand a word you said,” Betty said as she split the eggs onto two plates.

“Oh, well.” Alice pursed her lips. How should she explain herself? Betty was quickly becoming a friend to Alice, and she didn’t want to lie to her…But Alice now understood Xedo’s warning about it being so dangerous. What Alice did last night…that’s what Bendy and Boris did almost every week! Alice couldn’t imagine living like that, though it seemed the future could hold more running for her.

Note to self: work on cardio.
So, Alice decided to give Betty an edited version of the night before. Avery was after her for ruining his shady plans. Betty suggested calling the police, but Alice declined. Her reasoning was weak, but Betty didn’t put up much of a fuss. She seemed to have mixed feelings about her justice system, like Alice did.

They had a pleasant breakfast before Alice went to make a phone call. First, she called Granny’s house to make sure the old gopher was okay. Grandma Gopher picked up on the third ring.

“Hello?” she asked pleasantly.

“Good morning Grandma Gopher, sorry to call so ear—”

“Alice, thank the stars above you’re okay!” Granny’s voice cracked with how loud she shouted. Alice jerked the phone away from her ear with a wince. “What in the world happened?”

“I’m fine, Grandma Gopher.” Alice smiled. “Did Avery come back?”

“No! The last I saw of him, he went after you! I thought he’d caught you!” Grandma Gopher sounded frustrated. “I can’t believe he was going to run off with the doll! And after all the hard work the boys had put forth,” she tsked.

“So, you were able to get it?” Alice asked nervously.

“Why, yes! Yes! I got it over to that fox fellow and his brother. No problem, and no one noticed little me. I didn’t see that car either. It’s with them now, dear.” Grandma Gopher said quickly. “Obviously, you were able to get away.”

“Yes, I’m fine. I got away, and I’m at a friend’s house now,” Alice explained.

“Good, good. I was so worried. I want a full explanation, but not now. I have a couple guests that need refills on their medications. Stop by when you can, child and talk to Granny, okay?” the old gopher asked.

“Okay, Grandma Gopher.”

“Take care, and be careful,” she told the angel.

“Will do.” Alice couldn’t help smiling.

“Bye dear,” Granny Gopher said.

“Goodbye.” Alice hung up the phone and dialed Xedo Tiptail. She waited and waited. It rang. No one was picking up. She worried her lip anxiously. She was just about to hang up when the phone picked up.

“Hello?”

“Hello? This is Alice.” Alice sighed in relief.

“Oh, Alice! You’re alive! Hi! It’s Wiston! Hey, Xedo is worried about you, ya know,” Wiston said.

“I am so sorry,” Alice said. She hadn’t meant to make anyone worried.

“Just glad you’re okay. Holly showed up real worried. She and Xedo went out last night looking for you. He left again this morning to keep up the search,” Wiston said.

“She sprayed that wolf last night when he was chasing you. You and he disappeared after that. We were beginning to think he got you or something. Oh! And before I forget, Holly brought up a basket from Granny, so the goodies are safe. How’d you even know that Avery was gonna run off with it?” Wiston asked energetically.

Alice nearly dropped the phone. Holly was the woman that sprayed Avery in the face! She got the doll to Xedo’s apartment! Alice thought Holly didn’t know about the machine parts!

“Alice? Is everything okay? You did get away from that mutt safely, right?” Wiston asked when Alice didn’t respond.

“Ah! Yes! Yes, I’m fine. Don’t worry about me,” Alice said quickly. “Oh! I feel awful that Mr. Tiptail is out in that looking for me.” Alice looked out at the pouring rain.

“He’ll just be happy you’re okay,” Wiston said. “Don’t worry about it.”

“I’ll be there in a few minutes,” Alice said. She needed to talk to the fox about what they were going to do next, anyway—with the doll and if Avery showed up. Not to mention, she was worried about the kind of people that were after the doll. If one of them was an imp, it couldn’t be good.

“Wait, as in right now? In this weather?” Wiston said.

“No time like the present, Wiston,” Alice said.

“Are you sure?” Wiston sounded uncertain. “Maybe, I should call a cab.”

“Water you talking about! Don’t worry. It’s just a little rain. I’ll be there in a splash.” Alice smiled.


“See you soon!” Alice cheered and hung up. She hurried to the room she had left her things in. She changed back into the top and skirt she had worn yesterday and checked her bag.

“You’re not going out in that Alice,” Betty said in surprise on spotting Alice fully dressed.

“It can’t be helped.” Alice sighed.

“It’s about that wolf, isn’t it?” Betty frowned. “I think you should wait for the weather to calm for a little while.”

Alice shook her head. Betty pouted. “Well, at least call a cab to take you.”

“Will do, Betty. Thanks, hopefully it’s the only hailing I will see today,” Alice joked. Betty snorted a little giggle. “See you later.” Alice waved and headed out the door and down the stairs. She cautiously looked out the front windows before walking to the door. It didn’t seem like anyone was watching the building.

Alice called the cab and waited patiently. It didn’t take long for the car to pull up to the curb. Its lights barely did anything to pierce the wet gloom of the day. Alice rushed out into the rain and got to the car with no problem. The cab driver was a short little dog with a very droopy face. “Where to miss?” He asked in a slow and slightly nasally voice.

Alice was tempted to go to her apartment for a change of clothes and maybe a relaxing bath, but that would have to wait. First, she needed to make sure that the doll was safe, and what they would need
to do about Avery. That black car came to mind, and she still had a bad feeling about it. So, she gave the little dog Xedo’s address. “A one-one-three Neverland Lane.”

The little dog nodded and started to drive. Alice watched out the window as the raindrops slid down the glass. Thunder disrupted the patter of the rain, causing her to jump. They stopped at a corner and turned. Alice looked back to see a last glance at Betty’s shop when she noticed a black car pull out on the street. They finished the turn before the angel could figure out where it pulled out of.

They continued on, and Alice felt her heart begin to hammer when the black car turned and followed them. She kept a nervous eye on it as they drove. They would turn right, it would, they’d go left, they would too.

“Excuse me,” Alice said to the dog driver.

“Mhyes?” the dog hummed.

“That car. I think it’s following us. I would rather we lose it before we to the address,” Alice said. The dog looked in his mirror and nodded solemnly.

“Mmyes, ma’am. Please have your seat belt fastened,” he said in monotone. Alice buckled it, and no sooner did she when the car suddenly leapt forward. Alice squeaked as she was slammed into the seat. The dog’s driving went from calm and easy going to insane in an instant. He drove around corners, sliding and fishtailing. Alice clung to the door handle in a desperate attempt to not be thrown around despite her seat belt. The black car’s headlights weaved in their attempts to keep up. The dog took the car down a narrow alley. The cab crashed into cans and boxes. Garbage was slung into the air and knocked around. Alice looked behind them to see the black car struggling with the knocked over trash cans. The dog got back on the road and swerved by traffic, using the empty sidewalks. He ran over a couple of potted plants and an outdoor table and chairs. Alice couldn’t see the car anymore. A few more terrifying turns, and Alice was sitting in front of Xedo’s apartment building, trying to remember how to breathe.

“You’re destination miss,” the dog said in same monotone voice, like nothing out of the normal had happened.

“Th-th-thanks,” Alice was able to get out. She dug through her bag with shaky hands. She gave the little dog a large tip for losing the car and somehow getting her to the apartment in one piece.

“Have a nice day miss,” the dog said before pulling away, once again driving at a calm pace. Alice didn’t notice the rain or thunder anymore. She was able to stumble up to the apartment and knock on the door.

Wiston opened the door. “Alice! You’re so pale! What happened?” the fox asked and ushered her in quickly.

Alice sighed. “It’s been an...eventful drive over. Is Mr. Tiptail here?”

She walked into the living room. She was surprised to see the girl, Holly, dozing on the couch.

“No. He should be here soon, though. Can I get you some tea?” Wiston asked.

“Yes, please.” Alice smiled and sat on the love seat next to the couch. “Thank you.”

“Holly got here a little while ago, but she conked out pretty quick,” Wiston said as he went to the kitchen. “I think she was planning to go look for you again, but I told her she didn’t need to.”
Alice nodded and looked over the girl.

Holly started to stir at that moment. Opening her eyes slowly, she startled when she saw Alice. “Oh! You’re okay!” She sat all the way up, rubbing her eyes quickly. Holly’s hair and clothes were ruffled, still damp from the rain. “I was so worried. What happened? Why was that wolf guy chasing you?”

Alice let out a deep breath. “Let’s wait for Mr. Tiptail so I only have to explain once. I’m surprised that you were the one that stopped him. Thank you.”

Holly smiled shyly. “My pleasure. I’ve been looking for a good excuse to pepper spray a schmuck for some time now.” The words seemed to slip out unconsciously, and she put a hand over her mouth, looking embarrassed. She cleared her throat. “Anyways, I know how scary it is. I’m just glad I was able to help.”

Alice giggled. “No need to pepper me with kindness. I would have decked him if I hadn’t been running from him.”

An instant smile formed on Holly’s face, and she snickered. “Good one. Next time, you should just carry a pack of gambling cards. That way you can deck him and run at the same time.”

Alice’s eyes immediately brightened with excitement.

Wiston came in with a cup of tea and a groan. “Nooooo, not another one!”

“What’s wrong, Wiston? You can’t deal with it?” Alice asked and accepted the tea he handed her. Holly immediately burst out laughing. The warm liquid spread through Alice’s center and out to her limbs. Alice smiled in relief. Wiston grimaced and left them to go back to the kitchen. “Don’t burn anything!” Alice called after him. He moaned in frustration.

Holly took a look at her cup. “Well, he looked like he was really brewing.” Alice smiled. Oh, she liked this girl. She was stressed, a little sad, but kind and caring.

“Careful, we don’t want him to become steamed,” Alice warned and sipped her tea.

“I can still hear you!” he shouted from the kitchen.

Both burst out laughing this time.

When they had calmed down, Holly picked up her cup and took a sip. She hummed. “That’s so warm.”

“Thanks, I’ve gotten too much practice making it for Xedo,” Wiston said. He came in with a wrapped bundle in his hands. “So Alice, what do you want to do with this? Xedo doesn’t think it would be smart to keep it here since everyone is always coming and going from here.”

Alice nearly choked on her tea and gave a panicked glance to Holly. Holly tilted her head. “Isn’t that the bundle that Granny had me bring here?” Her eyes widened a little more, and she couldn’t hide the hint of excitement in her eyes. “Is that...one of the machine pieces?”

Alice did choke at that. “You know?” Alice coughed. Wiston chuckled.

Holly’s eyes flickered uncertainly to Wiston. “Yes. Bendy, Xedo and the others explained things to me after I showed up here a couple days ago.”
“Really?” Alice raised a brow to Wiston.

The fox shrugged. “Couldn’t exactly get her help with the map unless she knew what it was for.”

Alice sighed. What a mess. If only she had gotten that map! Or if she had her halo! She was sure she could have fixed it!

“So, what’s the plan here?” Wiston asked.

“I’m not really sure, to be honest. I just had to get it away from Avery,” Alice admitted.

“So, is that what that wolf was trying to do? Steal your item?” Holly asked.

“Well--”

The door swung open and Xedo walked into the room. He was soaked and froze when he saw the group in living room. “Alice!” He rushed into the room and dropped his coat without a thought to it. His ears and tail dripped with water. “Thank the stars! What happened?”

Alice smiled sorrowfully. “I’m so sorry I worried you Mr.--”

Xedo waved it off. “Don’t worry about it. What matters is that everyone is safe.” He collapsed on the last chair and untied his shoes. Wiston got his brother’s coat and again headed to the kitchen.

Alice nodded. “Well, it started yesterday.” Alice went over the events. She made sure to mention the black car and the chase to Xedo’s apartment too...She did leave out the embarrassing situation at the prison, but she admitted to seeing Bendy. Wiston came back with two more steaming cups and everyone listened until she was done.

“I saw a black car too.” Holly sat back after Alice finished. “When I left the house, it followed me, but I managed to lose it before I got here.” She shivered. “It’s the sort of car I imagine one of those Sykes brothers would drive. Really nice and sleek and dangerous. I also saw it follow Avery once, before tonight.”

“The Sykes?” Alice asked with raised brows. She had heard about them at the casino. They were some of the lowest of the low. She may have even seen Robert in one unpleasant occasion. She had to go to the back and gag after standing near the guy. He was as bad as Black Hat! She hadn’t even known humans could be so...dark. How were they involved in all of this? Wait...Holly had mentioned them before. When the boys were getting arrested. Alice had forgotten.

Holly nodded. “Fairfax and the commissioner were the ones orchestrating the assassination attempts on Oddswell, but the Sykes seemed to be helping out. They meet every other Thursday at this shady warehouse Bill Sykes owns that’s on the docks.”

Alice blinked. Commissioner? Should she ask? If he was after the doctor, he was a bad man, but it was obviously a title…”Um, what is a commissioner?” Alice asked hesitantly. Wiston blinked at her over his tea.

Holly frowned. “Oh, he’s in charge of helping all the different police departments work together. So, he’s like the chief over all the chief of police. Does that make sense?”

Alice had to think and compare it to home. So, the guards protect the public, the captain looks over his squad and the generals meet with the their captains before report to her brother. So...was he like a general?...Maybe? He couldn’t be the Arch of the Surface guards! Er...police...could he? “Ah...yes, thank you.” Alice sounded uncertain to herself.
Holly studied Alice’s expression. “Put simply, he has authority over every single police officer in the city. He’s in charge.” Holly scowled. “And he’s completely corrupt.” Alice deflated at Holly’s words. How could that be? The Arch of Surface guards, the person in charge of protection and justice, was corrupt? Was there no way to stop him?

“That’s where our problem, and I might add, the detectives lies. They’re good honest gals, but they can’t remove him themselves. If we’re going clear Bendy and Boris’ name, we also need to expose the commissioner and the mayor. They’re not going to let them get away otherwise.” Holly sighed. “We need to prove they’re corrupted.”

“You said they meet with the Sykes brothers, right? Can’t the detectives catch them there?” Alice asked. The darkness of their essence and intent would have been enough in the Upper for them to go to trial at least.

Holly nodded. “I was thinking the same thing, but there was a huge crowd around the police station when I tried to go talk to the female detectives. I didn’t even bother to try and get through. It made me too nervous.”

“That’s too bad,” Alice said with a sigh.

Xedo tilted his head. “Today is Thursday. Holly are they meeting this week?”

“Well…” Holly put a finger on her beauty mark, thinking. “Not usually, but I could imagine them making an exception considering the fact that tomorrow Bendy and Boris are going to court.” Her brows furrowed. “So, today would be the opportune day to tell the detectives about this. They need to act on it.” She turned to the fox. “I need to talk to the detectives. Thanks for pointing that out, Xedo.”

Alice perked up. “I need to go talk to them too.” She had to go see Bendy again, and she didn’t know if Richard would let her in without the detectives there. “We should go together.”

That seemed to surprise Holly, but then she smiled brightly and nodded. “Okay. Two people are better than one.” She quickly took one last sip of her tea before she stood up. “Do you need to prepare anything?”

Alice glanced down at the bundle that Wiston was still holding onto. “What about that?”

Xedo frowned and followed her line of sight. “I think Wiston and I can manage it until you get back. It should be safe for now. I do want to find a better place for it soon, though. Too many visitors filter through here. If anyone gets followed here, it’ll be one of the obvious places to check.”

Alice nodded. “Alright. Well, I think I’m ready to go.”

Holly’s eyes brimmed with a question as they talked, but when Alice joined her, she seemed to swallow it. She took a deep breath, schooling her expression. “Let us go then,” she said cheerfully.

“Wait! Let us call you girls a cab! It’s pouring out there!” Wiston said. Alice paused. “O-okay. If it isn’t a bother.”

“Course not. I would advise against walking,” Xedo said, standing and swishing his still damp tail.

When the girls got to the ground floor, the cab was already there. They rushed out to it, and when they got in, to Alice’s horror and relief, it was the same little dog as before.

“Um…” Holly shifted awkwardly next to Alice. “I don’t really have any cash on me to pay for a
Alice blinked. “Oh! Don’t worry about that!” She turned to the dog. “The police station, please.”

“Mmyes ma’am,” he answered in his monotone voice. Alice gulped and looked around the streets and gloomy sidewalks. No sign of that car. Good.

“So, do you have any idea who was in that car?” Holly said quietly.

“None,” Alice admitted. “I wonder if they were the people that Avery was supposed to trade with, but why trade at the train station if they were there at the house?”

“Hmmm.” Holly clicked her tongue. “Did you notice when it started following you?”

“No. I saw it at the doctor’s house, out front,” Alice explained. “I didn’t want them to see me leave, so I ran out the back. The next time I saw them was when I left my place of work.” Alice sighed and stared at the floor of the cab. It was very clean for a city cab.

“The doctor? Do you mean Professor Oddswell?”

Alice glanced at the girl next to her. “Yes. Is that not his title? I heard Bendy call him a doctor, was I mistaken?”

Holly shrugged. “I suppose so. Although, it’s not what I would call him.” She turned back toward the front. “So, since they followed both of us, we can infer that they weren’t following anyone specific. They wanted to know what people coming from that house were doing. They probably went to that house because it’s the last place where anything concerning research on the ink illness happened. So, they could be trying to get more information...or be looking for something.”

“Looking for something? Do you mean the parts or something else?” Alice furrowed her brows in concern. Was there any else of value for people to be after? Besides Bendy’s group, Alice thought that only those that were sick went to the doctor’s home. There were some valuable artifacts there, Alice supposed, but nothing worth following people for.

“Maybe. If they went to that old house, they probably don’t have very many leads. It’s an old, old lead.”

Alice hummed. Something didn’t add up here. “What if...it’s a person?”

Holly blinked. “That makes sense. But who would they be looking for? I know that the mob here was looking for Bendy and Boris for a long while, but both of those boys are in jail right now, and everyone knows it.”

Alice nodded. “There was the attack on the jail too. Do the boys know someone else that’s tied up in this? Or maybe they really are after Avery since he didn’t have the piece? I mean...he did disappear last night. He could have given them the slip...or been caught.” And if he had been caught, then he would have told them that Alice had it, and they would be looking for her. Was that why they had tried to follow her this morning? They were hoping she’d lead them to the piece? If the dog cabbie hadn’t lost them, then that’s exactly what she would have done too!

How frightful.

“I don’t know…” Holly frowned. “I stalled that wolf for a good five minutes. They could have followed him. Then, I went to Granny’s house, and after I left, they followed me. That wasn’t long after I helped you, so they wouldn’t have any reason to be looking for Avery at that point.”
A feeling of dread spread through Alice. If they followed Holly back to Granny’s and not Alice to Betty’s place, then they had already known that Alice would be there. That the shop was where she would head...So, what if they were just noting everyone’s faces and where they went from the house. But why? Alice swallowed. And how long had they been watching her without her knowing? “Wh-what if they’re just watching all of us? Everyone that goes there? Learn where we go, our habits and...schedules?”

Holly’s eyes widened, and a violent shiver ran through her. “That’s not good.”

“No. It isn’t. But why? Who?” Alice shook her head. It was alarming. It had been done carefully and seemed to be setting up for something. If she didn’t know better, she’d think it was something Black Hat would set up. It had the sinister nature of a dem-of a person like him.

“The people that come to my mind who would do this are the Sykes, like I said before. Or someone in power, like the commissioner or the Mayor.” Holly sighed. “But there are so many different people involved with this out there. It could be someone we’ve never even heard about.” She shook her head. “Ultimately, it doesn’t matter who they are. We need to find out how to deal with them.”

Alice nodded. The girls arrived at the station with no incident. The newsies had moved on, thanks to the weather. Alice paid the little dog again, and found out his name was Droopy apparently, appropriate in Alice’s opinion. And with that, the girls entered the station to see a chaotic whirl of police and papers. This place was always busy.

Holly swallowed. “Wow. This place is crazy.”

“It’s not always like this?” Alice asked curiously.

“No. Usually there are more people drinking coffee and eating donuts,” Holly snickered.

“Donuts?” Alice blinked.

Holly looked at her curiously. “Sugar covered pastries with a hole in them? Unholy desserts that taunt any attempt at dieting? The stereotypical sustenance for policeman? Anything ring a bell?” Holly raised a brow. “You’re really uninformed, aren’t you?”

Unholy? Taunt? Was it some kinda...devil food? And it was normal for policemen? Then, they were always corrupted? That would explain the arrest of someone as innocent as Boris. Good to understand why the system here was struggling. They would have to do something about these donuts. Alice blinked and realized she had been asked a question. “Oh! Um...well...heh.” Cloud fluff! “What was that?”

Holly smiled. “Don’t worry. I was a country girl when I first came to Toon Town too, so if you have any questions, feel free to ask me and I will explain things.”

Alice blinked owlishly and ducked her head. “It’s that obvious, uh?”

Holly shrugged. “Every person has their specialty. Yours doesn’t seem to be understanding the legal system, at least not that I’ve noticed in the last hour.”

Alice blushed. Of course she didn’t! The Surface was so backwards! “Yeah…”

Holly raised a finger, smiling brightly. “Don’t give up though, there is a method to the madness.” She scowled. “At least when there are decent people in charge,” she muttered under her breath.

Alice smiled. “Is it really different here than where you’re from?”
Holly folded her arms, lips pursed. “When you’re in a small town, you pretty much know who would do what. Although, I guess closed environments create the best secret keepers as well. We only had about six cops in our police department where I come from. They were easy to work with. Although, once the local bandit managed to steal everything off our chief of police, even his badge...and his shirt...and his pants. Personally, I think things get more tangled with bigger numbers.”

Alice hummed. That made sense. She knew most people in the Sanctuary, but out in Upper...It was like here. Crowded, but it was at least friendlier there...Wait, what was that last part? Someone stole a policeman’s pants?

The woman at the desk cleared her throat to get their attention. “Oh! Sorry! Hello, um. We’re here to see the detectives again.” The woman frowned.

“They are extremely busy,” she huffed dismissively.

“I understand. They’ll want to see us anyway. It’s important,” Alice said calmly, not losing a hint of her smile.

“What business do you have with the detectives?” the woman asked, looking at the desk and number of papers organized across it.

“It’s about a case they are working on right now,” Alice said.

“Then, you can fill out one of these forms, and I’ll be sure they get it.” The woman pushed a paper toward them.

Alice glanced down at the paper. She began to read it and pay close attention to what she was picking up from the woman. Not much. Huh.

Holly sighed angrily behind her. She started to move closer to the desk.

Alice pushed the paper back. “Thank you. But this isn’t a matter that can be simply written out. I have questions too. They are the only ones that can help me.”

The woman frowned. “I am sure I can answer any question you have.”

Alice smiled pleasantly. “Okay.” She put the tiniest bit of power in her voice. Not enough to push Alice’s limit too much, just so this woman would have perfect understanding of what Alice was saying. “Why are you locking up innocent people and letting liars get away with publicly humiliating others? Why are honest people getting fired, instead of cheats? Why are the police failing to protect these citizens from the falsehood corruption of their leaders? Why do you people eat donuts? Why are you stopping me from helping those innocents, when I’m pretty sure you intend to ‘lose’ anything I would write. Why are you undermining the detectives? What can I do to get past you? You think you can have your way and only work when you want to, but I see your intent and ma’am, envy is a very ugly thing.”

The woman’s jaw dropped. She opened and closed her mouth silently, like a gasping fish. “Y-y-y-you!” Her cheeks darkened with an angry flush. “You don’t know! You--”

Holly put her hand on the woman’s desk lightly, getting her attention. “Miss, you need to stop stonewalling us. Otherwise, I’m going to have to tell the chief that last time I was here, you had me go back to the filing room to get my form, instead of getting it yourself. He wouldn’t be happy to hear that you’ve been letting random people wander inside the police station, would he?”
The woman went from flushed to pale. “Fine. Just go.” She pointed down the hallway Alice had walked down yesterday.

Alice smiled pleasantly. “Thank you. I would focus more on helping people if I were you, miss. You’ll be happier, and you can really do some good, even if it doesn’t seem like it now.”

The woman blinked in a daze, then huffed. Holly smiled at her as they walked by. “That really is some good advice,” she threw back at the woman.

Dodging a person here and there, Alice and Holly made their way down the hall. Alice sighed. The Surface really could be a sad place. Not that there wasn’t sorrow in the Upper…

They reached the door, and Alice gently tapped on it.

“Clawhauser! If that is another processing form that needs signing, I am going to pull your tail off and toss it out in the rain! One more paper cut, and I will quit!” a woman’s voice hissed. Alice’s eyes widened in alarm.

“Oh shush, Rachel. We’re almost done,” Featherworth’s voice chuckled.

“I hate paperwork!” Rachel howled.

The two of them walked in. “If you quit, it’s going to cause a lot of people a lot of problems,” Holly commented cheerfully.

“Wah! You!” Ringtail jumped up and pointed at them.

“Yes,” Holly said seriously. “Us.” She nodded toward Alice. “We both have some things we need to talk to you about.”

The very disheveled looking raccoon stared at them with wide eyes before turning an accusing finger on Featherworth. “You knew they were coming! You set me up! No wonder you straightened yourself out!”

Featherworth smirked. “I have no idea what you’re talking about. I think you may need a break, Rachel.”

“Ah! Ah! Ringtail in front of the citizens! How did you know?” Ringtail demanded. She leaned over her desk to jab her claw at the bird.

Featherworth chuckled. “Well, I may have expected Miss Alice to come again at some point today.” The crow looked over to the angel. “Need a ride to the prison?”

Alice nodded and looked over the mountains of paper on their desks with wide eyes. “What is this?”

Ringtail groaned. “Paper duty.”

“Before we head to the prison,” Holly interjected. “There were a few more things I needed to tell you about from when I…” Holly seemed to realize where she was. “When I was gathering information. You two were in such a rush before that I didn’t have the chance to tell you everything.”

The detectives gave her a knowing look. “Sounds like we need to go on a drive,” Featherworth said. “Ringtail?”

“What? Ditch the torture machine that is a pen and paper? What are we waiting for?” Ringtail
straightened out her shirt and straps. She grabbed her hat. She was by the door in an instant. “C’mon, slow pokes!”

Featherworth chuckled. “We’ll talk as we drive.”

Holly gave Alice an excited look, perking up as they headed out the door. They got to the desk with the still rather pale woman. Alice was just thinking of what prank to get Bendy back with when Holly froze next to her. Alice blinked and looked in the direction Holly was facing. There was a man heading their way. He had a coat and hat on and seemed very agitated. He was tall, with graying hair and a square, heavy chin. Alice guessed he could have been considered handsome at some point. She didn’t care much for his anger. The man glanced up to the four women and then stopped, zeroing in on all of them.

“Detectives,” he called out. The two police women stopped and turned to the man stiffly.

“Commissioner, sir,” Ringtail stated coolly. Alice’s eyes widened, and she looked at him again. This was the corrupt leader?

Holly seemed to shrink beside her. Her expression went from excitedly amused to slack and distant. Her hands hung limp at her sides, and she watched the commissioner carefully.

Alice took a closer look, but the man had his guard up. She couldn’t really discern anything. Maybe she had used too much magic with the woman…? Either way, he was washed out, and it was hard to get a hint at what he was feeling or thinking besides frustration.

“What are you doing? I thought you were doing papers to day,” the commissioner said.

“Something came up, sir. We’ll be right back,” Featherworth replied.

The commissioner narrowed his eyes and glanced back at Alice and Holly. “What came up?”

“She needs an escort, and there are some things we need to do about the Bbro case.” Ringtail’s muzzle twitched. His eyebrows rose in surprise.

“The B brothers?” He stepped around the detectives and up to Alice. “What ties do you have with the B brothers?”

Alice lifted her head. “I served Bendy drinks at the Black Hat Casino sometime back,” Alice said honestly. He blinked and whatever train of thought he was on changed.

“Ah sorry, you are?” the commissioner asked.

“Alice, and this is Holly. If you don’t mind, sir. We have a very busy day today and the weather isn’t helping. I’d rather get going,” Alice said.

The commissioner’s eyes snapped to Holly. “Holly? That name sounds familiar.”

Holly seemed to brace herself against his look. She gave him a polite smile. “Well. It is the name of a plant. I’d imagine it would sound familiar to anyone.”

Alice smirked. Good one. The commissioner wasn’t amused. “No, it was in the papers some time ago I think.”

“Sir,” Featherworth interrupted him. “We need to go.”

“Where are you going?” he asked.
“The prison,” Featherworth answered.

“Why?”

“They need an escort,” Featherworth repeated.

“You don’t have time for that. They can take a cab themselves. Interview them here and get back to productive work.” The commissioner frowned.

“But sir,” Ringtail objected.

“I won’t hear any of it. You two have been running off and breaking regulations too often. You don’t own this station. Just because Chief Club let’s you get away with it, doesn’t mean I will. Now, get back to your office.” He turned on his heels and started to walk away. “And if you leave, I will hear about it!”

Ringtail growled when he was gone. Featherworth sighed. Alice looked to them and Holly in confusion. It’s wasn’t so bad. They’d just talk here and then go to Bendy.

Chapter End Notes

Geez, just when they were about to get a move on, the commissioner sticks his big nose into the situation!

No funny typos puns today, unfortunately, Tap didn’t stay up late enough. :D
But what I can tell you guys is this...Guess what? We’re posting two chapters today. :D
I’m editing the next one right now.
Discovering the Evil

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Alice feels so confused.

Chapter Notes

Hello again!
A second chapter for today! Weeeeee! Holly and Alice are cute. ^^ I love 'em.
Oh! And before I forget! Someone shared their story with me and I want to share. It's a really interesting Bendy story that I'm invested in.
Check it out!
Thanks for contacting me DeadricDaughter19! ^^
Okay! On with the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“He did that on purpose,” Holly said quietly, watching his back.

“Of course he did,” Ringtail growled and turned on her heels. She marched back to the office, Featherworth following coolly. Alice turned and caught a glimpse of the woman at the front desk gloating to herself. The angel sighed and went back to the office with Holly near her back.

When they got inside, the crow had written something on a pad.

“Sorry we couldn’t take you to the prison. You can still take a cab. We’ll take your witness statements and let you get on with your day,” Featherworth said and held up the pad.

Bugs in the room. Can’t talk here.

Alice blinked. Bugs? That was a bad thing? “That’s too bad. I’m sorry we won’t get to ride with you,” Alice said, still confused.

Holly looked at the note with resignation in her eyes. She leaned down and took the pencil from Featherworth.

Commissioner is definitely going out to meet the Sykes and a bunch of other bad people right now . Is there anyone else you trust that you can send?

“Yeah, but it won’t cost you much. So, what was your experience with the Bbros?” Ringtail asked and started writing on her own pad.

“Well, it was rather typical,” Alice said.

Ringtail turned the pad over.
Not right now. Everyone we know that’s clean is off on a case or stuck here with us. The commish covered his bases. Even the chief is busy. I think he’s suspicious of us. He must think we’re on to him!

Holly’s brow furrowed, and she tapped a finger on the desk.

“They didn’t talk about anything noticeable. A trip here, a night on the town there. It wasn’t anything I hadn’t heard before. That’s why I was so surprised when they were arrested.” Alice kept talking. That was good. It was an act, a cover. So bugs meant...someone was listening to them...Golly, this was scary.

Holly picked up the pencil again.

*We need to be at that meeting.*

“And you Miss Holly? What was your experience?” Featherworth wrote.

*We can’t go, and I can’t tell you to go endanger yourself. It’s against my oath.*

Holly actually snorted at that. “They came in, asked for directions and left. If anything, I would have mistaken them for a pair of lost hikers before wanted fugitives.”

Ringtail added to the notepad.

*I don’t care. They need to be caught.*

Holly sighed. She turned to the side, pointing away from everyone else. Working her hand underneath her shirt, she pulled something out.

When Holly turned back, she was holding a hand-sized leather journal. She took the journal and handed it to Ringtail.

*Evidence. I’ll go. If anything happens, everything I know is in there.*

Alice’s eyes widened. Oh.

Featherworth wrote quickly.

*You can’t do that!*

“You made an interesting choice in giving them that address,” Ringtail said with a smile.

“They looked like they needed help.” Holly locked eyes with Featherworth. “When I feel something is right, I act.”

Alice nodded. Featherworth sighed. “That’s all we can do.”

Ringtail threw a fist in the air with a grin. Then wrote.

*Be safe, don’t do anything dumb. If the choice is to confront them or run, just run. Don’t worry about evidence. We’ll get that later. No risks to nab something. Just use your ears.*

Alice looked over the lines.

“Well, thank you ladies for your statements. We hope you travel safe,” Ringtail said.
Holly grabbed the pencil and scrawled one last thing.

*For this to work, we need to get there fast... Car keys?*

Featherworth passed her a ring of keys.

*Come back for the journal at six, and I want my car.*

Holly nodded, actually smiling. She pocketed the ring.

“Thank you, detectives. Good luck with the work,” Alice said. The two headed to the door. The detectives watched them go with an odd longing that Alice didn’t quite understand.

When they got outside the building, Holly deflated. “I don’t like this at all,” she muttered.

Alice glanced back at her. “No?”

Holly shrugged, her expression withdrawn.

“Come now. You can tell me. I don’t judge.” Much, Alice admitted to herself in shame, thinking of Bendy.

“I don’t want to go back to the warehouse.” She folded her arms. Her voice lowered to a whisper as they reached Featherworth’s car. “I really wanted to just leave it to them.”

Alice hummed in understanding. “It’s scary, isn’t it?”

Holly opened the driver’s door and slid inside.

Alice hopped into the passenger side and looked over to the other girl. Her hair sprinkled with rain drops.

“It’s shocking,” Holly said in a dark tone.

Alice blinked. “Electricity?”

Holly gave her a seriously skeptical look.

“I see the...uh, light didn’t turn on.” Alice chuckled half-heartedly. Guess it was a bad time for puns.

Holly smiled a little. “So where do you want to go?” She started the car, putting it in gear and moving onto the road.

Alice bit her lip and thought. She didn’t want to leave Bendy waiting any longer than she had too, but Holly had said that the commissioner was going to that meeting right now. If they wanted to stop those bad people, they needed as much information as possible. In the long run it would be better for them to go to the meeting. It was dangerous, though. If they were caught... Alice didn’t want to finish that train of thought.

“We need to go to that meeting. We have to know what they’re planning,” Alice said

Holly frowned, then looked awkward. “What I meant was, you never agreed to go to the warehouse. I did. Those people are serious trouble. The Sykes will kill for fun.” She trailed off, staring at the road and looking uncomfortable.

“And?” Alice furrowed her brow and quirked her mouth. “You sprayed a wolf for me yesterday,
saved my skirt really. You don’t think I would just let you run off to a meeting full of dangerous criminals alone, do you?”

Holly shrugged and her face lightened. “I was taught as a child never to make assumptions.”

“And I was taught to never leave behind a friend,” Alice said. “But thanks for checking with me.”

Holly’s smile widened. “Good pun, by the way. It really sparked my resolution.”

Alice smiled. “Really? I thought it wasn’t such a bright idea since the situation was so dark.”

Holly chuckled, though there was still a nervous tension to her voice. A few minutes later they pulled onto the edge of a row after row of warehouses. Holly nodded towards an enormous one in the distance. “That’s it.” She looked at her watch. “We should be just early enough to sneak inside before they get here, if I’m right.”

Alice nodded and put a supportive hand on Holly’s shoulder. “Okay, sounds good. Don’t worry Holly, I won’t let them do anything to you if we get spotted.” If they got cornered, she could use one of her miracles...though she would get in a lot of trouble for it. Their lives were more important. And if they got captured, Alice would make sure that Holly would be let go. She had a few ideas...but she really hoped she wouldn’t have to use them.

Holly turned to Alice, her brow furrowing. “Alice. I’m not looking to be taken care of here. Although the past couple months have been hard, I decided a while back that I refuse to be a victim. Please treat me as your equal.”

Alice smiled. “Of course! Just know, I have your back. I pack more of a punch than most people think. Let’s go. If they haven’t shown up yet, we might be able to get to a good spot without them seeing us.” Alice scanned the building, trying to find a good spot to get in.

Holly walked with her. As they got closer, she tugged on Alice’s sleeve, nodding to a side alley. They went down it and got to the water. There was a little bridge and a door. To the side of the door, nearly at the corner of the building, there was a little window, which was open.

“Perfect,” Alice said. It hung a little over the water and was about two feet above them. She would have to jump and catch the window sill. If she missed, she would be swimming.

“Ah-ah-uh!” Holly reached out and grabbed Alice by the collar right before she was about to jump. “Don’t do that!” she hissed. “You’ll fall in the water. Not to mention, you’ll attract attention.”

Alice smirked. “Oh ye of little faith. Watch.” Alice gently pried Holly’s hand off her and took a couple steps back and judged the distance with her eyes. She could make it. She had to do it silently and with a tight grip, but this was basic stuff she’d learned in the Upper. Kid stuff. Alice took a deep breath and went for it. She bound off the edge and threw herself up in the air.

The window came and nearly went by her. She reached out and snagged the edge of the sill with a hand. The sudden stop yanked her arm and nearly made her lose her grip. Her body swung to the side of the window. She snatched the edge with her other hand and dangled there for a moment.

That had been close! She was more out of shape than she thought! The rain made everything slippery too. She glanced over to Holly.

Holly gave Alice a wide eyed angry look that said ‘are-you-trying-to-get-us-both-killed-you-crazy-culturally-illiterate-woman!’
Alice blinked. Well, that had been uncalled for. She was just trying to help. She lifted herself up easily enough and peeked inside. Not a soul was around. It was dim, but a few lights were on. The area was clear for Alice to enter. She looked over to Holly and winked before pulling herself through the window and carefully lowering herself to the walkway. That accomplished, she quietly walked to the door and unlocked it.

It swung open easily to show a wet Holly staring at her. “Just where did you say you were from, Alice?” she whispered as she pulled the door closed behind her.

“Out of town. Pretty far away actually,” Alice said.

“Uh-huh.” Holly seemed to want to say more, but as they got farther into the warehouse, they started to hear distant noises. They were in a dark hallway that ended right next to the open warehouse floor. There were stairs next to the hallway and hooks hanging from the ceiling everywhere. There was a track for the packages that wound from the ceiling all the way down to the floor. Holly leaned on the corner and turned to Alice. “I think they’re coming in through the front.”

Alice nodded and looked around. “I think we have a good chance of seeing them if we head up. We can sneak closer to overhear them.”

Holly nodded, and they quickly moved up the stairway. Cranes and machine boxes were scattered about. Beams crossed this way and that. Alice slipped by and scanned the lower levels for the criminals. The voices steadily grew louder as they crept past the sacks and parts sitting in the walkway.

The front door opened and a crowd of people filed in. Alice counted them. There were nine people. She recognized the commissioner, but not the others. They walked up to a table two stories below the girls and a little to their right. Alice knelt down and peered over the edge of the walkway. It was an odd assortment of people. There was a weasel, a rat, a man with a dice for a head and a bunch of men in suits. There was a round man there that Alice felt like she should know, or had at least seen before, but couldn’t put her finger on where. She was able to recognize Robert Sykes after a moment of looking at faces.

“Stars? There’s a man with a dice for a head,” Holly whispered in wonder. “How does that work? Can he roll his head? Does it come off? How does that mustache grow? Does his head feel like plastic? Does that mean that gambling dice were based off other people like him? Why would a head be numbered? How--”

“Shhh,” Alice warned quietly. “Listen and don’t be heard.”

Holly immediately went silent, looking sheepish. Alice gave her a reassuring smile before looking back down on the meeting.

The dice man sat at the head with a balding man to his left and the round to his right. Next to the balding man was Robert, then a handsome man, then the commissioner. Next to the round one was the rat, a man with a bald head and a curled mustache, and the weasel.

“What are you doing commissioner?” the round man growled. “First the doctor and now these kids? Can’t you get rid of a few pests?”

“Me? What about you and that pathetic excuse of a public address? You certainly got a handle on the public mayor,” the commissioner sneered. “Ink illness is now the biggest thing to hit since moving pictures!”
“Well, I think that should go to slip up of our good editor in chief,” the mayor turned a glare at Robert. “How could that story get front cover and go unnoticed?”

Robert frowned. “Ah, just like you Medusa to not take any respons--”

“Gentlemen,” the dice man stood from his seat. Everyone fell silent and turned to him. “We can spend all night pointing fingers at each other and have nothing done. The boss is already in a sour mood. I highly doubt he’ll want to hear that this meeting didn’t go anywhere.”

“Tell that to your damn lacky! I have a circus back at the jail because of his attack! I thought he was a professional! He blasted a star fallen hole in the wall, left scorch marks everywhere, injured my men and what can I tell the public?” The commissioner scowled.

The dice man turned to the commissioner with a dark smile. Alice felt a shiver go down her spine. “Oh, that lacky has been more successful in the past two weeks than you have your entire career. Don’t think for a second that I am not absolutely aware of each one of your failings.”

The commissioner sputtered in indignation. “I was under the impression that the Cups would be dealing with the B-Brothers. Now, the B-Brothers are under the protection of the most upright and paranoid cops in the entire city! They screwed up!”

“If ya have them locked up, then just shoot them for stars sake!” Medusa barked. “That little guy is a demon. It should be easy enough to say he attacked someone.”

“Those detectives are in the way.”

“Then, we’ll kill them.” Bill shrugged. Alice’s grip tightened into a fist.

“Tiptail will probably notice that. Since he published that story, I’m sure he has others. If we do anything suspicious or obvious, we could find all of our faces on the news.” Robert frowned.

“Then, we’ll kill him too,” a bald man with a mustache said.

“It’s more complicated than that, I’m afraid.” The commissioner sighed. “That Holly girl you warned us about, Fairfax. I saw her with the detectives. They’re talking.”

Fairfax groaned next to Robert and pinched the bridge of his nose. The dice man leaned forward and put his hands on the table top.

“They know your faces, gentlemen?” he asked.

“Not mine,” said the man with the mustache. The weasel shook his head next to him.

“Nor me,” the rat said.

Fairfax groaned. “That little miss has become a pain in the side. She knows my face, and she’s at least suspicious of me. I think she was the little mouse that found her way into my apartment. She’s been snooping.”

“She came to my office and was very nervous,” Medusa said. “I think she wanted to tell me something, but backed off and left instead.”

“Then, she’s probably has you figured too,” Fairfax said flatly. The round man flushed and growled.

“But how?” he demanded. “Was it something in your apartment? You don’t have our names anywhere?”
“No.” Fairfax shrugged. “That little miss is as good as any newies or cop I’ve ever seen. She up there with those detectives and ol’ Tip.”

“She hid behind her little friend at the station when I approached them,” the commissioner stated. “So, she knows something about me at least.”

“Who is this?” the dice man asked.

“Holly May, former student from Yen and a little snooping mouse,” Fairfax said.

“And you didn’t take care of her?” the dice man asked.

“She didn’t seem to know much at first. By the time we decided she was getting too close, she had already disappeared.” Fairfax groaned.

“You have got to be cussing kidding me,” the weasel muttered.

“Enough!” The dice man’s eyes glowed a bright green. Goosebumps jumped up Alice’s arms. Strong magic rolled off the man in waves. Medusa cringed away in his seat. The mustache man shot the weasel a look and the weasel shrunk in his seat.

There was a tense silence for a few heartbeats until the dice man blinked. The glow and buzz disappeared. “Well, it seems it’s time for me to take some measures here. You lot have done a fine job making a mess here,” the dice man said to Bill and Robert.

“Us?” Bill frowned. “King Dice, we didn’t do this. I admit that the news story is a problem, but--”

“No Sykes, it’s not a problem. It’s a catastrophe!” King Dice snapped. Alice blinked. His name was Dice too? “You and Robby boy here are in charge of this little show. Your dancing monkeys have failed their acts, so it’s on your heads. One more failure and your heads will roll! All of you.”

“Hey now,” Robert objected.

“And you’re lucky it’s me here and not the boss! I am being nice.” Dice didn’t allow him to finish. The men scowled and grumbled, but none of them spoke up. “Now listen, and listen good. This here is your last chance, boys. Be happy you’re getting one. The boss doesn’t offer these chances often, but considering the excellent work you’ve done these past years, we think it’s just some bad circumstances. Besides letting that owl slip, you have all done fantastically and been rewarded equally for all your efforts, no?” The men at the table all made sounds of reluctant agreement.

“I heard those Cups even had trouble with the cunning bird,” the rat said.

“Exactly! See? Just a difficult circumstance. It’s not your fault all of this seems to be happening at once. You just need to focus on fixing it. I’ll delegate each of you with a charge and when the next meeting comes, have it done. Easy as that,” King Dice said smoothly.

“And if one of us slips again?” Fairfax asked.

“Then, that individual will have to pay the price.” The dice man looked to the Sykes brothers. “You two will answer to a representative, whether it’s me or someone else. But remember, you will at least be punished if your team here fails.” He turned back to the rest of the group. Alice wondered if he noticed the dark look in the brothers faces. She gulped.

“And the rest of you will answer to the Sykes.” Dice grinned. “They have handled...disappointment in creative enough fashions that the boss doesn’t think he’ll have to get involved. It is your boys
The commissioner huffed like he disagreed. King Dice’s eyes flashed green. “Commissioner, your job is the most straightforward. Kill Dr. Oddswell. Don’t care how, just get it done!”

“Bu--”

“Do it.” Bill cut him off. “Or I’ll take care of him and you.”

The commissioner paled and nodded.

“Good,” King Dice said. “Fairfax, I will leave you to handle that nosy student girl.”

“She’s been missing for weeks! So what if the commissioner saw her? She’ll be gone again,” Fairfax complained.

“Then find her, you idiot!” Robert hissed.

“Robert, I want you to discredit this ink illness story as best you can and take out that rebellious reporter. Again, I don’t care how. We can’t risk people getting informed,” Dice said. Alice gulped. He was handing out assassination jobs like simple everyday tasks.

“Bill, you have to get that doll. I heard that the wolf has disappeared. Did he run off with it?” Dice asked.

Bill shrugged. “Either him or that little miss he had been chasing the other night has it. I’ll track them both down.” A shiver of dread went down Alice’s back. Cloud fluff, they knew about her!

“Good,” King Dice said and turned to the mayor. “Medusa, you are to make the detectives and that chief’s lives as miserable as possible. If you can get a little ‘accident’ together, that would go over well, I think.” The round man nodded at the instructions.

“Ratagan, I still want you to look into the doctor’s house. I’m sure those things you’re after are there and keep your ear open to their plans,” Dice said.

“Of course, sir.” Ratagan nodded.

“And Mr. Winky.” Dice’s eye twitched. “You get those two kids locked up. If we can pin everything or anything on them, it would help out the rest here quite a bit.”

“Shouldn’t someone just take those two street urchins out? They could be shot while walking out of the courtroom,” Medusa suggested.

“That job is for the Cups to do. Don’t worry about the B Brothers,” Dice said. “They have a spotless record after all.” He sounded disgusted for some reason. Alice gulped again, her throat was dry with fear. She couldn’t move.

“Will do.” Mr. Winky grinned. “This case will be the quickest open, closed case ever.”

“It better be,” King Dice said. “Now, good luck gentlemen. For your sakes, don’t screw up again.”

The dice man snapped his fingers, eyes flashing green, and a hole opened up in the floor. He stepped in and disappeared in an instant. The others sat quietly for a moment. Alice felt her heart beating against her ribs.

“That cocky, star-fallen buffoon thinks he can just talk to us like that,” Medusa grumbled.
“He can and he did.” Mr. Winky smirked. “And I didn’t hear you arguing with him ‘ither.”

“Shut your gobs and get back to your jobs. You all heard him,” Robert said with a small frown.

“So, you have nothing to add, Mr. Sykes?” the commissioner asked, a touch condescending.

“Oh, you’re right! I had forgotten,” Robert said in a mocking tone. “If I find out that lizard is still breathing next week, I will fit you with a pair of cement shoes myself!”

The commissioner’s eyes widened as Bill gave the policeman an unpleasant smirk. “I think that’s your cue to leave.” All of the other men quickly stood and made their way out of the building. Alice felt like she might have forgotten how to breathe.

With all of them gone, Robert leaned on the table and rubbed his temples. “These idiots are going to get us killed.”

Bill chuckled, “It’s definitely not like the old days. Back then, men knew what to do. And if they didn’t get it done, they disappeared. They were smarter back then, less words getting tossed around.”

“Think we’re getting soft in our old age, brother?” Robert asked.

“Us? Old? Ha!” Bill replied. “Maybe, I know I wouldn’t have put up with that priss of a commissioner in the early days.”

Richard chuckled. “True.” He sighed. “I don’t know what we’re going to do when either Dice or the rep shows. If it’s one of those people, I might just lose it.”

“Calm down, Robert. If it’s one of them, we’ll just take them out like any other obstacle we’ve dealt with,” Bill said and pulled a fat cigar from his pocket. He offered it to Robert who shook his head.

“But if it’s those Cups...Look I’ve never really cared for people’s reputations. We both know a lot of it is just hot air.” Robert gestured with his hand. “We’ve been in the game long enough to tell the difference. Those Cups are no joke. If someone like them comes, Bill, I might just do something stupid.”

Bill lit the cigar and laughed. “Then do something stupid. We’ll show them all that our reputations are just as substantial.” He took a couple long drags from the cigar and let the smoke curl around his face. “Maybe if we beat the schmucks that show, we’ll get promoted!” Bill laughed.

Robert chuckled and nodded. “Alright, well I better head out too. I have to get the teams ready for the courtroom tomorrow.”

Alice wrinkled her nose. She could smell the cigar from here. It made her want to cough.

“Get a front row seat. We’ll see if Wink was worth the investment,” Bill said with a wave. Robert nodded and headed out the door all the others had used.

Bill hummed to himself as he headed the opposite direction and into a closed off room.

Holly gave Alice a questioning look, glancing toward the room he’d entered.

Alice looked over the room from the angle they were at. It didn’t seem to have any windows and the one door. The ceiling was open to the rest of the warehouse, but she didn’t think they should get that close. Alice shook her head. They had been around long enough. Alice was frankly disgusted and ready to go. She felt they had pushed their luck far enough for one night.
Holly nodded and started to scoot back silently. They headed down the stairs. The girls tiptoed to the door. After one last glance behind, Alice opened the door and headed back out into the rain. The two quickly made their way to the car. As soon the door was shut, Alice growled.

“Those low down dem-uh, horrible, monstrous people!” Alice said indignantly. “I can’t believe it! How dare they! And who was that dice man to hand out kill orders like it was a grocery list!”

Holly started the car, giving Alice an eyebrow raise. “They're career criminals. To them, it is just a grocery list. I'm sure they've done worse.” As they got into the road, she let out a big breath of air. “I'm just glad nothing happened while we were in there this time. They don't know that we know what they're doing.”

“This time? So, you did that before,” Alice said, not really questioning it. “I know they’re criminals!” She had been on the Surface and in Black Hat’s casino long enough to understand that at least. “But why the doctor and the boys? What possible threat does a cure to the ink illness have against a bunch of mobsters?”

Holly hummed thoughtfully. “That is the hundred dollar question. But I'm guessing the answer doesn't lie with them, but with whoever sent that dice man. They all seem to be directed. I think whoever it is probably helps them with their corruption.”

Alice hummed. “That was some powerful magic the dice man used. It seemed...strange...for some reason.” She couldn’t quite put her finger on it, though. “How are you feeling, Holly?”

Holly smiled at her. “Relieved actually.”

“Really?” Alice asked, surprised. It wasn’t everyday that a ton of people she knew got death threats.

Holly replied confidently. “We’re one more step ahead of them. We know some of their plans. And the best part, they don’t know that we know.”

“But...there are kill orders on us and everyone else. There will be people we can’t talk to either, like the doctor! How can we protect them from a threat?” Alice asked. Her mind went over the couple of defensive strategies her brother showed her. Nothing seemed to fit for this situation though.

Holly thought for a moment. “Well, I know at least I’ve been playing this game defensively. What if we tried being more offensive about it?” An evil smile crossed Holly’s face. “If we cause them enough trouble, we could keep them too busy to cause trouble.”

Alice blinked. She...did not understand the people here. She could see the logic in Holly’s plan...but she seemed too...excited…

Alice decided against asking, instead focusing on the next step. “I need get to the prison to talk to Bendy.”

Holly nodded. “Just tell me where to go.”

Alice gave her directions to the best of her ability. They only got lost once and had to turn around twice before they reached the tall fence with the barbed wire on time. Alice thought the rain had been bad before, but now it was coming in sheets. It was a miracle (heh) that they made it because the girls could barely see six feet in front of them when they pulled up to the gate.

The guard leaned out to peer at Holly through the window. “What’s your business?”

Alice leaned over her to smile at the man. “Hello! I’m here to visit again!” She waved at the guard.
“Richard should be expecting me,” Alice said. The guard stared at her for a moment before nodding and waving them through. They parked and looked out at the waves of water.

“Does it usually rain this bad here?” Alice asked. She’d been in Toon Town for a few months, but the seasons were changing…

Holly carefully squeezed out her hair. “Only during the fall.” She seemed resigned about it. “Don’t worry, it never lasts too long.” The two took a moment to wring as much water from their hair and clothes.

“So, why are we visiting Bendy?”

“I had to ask him where the doll was yesterday. I promised I would visit to let him know everything’s alright. I felt bad leaving him here to worry for so long.” Alice sighed as the two walked down the hall and to the front desk.

Holly smiled. “You know Alice, you’re a really nice person.”

Alice blushed. “Thank you, but I don’t think so. There is so much more I could be doing...should be doing.” Alice frowned. If she had her halo and her Gift worked right...maybe she would have been able to cure this illness without the boys going on a dangerous quest for magical pieces in the first place. What was the point of being the Angel of Healing if she couldn’t even take care of a common cold?

Holly snorted. “Give yourself some credit. What point is there is focusing on what-ifs? You’ve done good. Let yourself feel good about it. That way you can do better later.” She put a comforting hand on Alice’s arm.

Alice smiled. It was almost like she was talking to Mary again. “Thanks, Holly. That’s very wise of you.”

Richard tugged on his mustached. He grinned upon seeing Alice again. “Well, looky who’s back! Couldn’t stay away I see?”

“Hello, Richard,” Alice said and reached for the sign-in sheet.

“Did you two swim here?”

“Practically,” Alice said.

“I think I even saw a shark or two hanging around out there,” Holly added cheerfully.

“I think you should scale them down a little. They were more like barracuda than sharks.” Alice winked.

“It would add more teeth.” Holly considered thoughtfully. “You know. You might be right. It was dark and eely enough out there that I might have made a mistake.”

Richard stared at the two of them. “That was awful,” he said after a moment. The girls burst into laughter. “So, I’m to assume you are here to torture your boyfriend to death on puns? Good. He got in a bit of trouble this morning. You are just the person to set him straight.”

Holly glanced at Alice. “Boyfriend?”

“Trouble?” Alice asked at the same time and glanced at Holly. Ah. She had forgotten about that little
detail. Oooooooh golly.

Richard nodded sagely. “I didn’t punish ‘im, since I heard the fella was hasslin’ Bendy. The blockhead deserved the thwack he got for talkin’ about ya that way...especially to the boy!” Richard shook his head. Alice’s eyes widened in shock. Richard suddenly grinned. “And boy does that kid have a hook or what! He sent that fella flying! You should have seen it!” Richard chuckled. He stood and gestured for the girls to follow. Alice stared at the floor, not quite sure how to take that information. It was the casino all over again.

“Sounds like Bendy really cares.” Holly gave Alice a sidelong glance. Alice fought the urge to fidget.

Richard chuckled. “Of course. She’s his gal after all.” Alice felt her face heat up as he led them down the first hall of whistling and shouting inmates.

“Be-Bendy’s always been a gentleman,” Alice said, more as a justification for herself than anyone else. He was also a terrible flirt.

“Uh, huh.” Holly’s expression remained carefully neutral, though there was curiosity in her eyes.

The second hall was louder than the first. Alice glanced at the men behind bars. She regretted making eye contact with a man that winked. She didn’t like the feeling she got from him.

“Did anything else happen since I’ve been away?” Alice asked.

Richard thought for a moment. “Besides the storm and his lawyer stopping by, I wouldn’t say so.” Alice nodded. “The trial is tomorrow?”

“From what I have been told.” Richard shrugged. That was good news.

“Who’s his lawyer?” Holly asked.

“Fellow that goes by the White Rabbit. Nervous little fella, but he is good about his details, organized too. He just struggles getting to places on time.” Richard chuckled.

“Well, that’s...good.” Holly sounded uncertain.

“He’s probably the best shot that little demon’s got! Everyone thinks he’ll be in the slammer for the rest of his life. He’s infamous after all. Think the inmates have a pool going.” Richard glanced back to see Alice’s worried face. “But that Rabbit has pulled a couple of miracles before.”

They finally reached the third hall.

Chapter End Notes

Typo pun of the week!
Alice is amazing...
“She would have to jump and catch the window seal.
The two of them quickly made their way to the cell. Bendy was again lounging on the bed. His essence was agitated, but not in waves of anger like yesterday. His tail hung over the bed, flicking back and forth like a bored cat.

“Bendy,” Alice said. The demon’s head popped up, and he was on his feet and in front of the bars in an instant. Alice flinched at how fast he moved and how close he suddenly was.

“You’re okay! Did you get it? Is it safe? Is Granny okay? Did Xedo help? What happened?” Bendy shot question after question at her without giving her a chance to answer. She grabbed his hand to stop him. It worked, and he froze for half a second to look down at their hands. “You’re cold.” He looked back up. “You’re soaked! What? Is it raining buckets out there?” It worked for only that moment...Well, at least his hand was warm.

Alice laughed. “Nah, that would hurt. It’s just a lot of water. I came by to tell you everything’s fine and everyone’s okay.” Bendy appeared to deflate in relief.

“Alice and her jokes. Boy.” He snorted. “Thank the sta--,” he cut himself off. “What are you doing here!” He pointed at Holly with his jaw dropping.
Holly looked down at herself. “Standing, I think.” She smirked at him.

Bendy frowned. “Aw, you think you’re so funny. Good one. You look like you went through a spin cycle.”

Alice snorted. Holly laughed. “That’s a good one too. I drove Alice here.”

“Ah, then I gotta thank you. I was going nuts in here.” Bendy gave her his half smile.

“And I heard you’ve gotten into a fight.” Alice frowned. “Again.”

Bendy looked back at her sheepish. “What? What? The mook was asking for it!”

“Bendy.” Alice sighed.

“It’s not like I’ll be here for very long anyway.” Bendy shrugged.

“But you shouldn’t fight people.” Alice pushed. “You can resolve things without violence.”

“I know.” Bendy frowned and glanced away. “Then, there are times when a fella needs a wake up call.”

Alice rolled her eyes. “Your case is tomorrow. What if they didn’t let you go because you were fighting?”

“They wouldn’t do that...would they?” Bendy glanced behind her again. Richard shrugged.

Holly stood against the wall, her arms folded. “Generally, people are only locked up if they’ve broken the law. Having a little scuffle isn’t something people go to prison for.”

“Yeah, but I’m a demon. The social law seems to apply a little different to me.” Bendy smirked. Alice frowned. Like the way she had treated him. Unjust.

“If you’re worried then, don’t get into any more scuffles. We’re working our hardest out here to make sure things go smoothly.” Holly put her hands on her hips.

Bendy saluted her with his free hand. “Yes, boss ma’am.”

Alice smiled again at his joking attitude before she remembered the other thing she had wanted to tell Bendy. She squeezed his hand to get his attention. “Bends, there’s something else I need to warn you about. The bad guys are on the move. I think they’re trying to trap you here.”

“What do you mean?” Bendy narrowed his large eyes.

Alice paused, looking at Holly. Holly frowned. “They’re trying to pin as much evidence as they can on you two in court to keep you in here permanently. They’ve got this dirty lawyer on their side called Mr. Winky. He has a real bad reputation. Once they do that, they’re going to send...Cup assassins?...after you and Boris.” Holly shrugged. “If you know what that means.”


Holly laughed. “I know, right?”

Alice giggled. Bendy gave her hand a squeeze and smiled before turning back to Holly. “Well, I think we’ll be okay about the lawyer. The detectives did a bang up job getting evidence to prove Boris and I are innocent.”
"But what about the assassins? There was an attack on the jail recently, and the detectives thought they were looking for you!" Alice said, a bit worried. That’s right. In all the hubbub over the doll, she had completely forgotten about the danger the boys were in.

Bendy pursed his lips for a second and glanced away from both of them. "I-It could have been. If it was him…" Bendy trailed off. Alice blinked.

"They sounded pretty dangerous." Alice said.

Bendy frowned. "They are...or were…" He grimaced with something like pain flashing in his eyes. Regret? "You two don’t need to worry about them." Alice frowned and furrowed her brows in worry. He wasn’t telling them something.

“So...you’ve met them before?” Holly looked confused.

Bendy seemed to cringe. Alice had to take a moment to think what a girlfriend would do if her boyfriend was uncomfortable...eeeeeheh. She glanced back at Richard. The guard had graciously given them enough room to talk privately. He winked at her. Alice sighed inwardly. This plan had been dumb. She could have just said she was adopted, or he was...Boris was obviously not blood related after all! With inner resignation she stepped a little closer to the bar and rubbed the back of Bendy’s hand with her thumb in what she hoped seemed like a comforting gesture.

Bendy flinched and stared at her with wide eyes. He nearly yanked his hand away. There was a muffled snort of laughter from Holly. Alice fought the urge to scowl at the girl. She wasn’t good at this! She didn’t know how couples acted! He visibly relaxed and looked back to Holly. “You...could say the Cups and I have a history.”

Holly forced down an amused smile. “Are they really Cups? Or is that just a code word?”

Bendy’s expression changed into something between resignation and dislike. “Um...yes and no? How can I explain them? It’s just their heads?” He shrugged helplessly.

Holly’s eyes widened. She opened her mouth and closed it again. “Well...uh. What sort of race is made of ceramics?” she muttered to herself in wonder. “It’s like that dice man. What came first? The person or the cup? Gambling dice or the man?” She continued the string of questions in a low voice to herself. They had lost Holly.

Alice and Bendy stared for a second. “Is she gonna be okay?” Bendy asked.

Alice shrugged and shook her head. She had no idea. "Wanna hear a joke?"

"Sure."

"Did you hear about the crimes over at that house they're renovating?" Alice asked with a smirk.

"No I didn't." Bendy looked at her expectantly.

"The shower was stalled while the curtains were held up." Alice grinned.

"Oh stars," Bendy snorted.

"Apparently the doors were also hung, and I heard the window was framed for it," Alice continued proudly.

Bendy laughed. "That's terrible!"
"I know. It must have been a gruesome scene." Alice giggled. Bendy was shaking his head while he laughed.

Holly’s head suddenly jerked upward again. “Oh. Also, I’d almost forgotten to tell you. I was able to find the right rune combination. All I need to do now is put it on the map.”

That snapped Bendy out of his laughter. His eyes widened and gleam of…excitement or hunger entered their light depths. “Yeah? Th-that’s great! The detectives stashed it for us. You’ll have to bug them for it, but that’s some of the best news I’ve heard since getting locked up in this joint! Thanks Holly!” Bendy smiled. “Boy, Boris will be thrilled to hear this.”

“He’ll be there tomorrow?” Alice asked.

Bendy frowned at the cell floor. “He better be,” the demon muttered before looking back up at them. “Are either of you gonna be there?”

Holly nodded. “You can bet I’ll be there.”

“I’ll be there, but I don’t know how much help I can be,” Alice said, a bit unsure of her part in all this.

“You’ll do fine. Just use that scowl you used on me at the bar.” Bendy winked. Alice frowned, which caused him to grin. “Yeah! That one!” She huffed and went to yank her hand back, but he just took a step closer to the bars. She leaned back and turned her head away in a pout.

Holly, meanwhile, had gotten a thoughtful look. “So, if they’re heads are cups, wouldn’t that make them really fragi--”

“Alright you lovebirds! Wrap it up. Times up, and you have to ready for a busy day tomorrow,” Richard called out and pointed to Bendy.

“But, I had more questions,” Holly said mournfully in a low voice.

“Ask ‘em when the kid is free. Now, get your goodbyes going. The storm is getting worse, and I don’t want you ladies stuck here for the rests of the day,” Richard said.

One of the other men whistled. “Aaw! C’mon Richy! We can show them a good time!”

“You mean have them show us a good time!” another shouted. Several laughed.

Richard scowled at the cells. “What would your mothers say?”

“Good catch?” There was more laughter.

Bendy frowned in annoyance. “Those lousy star fallen--”

“Bendy, don’t,” Alice said. “I want you there for your trial!” The demon huffed.


Alice frowned. “Can you not?”

Bendy’s smirked turned into that cocky half smile of his. Alice was ready for the kiss he gave her hand. It was as warm as it was yesterday, but she didn’t react. She didn’t blush. No, she had a plan.
She wasn’t going to be the flustered one today!

“See you then, Bends,” Alice said simply. Holly was already walking toward Richard. Alice made a motion to go until she stopped and came right up to the bars. “Oh! Wait, I forgot!”


Alice glanced back at the two waiting, then to Bendy. “I have to tell you…” she whispered. Bendy had to lean forward to hear her. “Something important,” she said even softer. He leaned just a little closer with a questioning furrow in his brows and curiosity in his eyes. Before Alice could lose her nerves, she snagged her revenge.

She leaned against the bars and pecked a kiss on Bendy’s cheek before straightening up and stepping back.

Bendy jumped back. His eyes looked like they were going to fall out of his head. His tail was bent funny, and her lipstick left a mark on his cheek. He seemed so surprised and silly that Alice couldn’t hold back her laughter. As her voice rang out, his face darkened with such a deep blush that Alice almost lost the sight of her lipstick on his cheek. Boy, did she wish she had a camera! Alice struggled to breathe through her laughter and brushed a tear from the corner of her eye.

“Bye-bye for now, Bendy dear,” Alice was able to say as she turned and walked over to join Holly and the guard. Richard raised a brow, an entertained smirk on his face, but he didn’t say anything.

Holly had stopped, her mouth slightly open. She snapped it shut, giving a little shrug. She touched her beauty mark thoughtfully. “Hmm.” Without a word, she turned to follow Richard. Alice simply gloated to herself and replayed Bendy’s glowing face in her mind. They bid Richard a good day and headed back out into the rain.

Alice completely understood why people compared rain to cats and dogs now. They got in, and it was like they stepped into a shower.

“The police station?” Holly asked, and when Alice agreed, she put the car in gear and started to drive. It was silent, but for the rain, for a few minutes.

“So, what’s it like dating a demon?”

Alice came up short suddenly. Her good mood doused with ice. "Uh? What?"

Holly raised a brow. "C'mon Alice, I want to know details."

Details? "On dating? Have you dated much?" Alice didn't have much experience either if she was honest.

"No, silly. On dating a demon. Is he a good kisser?" A slight smile grew at the edge of Holly’s lips.

Alice inwardly cringed to herself. On dating a...demon...Alice blinked.

Bendy was a demon.

She had...

“Wh-wh-what!” Alice squeaked. Her mind wiped blank in surprise. Sh-she had kissed Bendy...She had kissed Bendy! She had kissed a demon! Oh, no! Her family was gonna disown her for this!
They would be so mad! She could just see her father’s disapproving frown, her mother’s look of betrayal and hurt! The disgust in her brothers, the horror in her sisters! What would grandmama say! Oh oh! Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh! Oh no! What had she done! It had just been a prank! AAAAAHHH! WAS SHE TAINTED NOW? WOULD THEY KNOW? WAS IT ANOTHER MARK LIKE WHAT BLACK HAT SAW! WHAT HAD SHE DONE!

Holly suddenly burst out laughing. “Geez, don’t freak out so much, Alice! I was just kidding. So, I’m guessing they only let family see inmates?”

Alice blinked owlishly. She realized she had put her fingers to her temples in her panic. She lowered her hands and stared at Holly. “How did you figure that out!” Alice gasped in surprise. Was Alice obvious? Was it a common law?

Holly nearly burst out laughing again, but managed to get control of herself this time. “I don’t know, you two were just a bit stiff with the couple act. But what really gave you away was that kiss.” Holly snorted in good humor. “There’s no way you’ve ever kissed Bendy before.” She shrugged. “Ultimately, your reaction to my questions proved it. I was just guessing, but then you panicked.”

Alice deflated like a popped balloon. “I had to see him and didn’t know what to say,” she explained weakly. “The first thing that popped into my head came out of my mouth before I had really thought about it.”

Holly chuckled. “It’s okay. Honesty is a strength most of the time.”

Alice nodded. “I don’t like to lie. It’s so uncomfortable. I couldn’t think of a way to fix it without either getting in trouble or being cut off from seeing him again.” She sighed and looked out the window to the rain and roads. “And I couldn’t just run in one day with so many problems and questions. Then, disappear on him without a word. Knowing him, Bendy would have done something rash.”

“A bit of a hothead, is he?” She smiled, tapping on the steering wheel. “Although, him breaking out to protect you would be sweet.” She paused, getting a mischievous smile on her face. “So, what do you really think about him?”

Break out for her? Alice smirked at her reflection. Ha, good one. It would be the machine piece he’d be checking on first. Which was fine. A lot of lives depended on that thing. She understood that. It was far more important than whatever was going through Holly’s head between Alice and Bendy...Then Holly’s question caught up to Alice. “Me?” Alice asked and lifted her hand to twirl the ends of her hair on her fingers. What she really thought? Uuuuuh.

“W-well.” Alice bit her lip for a second. “He really cares about his brother. He works hard for the things he thinks are important. He does have pretty good manners for a demon…” She blinked. “He actually surprised me. He didn’t act violent until someone was acting aggressive first.” That’s right. He was always on the defensive, always reacting. That was not normal for a demon. “He stood up for me a couple times, even though I hadn’t been...nice to him.” Alice sighed. She still felt bad about that.

Alice shrugged. “He’s a good guy, I guess, but...but.” But what? But, he’s a demon? A creature of darkness? He wasn’t what he was supposed to be? “He’s confusing. I don’t get what he’s thinking most of the time. He always has this...wall up, I guess. I can never tell how he really feels, or what he really thinks.” Alice didn’t know what would set him off. She looked down at her hand. He had almost crushed it yesterday. He had hardly noticed too. He was much stronger than he appeared. She didn’t know what he would do when he finally went off on someone. It was a scary thought. But...he hadn’t done it intentionally. She had to stop expecting the worst from him! It wasn’t fair.
Holly’s face went back to being serious. “Sounds like you’re really trying to understand him then. If you’ve had such a hard time of it, how did you become friends?”

“I didn’t try to understand him at first.” Alice smiled. “I completely judged him for being a demon. I had some...prior experiences with a demon and expected the same from him. I was very mean,” Alice admitted with another sigh. “Instead of going away or taking it personally, he tried to save me from a drunk that got handsy.” Alice shook her head. “I accused him of only wanting to be violent and attack someone.”

Holly made a listening noise and nodded. Alice looked back out to the rain and fiddled with her hair. “I thought he’d leave me alone or prove me right, but he kept coming back and just...talked to me. It was like he was trying to figure me out. I thought he was just messing with me. His brand of revenge or something. Then, he just kept at it. Questions, jokes, and so on. I would brush him off, but he would shrug it away. Then, I met his brother. I didn’t know they were brothers at the time though. They weren’t together. And...” Alice’s mind went back to the balcony. “Boris really loves his brother. He wanted to help him so badly. He really touched me. The way he showed how important his brother was to him...” Alice swallowed and took a deep breath.

“Well, you could imagine my shock when I found out that the brother Boris was so fond of was Bendy. It helped me see him in a new light. I started trying to really listen to him. Him and Boris. I jumped into this mess because I wanted to help them. Both of them,” Alice admitted.

Holly half turned, her eyes still on the road. “So, where did you meet him then?”

“Heh, I used to be a bartender at a casino on the outskirts of the county,” Alice said. She looked back at Holly. “Bendy just showed up one day. Then he would pop in and out every few days after that.”

“A casino bartender? I wouldn’t have expected that from someone like you. I’d have guessed...maybe classy theater singer, if you had anything to do with a gambling parlor.” There was a little sparkle in Holly’s eyes.

Alice shrugged and quirked her mouth. “It was an interesting situation to be in. Actually, I had been promoted to be a singer there just before I lost my job.” Alice chuckled.

Holly blinked. “Oh really? You got fired? I’m sorry to hear that. It hurts when that happens. Were you able to get another job?”

Alice smiled, a bit chagrined. “I was actually a little relieved.” Except, she’d had to leave her halo back there! “It wasn’t a good place to work. I just got a new job with a wonderful gal, actually. Ms. Betty Boop.”

“I’m glad.” Holly winked. “Good employers are priceless.” Just then Holly pulled into the TTPD parking lot.

“Tell me about it,” Alice mumbled. “Ready?” She asked looking out at the rain.

“Just one moment.” Holly leaned toward the back and grabbed her bag. She pulled out small notebook. “Never go without paper,” she advised Alice. That said, she scribbled out a bullet point list on it. When she was done, she showed it to Alice. It was a list of which people from the mob were going after which people and a short summary of what they’d seen. “We can’t depend on being able to tell the detective anything in there, so this is the backup option.” Ripping out the page, she tucked it into a crack in the steering wheel.

“Also, what do you think should be our back up plan in case the commissioner does anything inside
“If he doesn’t try anything, I think we should be fine. If he does, run. Head to Granny’s,” Alice suggested.

“You sure you could lose him?” Holly looked at her sideways. “You were having a bit of trouble outrunning that wolf.”

Alice smiled. She had no clue. The commissioner or Avery were bigger than her and the weight difference was a concern. But she guessed they probably fought like other people on the Surface. She could probably use her self defense to protect herself...but she probably wouldn’t be able to outrun him. “We’ll be fine. We’ll have the detectives there and a room full of cops. It’ll be fine.”

That decided, the two rushed out and into the building. Alice scanned the front. It was just the same grumpy desk woman. “We’re visiting the detectives, thanks,” Alice said, without giving her the chance to try and turn them away. She marched down the hall to the office that was theirs. Holly opened the door.

“Hello detectives, I hope you’ve been having a productive day,” Alice greeted on entering.

Ringtail jumped so badly that her coffee splashed out of her mug and on her desk. “Ah!”

Alice winced. “Sorry.”

Holly blinked at the mess. She picked up the notebook they had used earlier.

You told us to be back at 6.

She smiled at Ringtail. The raccoon scowled. “Didn’t anyone ever tell you to knock?” She started to clean up the mess with a huff. Featherworth turned to them after putting down her pen.

“I hope everything went alright,” she said.

“Yes! Thank you for all the help,” Alice said. Featherworth lifted a pad.

We’re wrapping up to leave in ten minutes. I want to know what you learned. The commissioner hasn’t returned.

Holly nodded and picked up the pencil.

Do you want us to go somewhere else with you and talk about this then?

Featherworth scribbled something down.

Let’s head to Rachel’s apartment. Follow us out.

“Oh! Thank you!” Alice made sure to sound pleasantly surprised. The group made their way to the front of the building and back out to the car. The woman at the front desk eyed them suspiciously, but didn’t say anything. Once in the car Alice dared to let out a small sigh of relief.

Holly smiled at her in agreement. She turned to Featherworth. “My journal?”

Featherworth passed it back to her with a nod. “It was very informative. My keys?”
Holly passed the detective her keys and the crow started the car. Ringtail looked back at Holly. “You went through the ringer there. Sorry ‘bout that.”

Holly pinked. “Oh, don’t worry.” She smiled. “I’ve moved forward. After all, difficult experiences help you grow, right?”

Ringtail and Featherworth made noises of agreement. “So, now we seem to be completely caught up on what’s happening,” Featherworth said. “And I’m sure you were never meant to tell us about the ink machine.” Alice choked in surprise. “But we aren’t going to tell. It would be bad for the parts to be endangered, especially if it’s the best chance those that are sick have.” Alice looked around the car with concern. That was supposed to be a secret, and now the detectives knew. Oh no. Xedo would be mad.

Holly sunk down in the seat next to her. “They read it in my journal. I didn’t think about that,” she murmured guiltily.

“You probably want to hide that book,” Ringtail suggested with a chuckle.

Holly stuck the journal down her shirt. “This has sufficed for the last two weeks,” she said with finality. Ringtail raised a brow, but didn’t say anything.

“You really won’t tell? You’ll help everyone with the parts?” Alice asked.

“We will, as far as we can legally,” Featherworth said.

Holly grinned. She turned to Alice. “That’s progress.” Turning back to the detectives she said, “After reading my journal then, I’m sure you’ll realize that I need that map the boys gave you.”

Featherworth nodded. “Strange that such an old piece of blank parchment would be so important.”

“If it involves runes, I’m not entirely surprised,” Holly replied.

The detectives hummed. “So, and don’t take this the wrong way,” Ringtail said quickly while waving a hand. “What’s the difference between your magic and a witches?”

Holly pondered a moment. “Witches make contracts with living beings of power. They get their energy from the creature and channel it. They are dark or light witches depending on themselves and the creature with which they contract. Runes take energy from the caster and apply it to what they are casting.” Holly took a breath. “Also, witches can do more powerful works. They have more instant access to doing works of magic. However, working with runes is...more safe and lot more flexible. It takes knowledge and work to write them out, but there is endless potential to create new magic. For witches, when you make a contract with a being and use its power, there is always a heavy price, whether the creature you contract with is good or bad.”

“Huh,” Ringtail grunted. “Magic still looks like a loose canon to me.”

Holly frowned, her lips hardening with determination. “Yes, but when you are careful and direct it the right way, even a cannon or gunpowder can be used to accomplish important things.”

Alice nodded. “She’s right. There can be a lot of good done if you use it wisely.”

It didn’t take the car long to reach the raccoon’s home. The apartment complex wasn’t the fanciest, but it was comfortable. Ringtail led them to the second floor and into a slightly messy living room. Papers and empty coffee mugs sat on most table surfaces. There was an attached kitchen with dishes in the sink, empty milk glasses on the table and a couple open cupboards.
“Sorry for the mess. Wasn’t expecting company,” Ringtail said. She disappeared off into a side room. Featherworth went to the kitchen table and started clearing it off. Ringtail came back with the map in hand. She handed it to Holly.

Holly smiled brightly. Then she deflated. “I just realized...There’s only one problem. I need to be able to see the characters to change them.” She rubbed her beauty mark. “And the only people we’ve found so far who can see them are the boys.”

Alice’s eye twitched. Holly unfolded the map on the table top. Alice could see the spread of the local area. The bay and ocean to one side. The rolling hills to the other. The runes in the corner. OOOOOh! How could she say she could see it without giving away her identity?

“It’s really a shame. It’s so frustrating, only being able to see a blank piece of paper.”

Holly thought she was frustrated! Alice was right there! She could step up and speak up, and break one of the rules she was supposed to keep. If she did, would she lose her last two miracles? Would she have to go home in shame since she couldn’t make people forget her? She wasn’t powerful enough without her halo! What was she supposed to do! She found her mouth hanging half open, ready to speak, but not knowing what to say.

Holly caught sight of Alice and blinked. “Alice, are you okay?”

Alice swallowed. “Didn’t they say the runes were in the bottom right corner?”

“Yeah.” Holly shrugged. “It’s all the same. If I can’t see what I’m doing, I could erase the wrong thing or write over something. I could mess things up really badly.”

“What did you do on the copy Bendy gave you?” Alice asked. “Can I see it?”

“Sure.” Holly rummaged through her bag and pulled out a piece of paper. “The top line was what Bendy gave me. The bottom line is what I came up with. Ignore the middle. Those are failed attempts.”

Alice scanned through the symbols. Holly had added the symbol for day, which looked a little like an H with an X in the middle. Also at the end, she had added what Alice recognized as a “riding” symbol. It was curious way to solve the problem with the map. The riding symbol essentially kept the map moving forward. It was a tricky way to try and keep the map current. Both symbols were very simple, but also very old. They were from the Micco. Huh. She had fit them in with the other originals in a natural flow. Alice had to admit she was impressed. Most people on the Surface didn’t understand how runes worked anymore.

She could also see why Holly was worried. Placing them was important and not being able to see them would be an added risk. What could Alice do to solve this? She hummed and ahhed for a time. The detectives went on to other things. Holly and them talked about the warehouse. In the end, Alice couldn’t figure out how to let the others see or put the runes on herself without blowing her cover.

Eventually, Featherworth and the girls were back in the car. “What’s your address Alice?” Alice told her and the three headed off. “And where should I take you, Holly?” Alice looking over to the other girl.

“You can just drop me where Alice is going too. I’ll find my way from there,” Holly said offhandedly as she continued to scrutinize the blank map in front of her.

Alice raised a brow. “But it’s still raining…”
Featherworth cleared her throat. “I have a couch.”

Holly blinked and looked up slowly. Alice looked between the two for a second before it finally clicked. “Oh! You don’t have a place to stay? Why didn’t you say so! Stay with me! I have a second room!”

Holly was starting to look a little uncomfortable. “Uh. Um. I don’t really want to impose on anyone…”

Alice laughed. “Impose? Hardly! I insist. I can’t leave you in the rain!” It was normal to have the door open to travelers in the Upper. Most made it to the city with only the clothes on their backs after the dangerous climb up the mountain paths.

“Um...okay,” Holly said the word really quietly. Alice smiled. She caught Featherworth smiling from the corner of her eye.

They reached Alice’s place. It wasn’t very far from Xedo’s, and Alice looked around carefully for a black car. No sign of it. Good. Alice thanked the detectives, and they went inside quickly. The entrance was a small hall that had the kitchen to the left and the living room opening up in front of that. There was two doors on the far side of the living room that led to the guest room and a bathroom. Then, another small hall to the right of the living room that led to a closet and the master bedroom.

The two looked at each other and sighed. What a day. Alice went and hid the map in her room, a frustrated knot in her brows. If only she could fix it! The two jumped on dinner, since they missed lunch. They spent most of the time chatting about runes, with Alice asking a question and Holly rambling on and on.

It was during clean up that the phone on the wall started to ring. Alice glanced to Holly, and then to the phone. It could be Betty or Xedo. Maybe Avery showed up at Granny’s house? Alice walked up to the phone and picked it up.

“Hello?” Alice spoke into the mouthpiece.

“Hello, Alice?” a higher-pitched, male voice asked.

“Yes? Who is this?” Alice asked.

“It’s Dr. Flug.” Alice’s eyes widened. “I’m calling you to give you an amazing offer.”

“How did you get this number?” Alice asked.

He ignored her. “Mr. Hat has reconsidered your dismissal and is willing to offer you your job back! How fortunate for you!”

“What!” Alice squeaked. Offer it back? Why! Black Hat never reconsidered...unless he wanted her back for some reason.

“Yes! I know! You must be thrilled.” Dr. Flug didn’t sound too thrilled. “Can we expect you in by tomorrow morning?”

“I-I didn’t say I was going back,” Alice said in a daze. She didn’t want to go back. She liked working for Betty and visiting everyone. It was nice to get out and see others. It was nice to meet kind people like that Minnie girl that ran a flower shop and Holly. She didn’t want to be on her guard at every moment. She wanted to say no. She wanted to hang up so badly.
“Are you saying no?” There was a warning in his tone and annoyance. She could only wish. Her mind went back to the long rich corridors, the small cramped room, the mobsters, the rich, the gambling, the flirting, and yelling. Being under that demon’s thumb. All that darkness. Her hand tightened on the phone. She didn’t want that life. She didn’t want to feel trapped. What if she didn’t get out...But what happened when you say no to a demon? She would find out.

“No,” she said with finality. She didn’t want to! She would have to say goodbye to this life. She probably wouldn’t get a chance to get into town. So, she wouldn’t get to see anyone very often. If at all. She felt like she was going far away for some reason. Like the casino was a completely different world..

“Good. Be here at eight,” Dr. Flug said and hung up without a goodbye. Alice stared at the phone with wide eyes. The dial tone buzzed. He hadn't heard a word she said! Annoyance bubbled in her as she hung up the phone. What was she going to do?

But her halo!

Stars above! She’d have to do this! She’d have to tell Betty, and she’d have to do something with the apartment. Bendy and Boris’ court date was tomorrow! Heavens, why!

“What was that about?” Holly was sitting at the table. She frowned at Alice.

“Huh? Oh, uuuuh, well." Alice grimaced. “Just something I need to take care of.”

“Okay. Anything I can do to help?”

Alice pursed her lips. “Do you need a job?”

Holly blinked. She frowned. “Huh? Yeah...I guess I do.”

Alice nodded. This could work. Holly needed a job and a place. She could take the apartment and replace her at Betty’s store. “How do you feel about working at a shop?”

Holly tilted her head, studying Alice intently. “It depends on the shop, but under my current circumstances, I’m not really picky.”

“You’ll love it.” Alice turned back to the phone. She quickly called Betty.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Betty.”

“Alice! How are you?”

“I’m okay. Listen, I’d hate to ask, but I need a favor.”

“Okay, what can I do?” Betty sounded curious.

“I have a friend that needs a job,” Alice said.

“Oh dear, I don’t know if I can afford--”

“Give her the spot. It’ll work out.” Alice cut her off. There was a long pause.
“Alice.” Betty sounded serious. “What’s going on?”

“Something came up. Don’t worry. I’m fine. Just...do this for me, please,” Alice asked. The silence on the other side of the line was nerve wracking.

“Alright, Alice, but I want an explanation,” Betty said.

“I will when I can,” Alice promised. “Thank you so much.”

“Be safe, Alice.”

Alice said her goodbye and turned back to Holly. “Okay, you have a job. You start the day after tomorrow.”

Holly folded her arms, looking skeptical. “Alice. What’s going on?”

When Alice didn’t answer, she tilted her head again. “Okay. Let’s try a different question. So what was that whole window thing earlier today about?”

“What do you mean? We needed to get in and the window was open.” Alice shrugged and sat across from Holly.

Holly raised a brow. “You jumped twelve feet out and snagged the edge of the window as you were passing by. That’s not normal.”

Alice blinked. Oh no. “Oh...It isn’t?” Feathers, was this girl onto her?

Holly’s lips twitched in a small smile. “No, Alice.”

“Ah, well. My family was very much into self defense and being physically fit. My brothers would probably be horrified with how much I let myself go,” Alice explained weakly.

Holly sighed and shrugged. She smiled at Alice. “Well, I suppose it’s none of my business if you don’t want to tell me the truth. You really have been kind to me. I don’t want to be rude or put you in an awkward position. Just, if there is anything I can do to help you in return, please tell me.” She stood up. “I’m going to go to bed, if that’s okay. But you should know...when you were opening the door, I took a look at the window, and you left finger marks on the wood frame.”

Alice’s jaw dropped. “I-I didn’t lie! It’s true and-and--! Wait...I left finger marks?” Alice looked down at her hands. She had? She hadn’t even noticed. She smiled and clenched her fist. “Maybe, I haven’t lost all my strength after all!”

Holly laughed from the other side of the room. “Geez, Alice. You’re not making it easy for me to not ask questions!”

Alice smiled apologetically. “Sorry. Thank you for being considerate.” Alice bobbed her head in a small bow. “I’d hate to feel cornered after all. Wouldn’t want to frame myself in a bad image.” She winked.

Holly raised a brow and chuckled. “You’re certainly pulling me through a complex picture.”

Alice grinned. “Hopefully, I’ll get to explain myself soon. Sorry to act all mysterious, especially after such a long day.”

Holly shrugged. “I’ve faced far more difficult challenges,” she said in mock seriousness. “I shall remain strong as I restrain my natural curiosity.”
Alice laughed. “You do that. Good night, Holly.”

“Good night, Alice.”

Alice opened her door and checked the living room. No sign of Holly. Good. She grabbed her bag and stopped at the table. She looked at the three letters and put them on the table. One for Holly that would give her the apartment. One for Betty to explain the job switch. And one to Bendy and Boris.

With a silent sigh, Alice headed out the door.

She was going to get what was hers and nothing, not even that monstrous demon, was going to stop her. She had no idea what he had in mind for her, but she would be able to handle it. She had to. She had been so useless since she left her halo behind. If she had it with her, she would have been able to fight Avery without too much of a problem. She would have been able to listen in to those mobsters without having to break into that building and endanger herself and Holly. She would have been able to allow the detectives to talk freely at the office without the risk of being overheard. And none of them would remember enough to be suspicious of her, like Holly was.

She had to get it back. She had to go back. Alice didn’t want to. She was a little scared what Black Hat wanted, but she couldn’t allow that to stop her. Everyone had to face their own battles today after all.

Chapter End Notes

Tap here!
So what did you think? Pretty eventful day for the girls, huh? And now Alice is disappearing for a time. I have no clue when she'll be back so this is probably the last we'll hear from her for a while. T-T
And here that's awesome story by ViraSol The Illusion of Living Enjoy!
Chapter Summary

A somewhat thin man with a microphone as a head steps up and lifts a...well, a microphone to his mouth. He glances off stage, a little nervous. He pulls a few note cards from his vest pocket. “Welcome to the newest chapter of Bendy and Boris in the Inky Mystery! Today’s episode: What’s in store for Bendy and Boris in the court room? Will they be proven innocent or guilty with the evidence the detectives were able to gather? And what does the villainous Mr. Winky have planned!!” He pauses and raises a brow. He tilts the mic away from his face and asks to the side stage. “Really? His name is Winky?”
“~~~”
He waves his hand and frowns, “Okay, Okay! Sorry!” He turns back and lifts the microphone again. “Find out today!”

Chapter Notes

Hello, hello, my wonderful readers!
This chapter was such a hassle to write. I don’t even know why I struggled so much with it! Aaaaarggh! I’ve decided I don’t like legal stuff. Which is a bummer, because there is a chance that I’ll have to show up in court next week to be a witness for a friend! XP Why do things like this happen? Maybe, I should write about how someone becomes a millionaire and wait for the money to show up! (Knowing my luck, I would be owing money to a millionaire... ;/)

Oh! And I gave Mic a new job! (You know Mic, from the last fight between the Cups and the Warners?) He’ll be our new Summary Announcer!^^ He needed a job other than announcing at the casino.

Oh, and you should check out the newest Inky Extra chapter. Holly shows just how hard it is to work with runes. (And it’s hilarious.)

Anyway, I hope you enjoy! Have a great weekend/week.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Bendy did not like prison.

The food was terrible. The schmucks here were the lowest of the low, dumb, or unlucky enough to get caught. There was literally nothing to do here.

Bendy sighed as he stared at the ceiling of his cell. He had practically every notch, scratch, and speck of dirt memorized. Three days in here had been an eternity. He was constantly worrying about Boris, and then Alice after her first visit. Her second visit had helped calm that inner panic. Yet, he couldn’t
completely shake his worry for her, for some reason. It was like some part of him believed she wasn’t out of the woods, for some reason. Or that something had been off when he had last seen her, and he couldn’t quite put his finger on why. He had a bad feeling in his gut.

Not to mention that quick trick she’d pulled on him. Even now, he blushed at the memory. He had been able to calm down a few minutes afterward…Then he saw the lipstick mark, and the embarrassment and shock started all over again. Bendy covered his face with his hand. That…hadn’t been his swapiest moment.

With a sigh, he dropped his hand.

Then, it went right back to Boris and The Ink Machine. He’d had an attack last night. Luckily, Ringtail had slipped him his pills, and he had been able to keep them hidden. It had still wiped him out. He was exhausted, but couldn’t sleep anymore. He felt so sluggish. He wasn’t ready for any public appearance. He really need to get back to that quest.

He would need more pain meds soon. He had meant to ask Granny Gopher that day, but then the news about Steven had erased the thought from his mind.

The guy in the cell next to him coughed.

Anyway, the attack had been terrible. He was alone, melting, burning, and terrified to make a sound. He hadn’t been able to be completely silent. A schmuck next to him had woken up and told him to shut it, then had started to threaten him when he didn’t. Of course, at the time Bendy hadn’t given the guy any mind. No, he just didn’t want to get moved to the infirmary. Last he’d heard about Ink Illness, the city officials were still denying its existence. He didn’t want to know the prison doctor’s opinion. It had been one of the worst attacks he’d dealt with so far. He had really thought he was a goner for a second there. He'd almost wanted to be, but he couldn’t do that to Boris. He'd promised they’d see each other again. He couldn’t fall apart here. So, he'd stayed as quiet as he could and endured, trying to think of the good things in his life. It hadn’t been easy, but he got through and no guard showed up.

The less attention he got, the less likely the commissioner would find him too. Another warning from the detectives (They were full of them!) was that the commissioner had already tried for Oddswell three times, so of course the guy would go for Bendy and Boris. Bendy had to keep his head down, a nearly impossible feat, but it seemed to be working so far. No killer assassins yet.

Aside from the mook that had been harassing him about Alice, Bendy hadn’t had to deal with much. That scum wouldn’t be leaving the infirmary for a while. The other prisoners already figured out he didn’t really care what they had to say or what they were doing. They couldn’t entice, intimidate, or get him to take any bait (until Alice). He knew that had ticked some of them off. But again, Bendy couldn’t really bring himself to care. He just wanted to see Boris, make sure he was okay, and then get back to their quest.

If his trial weren’t today, he was sure it’d get worse here. The schmucks knew he didn’t like ‘em talkin’ about the girl that came to visit him. His disinterest in their attempts to interact had bugged them. Like poking a bear with a stick, some of these morons’ egos were sensitive to being ignored. To add to that, he had kinda proved he was a tough guy yesterday. So now he definitely had a target on his back. This place had a pecking order, and Bendy was flat out refusing to be placed anywhere on it. Now that they knew he could dish out pain, they might not leave him alone. They would start seeing him as a threat.

He wasn’t in a group. He wasn’t a top dog, a bullying schmuck, a coward, or an alley. Nope, nu-uh, he wanted none of it. He wasn’t here to make friends and get a rep. But…lone wolves weren’t
appreciated here. Bendy was determined to not be around long enough for that to become concrete to these thugs. He was a passing shadow and wanted to keep it that way. Legally or illegally, he was leaving this place in a week, promise or no. He couldn’t stand living like this. He felt like he was doing a balancing act on a knife.

And the guards here! Stars, they acted like he was a time bomb. They were horrified when he decked that fella yesterday. He thought they would toss him in solitary or something, but lucky for him, Richard had been watching. He got them to calm down and back off. Good ol’ Richard. The string bean seemed like a push over, but he actually had a lot of respect around here. Bendy figured it was because he was one of the few that treated everyone like an equal and didn’t let anyone get away with nothin’. Didn’t matter to him if you were one of the guards or one of the prisoners, you did something, you’d spend the night in solitary to think about your life choices. Despite that, he was a kind fella. If one of the prisoners wanted to talk, Rich would hear them out. He was great for advice and optimism. A true pal.

It was kinda odd to find a guy like him in a place like this.

He probably annoyed some of these idiots too, but no one tried anything on the old man. So far, these criminals treated the guy different than the other guards. Bendy liked him well enough. He just got tired of the fella trying to figure him out. The old man, like everyone else, tried asking him questions. Everything in the news, rumors, Warnerburg, blah, blah, blah. Infamy was stupid, Bendy decided.

There was a clang on his bars. Bendy turned his head to see Richard and a couple of other guards. “Morning sunshine! Ready for the big day?” Richard asked, his mustache turned up with his smile. Bendy felt his heart rate pick up with excitement. He sat up and nodded. “Jiminy Christmas, boy! What in the world happened to you?”

Bendy blinked owlishly and looked down at his striped uniform. Splotches of ink stained the shirt and his pillow. Ah, right. He had forgotten about the mess. There wasn’t really much he could do about it anyway. Bendy just shrugged.

“Did you get into a fight with an inkwell or somthin’?” Richard asked. Bendy smirked at the joke. Richard blinked in amazement. “Well, no worries. I’m sure you showed it who’s boss.” Richard unlocked the door. Bendy stood, offering his wrists to be cuffed. “Guess you better get cleaned up before we head out. It’ll cut into your breakfast, you alright with that?”

Bendy gave a small nod as the cuff went on his wrists. “Yeah, thanks.” There was that difference. He actually asked if Bendy was okay, instead of just assuming.

Richard stepped out with Bendy and turned to one of the others. “Best get that cleaned up too. Go ahead and call the janitor.” The guard nodded and glanced at Bendy skeptically. He was sure he could see disgust in the fellas eyes before he turned away and walked off. Richard and the other guy headed to the showers with Bendy in tow.

That was another thing.

Bendy thought being a demon in public was difficult. This place was a whole new level of hell. The people here really expected the worst from him. Hell fire, nightmares, evil magic or killer pranks. Both prisoners and guards. It was crazy some of the questions these guys asked. Like if he had a portal to hell and could leave at any time, or if he would make them rich or help them escape if they gave him their souls. Or if he could curse people. It was nuts. Bendy already knew that he wasn’t gonna use his talent here unless it was to leave. But after the first day, he wasn’t sure he wanted to use it at all. He never wanted to see any of these weirdos again, but he didn’t want to give them any
fuel for their crazy assumptions of him either. Who knew when another innocent demon like him might come along? They would use his example to harass ‘em. Hey! It could happen...right? There had to be other good demons. Black Hat couldn’t be the only other demon in the world! Also, giving their crazy ideas any kinda leverage left a bad taste is Bendy’s mouth.

“So, I hear this will be the case of the year. Everyone’s making a big deal about it,” Richard said.

“You nervous?”

Bendy blinked. Whelp, great. More newies, because that’s what Bendy wanted in his life. He simply sighed.

“Yeah, I figured you wouldn’t be thrilled. But hey, you get to see your brother! And the detectives are the best in the city! I’m sure that they got everything covered. If you’re as innocent as you claim, ya got nothin’ to worry about,” Richard said cheerfully. Bendy smiled, but it didn’t reach his eyes. He had plenty to worry about.

Bendy got to take his shower, alone, which was nice. They let him go to the cafeteria to grab a quick bite before loading him into the police car and driving back into the city. The court house, of course, was in the busy downtown part of the city. He wondered if he was close to the University. He didn’t see it. What he did see was a swarm of people outside of the court house. Bendy grimaced.

“Ready?” Richard asked him.

“Do I have to go through them? It’s like they’re a wall of people,” Bendy said, unnerved.

Richard laughed as the cop car pulled to a stop. There was a lot of shouting and questions. The sounds all mixed together into a wave of noise that didn’t make any sense to the demon.

Richard laughed. “Don’t worry. We won’t let any of them get you,” Richard said and opened the door. He gently led Bendy out of the car by his elbow. There were several other police outside the car who helped push the cameras and reporters back. Bendy’s heart pounded nervously as all the noise and flashes were turned on him.

“Bendy! Bendy! Are you in cahoots with Ryan Oddswell?”

“Did you talk your brother into the murder?”

“Are you working with Geovanni?”

“Did the bust in Warnerburg mean a mob war?”

“Why did you run in Sillyvision?”

“How did you know Wilson Wiseton?”

“Is Ink Illness real? What about the drug Dr. Oddswell was giving out?”

“Were you involved in the death of Wilson’s archeological team?”

Bendy pursed his lips and focused on the building. It was tall. White pillars held the front of the square building. It seemed very stately and professional. Bendy gulped. His stomach was tying itself up in nervous knots. Richard and the police helped Bendy into the building, through the yelling crowds, camera flashes, and groups of people who held up signs and tried to chant over the shouting. Bendy didn’t know what they were about.

The shoving was unnerving. He wasn’t used to being around so many people, so close to so many
people, the focus of all these strangers who thought he was horrible. He hated this.

He finally got to the front entrance and into the building. When they got to a hallway he was able to breath for a moment. “See? Wasn’t so bad,” Richard huffed, panting. “I really should start thinking about retirement.”

Bendy chuckled. “So, now what?”

“We take you to a back room and wait for your brother. Then, we bring you into the court room and the case starts. You know your lawyer?” Richard asked.

Bendy nodded. “Yeah, a white rabbit that the detectives recommended.”

Richard nodded. “Alright.” Richard brought Bendy to a bare room. There was a table, four chairs, a picture and a plant. “Have a seat.” Bendy looked around and sat down. “Now, the pleasant thing about this is that I can take these off.” Richard unlocked the handcuffs and removed them. Bendy rubbed his sore wrists and turned to the guard.

“So, when will Boris be here?” Bendy asked anxiously. His tail flicked back and forth impatiently.

Richard chuckled. “Patience. Like a cup of water?”

“Sure.” Bendy sighed. He looked around the room again after the guard left. Boris was okay, right? They wouldn’t bring him if he wasn’t. Boris would be here soon. The door opened and Bendy nearly jumped out of his seat. Sadly, it was only the lawyer. Bendy slumped into his seat in disappointment.

“H-h-hello Mr. Demon,” the White Rabbit said nervously.

“Not my name,” Bendy muttered. “Just Bendy will do.” The rabbit flinched away. The couple of times Bendy had met his lawyer the rabbit had seemed extremely nervous and fidgety. The guy was always high-energy, going this way and that. The demon wasn’t sure if the rabbit feared him or the case. Featherworth had assured him that the rabbit was always nervous.

“B-Ben-Bendy! Right! Oh my. Are you ready for the trial?” Mr. Rabbit asked as he hopped into a seat. Bendy nodded. They had gone over everything. Bendy had a pretty good idea what expect. He was still very uncomfortable, but whatever. If it meant he could walk free, then he’d do it.

Richard came back with some water. “Thanks,” Bendy said.

“Are you sure you don’t want to use your…condition in this matter? It’ll get a lot of sympathy from the jury and the public,” Mr. Rabbit said. His nose twitched.

“No. Not unless it’s our only option. I don’t want to be some pity poster boy.” Bendy frowned. His health was his business. He didn’t want to project it off to the world. They had no right to know.

The White Rabbit sighed, his ears dropping. “I will do the best that I can, Mr. De-Bendy.”

The door opened again, and Bendy perked up. It was a big guard. Bendy’s tail flicked in annoyance until the guard stepped aside and revealed Boris.

“Bendy!” Boris gasped. The wolf’s ears perked, and his eyes lit up with joy.

“Boris!” Bendy was on his feet in an instant. A couple of the guards tensed, but didn’t stop him. Bendy wrapped his arms around the pup. Boris couldn’t hug him back because of the cuffs, but his
tail was going a mile a minute.

“I missed you, bro. Are you okay?” Boris asked. “Nothing bad happened? You didn’t get into trouble, right?”

“I’m fine, bro. I’m fine. Missed you too.” Bendy pulled back, and the brothers grinned at each other. “Nothing bad happened. How about you? You were okay? No one tried anything with ya, did they?”

“H-how touching,” Mr. Rabbit said, reminding Bendy that they had eyes on them. Bendy pulled back, and the guard that followed Boris in chuckled.

“Try anything?” The guard that brought Boris shook his head and stepped up to unlock Boris’ cuffs. “He practically has a following. Some of those kids have never been so civil and happy.”

Boris flushed. “I didn’t really do much. Just talked to them.” The guard laughed again.

“Kid, you should think about being a counselor or a world leader. I’ve never seen so many troubled kids change so quickly.” The guard stepped back with a smile. Boris’ blush deepened, and he shrugged.

Bendy raised a questioning brow and sat again. It sounded like the juvie kids were okay with him. Good. Boris sat next to Bendy with a sheepish smile and faced the lawyer. They went over the case again and what their parts were. It was pretty easy with all the evidence and witnesses that were going to be called. Bendy was surprised when the White Rabbit told him who had come up to Toon Town to testify.

Then it was time. The boys went into the court room to find the place filled. Every seat was occupied and a couple cameras were running. Bendy did his best not to grimace. It was quieter here than outside. Instead hearing shouts and questions, he heard mutters and muted conversations. People stared as Bendy and Boris walked past. Bendy tried to spot anyone they knew, but he didn’t have much luck with this crowd.

They reached the tables in front of the room and took their seats. Bendy glanced back and thought he might have seen a fox’s ears, but wasn’t sure. Many people in the room were staring or glaring at them. Bendy felt his skin crawl with all the attention. The opposing side entered and a man with a bald head and a corkscrew mustache leered at Bendy. He had a round nose, low, tiny ears and a huge toothy smile. The demon narrowed his eyes. That guy had to be Mr. Winky. He and a weasel took the seats at the other table.

One of the uniformed guards that stood off to the side suddenly spoke up. “All rise. Court is now in session. The honorable Judge Hearts presiding.” Everyone in the room stood. Bendy quickly followed suit. The door opened, and Bendy didn’t see anyone appear on the other side of the desks. He blinked when the door shut. There was a sound of footsteps and grunts. Bendy glanced around and saw that everyone was focusing on the judge’s chair or bench.

It was a few moments more before the figure appeared on the chair. He pulled himself up, his white wig askew and his cheeks dark from the effort of climbing up onto the chair. He huffed, turned and plopped himself on the chair. Bendy’s eyes widened in surprise. He was the smallest person the demon had ever seen. Other than a child, he was the first person smaller than Bendy he’d met. Bendy immediately felt a wave of pity.

On closer inspection, Bendy realized that the tiny judge was sitting on a huge book placed on a box, on top of the chair cushion. The judge smiled pleasantly, though, and fixed his wig. “My, we’ll have
to look into getting some stairs,” he chuckled. Others chuckled with him. He had an oddly forked
beard that looked a little like a mermaid tail, a pencil thin mustache, and a happy smile on his face.

“You may be seated,” the guard said. Everyone sat down.

“Oh yes, yes, good. Okay! So, let’s see here. Today is the case of Bendy the demon and Boris the
wolf verses the people. Oh, how exciting!” The judge grinned. Bendy blinked. He acted like this
was going to be a trip to Mickey’s circus or something. “And we have our jury, yes. Hello, good
morning.” He waved to the twelve characters that sat together on the far side of the room. There was
a bear, a grinning cat, a painfully thin man that was looking around nervously, another man with a…
cooking pot on his head. Okay? And several other individuals that were nodding to the judge or
eyeing the boys.

“Alright! Let’s go over the accusations.” He leaned forward to reach the papers on the desk and
paused. The papers were set below him. He’d have to lean down to reach them. Bendy wondered if
he was gonna fall. He leaned further, nearly lost his wig, but grabbed the papers and straightened up
again. Bendy pursed his lips into a tight frown of pity. Boris nudged him with an elbow.

“Hey, are you okay, bro?” he whispered. “You look down.”

Bendy shook his head and focused. “Yeah, I’m fine.”

Boris watched him for a moment as the judge went through the papers. “Okay.”

“No, no, not that one, ah! Here we are!” Judge Hearts said, lifting the paper proudly. “Now then,
Bendy the demon and Boris the wolf are accused of the murder of Wilson Wiseton, the arson a
mechanic shop called Pete’s garage, two accounts of evading arresting, breaking and entering, and
conspiring with Dr. Ryan Oddswell on illegal drug production and trade.” The judge put the paper
down beside him on the book and looked to the boys. “How do you boys pl—”

“Wait one moment your honor.” Mr. Winky stood up with a hand raised. The judge turned to him
with his brows raised. “Sorry to interrupt, but you are missing one. I sent the charge to you last night,
but you must not have received it.”

“M-missed one?” The little man tapped his finger tips together nervously. “Oh my. Well, what is it?”

“The murder of Noni Facilier,” Mr. Winky said with a wide grin.

“What!” the White Rabbit exclaimed. Bendy blanched, Boris gasped, and people whispered and
muttered behind them. “T-this is an outrage!”

“Order! Order in the court!” The judge pulled out a little hammer and started banging the book with
it. The whispers died down. “Now then! What’s this about murder?”

“I-I-I object! There is no evidence that was brought to me! I was not able to—”

“Oh, now hush you gabbling gerbil,” Mr. Winky huffed. “You brought last minute evidence, and
Technically I didn’t bring evidence, only a witness,” Mr. Winky said.

“Bu-but!” Mr. Rabbit lifted a hand.

“Judge, what do you think?” Mr. Winky asked, turning to the little man.

“Oh me? Well, I don’t think it would be too much of a problem,” Judge Hearts said meekly. “Right?
Just one little witness.”
“But sir, it’s com-complete—”

“He said it’s fine, so it’s fine! He’s the honorable judge, after all.” Mr. Winky first frowned down at the rabbit before turning a bright smile to Judge Hearts.

“That’s very true. I am the judge here.” Judge Hearts agreed bobbing his head so fast that his wig slipped askew.

Bendy blinked in surprise, his eyes wide. What had just happened? He and Boris were suddenly accused of two murders. They weren’t prepared for this. How did this schmuck even know they were in that woman’s shop at the time? Bendy looked over to the mustached man. He was grinning, looking oh-so-pleased with himself as he took his seat again. Bendy narrowed his eyes like he could see into the man’s soul or puzzle out how he knew.

Mr. Winky noticed Bendy’s glare and gave him a rueful smile and a subtle wink. Bendy frowned and looked away. He thought he now understood why this guy's name was Winky. He didn’t like it. This was a terrible way to start off.

“Now that we have that in order, are our defendants ready to enter a plea against these charges?” Judge Hearts turned to them. The boys and their lawyer stood. Bendy glanced at Boris and the lawyer. The White Rabbit seemed nervous and a little put off, but he gave Bendy a nod. Boris smiled and nodded too.

“Yes, your honor,” Bendy said. He felt all the eyes in the room on him, the cameras that whirled and focused on him. Bendy hated all this judgmental attention. He wanted to walk out and get back to what he thought was important…But to others, this was important. This case, at least part of it, was for Wilson and the Ink Illness. It was to combat all the terrible stuff horrible people were getting away with. This was a battle for Oddswell and for their innocence. It was one that didn’t involve fists, but words and expressions. A battle of wills. A battle Bendy had never had before. He was going to give it everything he had. It was the only way he could get back to the quest. So, he gave his best relaxed half smile and said, “Absolutely not guilty.”

Surprise and mutters flew around the room. Bendy glanced up to Boris to see he was grinning. Bendy returned the grin.


“We’ll move onto opening statements,” Judge Heart said, shuffling some papers. “Mr. Winky, let the prosecution begin its arguments.”

“Thank you, your honor,” Mr. Winky said smoothly with his big, white-toothed smile. He stood and walked around the table. He faced the jury and nodded to them. “My fellow citizens, we gather here to bring these criminals to justice. Bendy and Boris have gone on a cross nation spree of terror, and we finally have been able to stop them here. They murdered the former professor, Wilson Wiseton, possible murderer of his entire research team, in their home town of Sillyvision. Wiseton was already involved in questionable events and was fleeing the police himself. The ‘accident’ that led to his demise was prearranged by Bendy and Boris. The car that hit Wiseton had failing brakes. It was the same car that Bendy had practiced on a week prior to the incident.” Bendy startled. How did he know about that accident? There hadn’t been any proof! He had been trying to figure out what the hell Pete had done at the time! He had been sure it was fake! What the cuss! How did this guy know about that? Bendy himself had almost forgotten.

“They had planned to kill him, fake their deaths in a garage fire and disappear in the criminal underworld to join Ryan Oddswell. That plan failed when a brave firefighter intercepted Bendy at
the garage, and the police took them in for questioning. After this they escaped authorities,” Mr. Winky explained with his wide grin. Bendy grit his teeth but stayed quiet. This guy was twisting facts.

“They went to Warnerburg to meet with their cohorts. Once there, they set themselves apart from others in infamy by leading the police to their rivals’ secret warehouse and crippling their operations in that region. They then came here to meet with Dr. Oddswell to begin their own criminal trade of illegal drugs. Using the tactic of an imaginary disease they called Ink Illness, they began spreading their drug to the public. This ‘pain relief drug’ is simply a relaxant that has addictive qualities and its spread has been stopped with their arrest”

Boris growled softly. Bendy had to lightly elbow him to stop.

“They were able to start with little resistance in our wonderful city of Toon Town, their reputation scaring any possible competition. It wasn’t until an herbalist in New Orleans became a snag to their spreading influence that they moved again. That was when they killed a local woman, Noni Facilier, when she refused to stop helping the local sick and suffering in the city of New Orleans. It was a mysterious death, with no visible wounds or detectable poisons.” Mr. Wink looked over the jury and the rest of the room. He turned and looked at Bendy with cold eyes. “It was a very grim way to die with no sure explanation. There is the chance of…dark magic involved.” Bendy narrowed his eyes at the man. The implication was obvious.

Mutters went around the room. Bendy and Boris squirmed under the looks they were getting. The White Rabbit looked like he was about ready to faint.

“When they returned, their doctor was gone, but they were still able to produce their little product on those that were desperate. They wanted to create epidemic and enlisted others to their cause. They snuck in a false article into a popular newspaper to begin the cycle of fear in the general public use false information on 'Ink Illness’ to work the public into a frenzy. There is no cure, because there is no disease. They have strung together a number of symptoms from other sicknesses.”

Bendy raised a brow and scowled. The more he talked, the more Bendy hated him. If he thought he could sell his ‘no Ink Illness’ spiel, he had another thing coming. The mook wasn’t gonna convince anyone that had the damn thing.

“When they returned from New Orleans, they weren’t as careful as they should have been. The good Toon Town Police Department was able to find and apprehend them,” Mr. Winky stated.

More muttering went around the room.

“Order!” Judge Hearts banged his malt against his book a few times to quiet the room. “Thank you, Mr. Winky.” The mook nodded to the judge before taking his seat.

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“Now then, Mr. Rabbit, the defense may approach.” Judge Hearts waved his hand for the rabbit to stand. The rabbit was shaking in his fur. He looked like he was more ready to faint than speak. He adjusted his small glasses, and his nose twitched.

He glanced at the boys and forced a smile before standing. Bendy sighed inwardly. They were doomed, weren’t they?

“Ah, um. Yes, w-well you see...” The White Rabbit adjusted his glasses again and straightened up. He hopped around the desk and to the jury. With each bounce, he seemed to gain an air of confidence. “The brothers, Bendy and Boris, took the unfortunate Wilson into their home for an evening since he didn’t have anywhere else to stay. It was there that the owl told them about the Ink
Illness and his mission to help those with it. He told them that there were people out there trying to stop him. The day he passed, Bendy heard the commotion and rushed to see what happened. He found and comforted the former professor while he died. Boris wasn’t there at the time. The fire at the garage where Boris was working was unexpected. When Bendy arrived and there was no sign of his brother, he feared the worst. He was willing to throw himself into the flames to find Boris.” The room went completely silent.

Bendy shrunk in his seat. He felt the weight of every eye in the room on him. It made his skin crawl.

“Luckily, no one was harmed in the fire. The night they fled was the night someone had ransacked their home. They did not turn to the police because of the long-suffering treatment they had from the law enforcement.” There were a few whispers in the room at that. “You see, members of the jury, in Wilson’s dying moments, he asked the boy to take a message to his long-time friend, Ryan Oddswell. So, with fear of the people that were after Wilson focused on them, the boys fled the town with Toon Town being their goal. They ran into trouble in Warnerburg. Bendy’s bag and all their money was stolen. They wouldn’t be able to travel without it, so the two had to find it. They didn’t mean to stumble upon an underground theft ring! Hundreds of thousands, if not over a million dollars of stolen items were returned to their rightful owners thanks to these two.”

Again, Bendy fought the urge to squirm. That had been a complete accident.

“Then, they made their way here. They struggled to find Ryan Oddswell. They thought that everything would work out, that Dr. Oddswell had all the answers. Bendy and Boris had no clue how badly ink illness was spreading, how desperate the search for a cure was.”

“The boys promised to help. I’m not sure about what happened in New Orleans with Mrs. Facilier. I am sure they are innocent of every accusation. They came back to get the story out, to warn the public. They need help. They have been trying to help sick people that everyone else has turned out,” Mr. Rabbit said. “The drug is a pain reliever because the disease causes vast amounts of pain. It’s the only relief they have gotten. Oddswell and the boys are the only help they’ve found. The only hope. That newspaper article was their way to get the word out to those that were dying! They had answers and no way to share it! No one would listen! Of course, they acted desperate. There are several people out there that are sick! This disease is real.” Mr. Rabbit lifted his chin to the jury. “And you can be certain that it will get worse if we don’t help and instead lock the boys up for crimes they didn’t commit.”

“Thank you, Mr. Rabbit,” Judge Hearts said.

“Oh! But I’m not—”

“Let’s move on to the first witness!” Judge Hearts called out excitedly. He waved his anvil in the air gleefully. Bendy frowned. What the cuss? Could he just do that? Rabbit wasn’t done!

The White Rabbit flustered for a moment. “O-oh my! Oh dear! B-but, your majesty, I mean, your honor.”

“Witness!” Judge Hearts called out, completely ignoring the little creature. White Rabbit deflated and took his seat.

“Can he really do that? Can’t you object?” Bendy hissed. The court muttered.

“The Heart family is…unique,” the White Rabbit muttered. “Don’t worry, it’ll be fine.”

Bendy was beginning to doubt that. Boris fidgeted next to him. “You okay?” Bendy asked.
“Yeah.” Boris leaned down to whisper to him. “It’s just weird to hear all this. Like, neither one is really right…or they don’t feel right.” Bendy had to agree. Leaving out his sickness weakened their motives on the defensive. He hated to admit it, but that schmuck prosecutor was very good at story telling.

“Well, we did ask him to leave out that one small detail,” Bendy admitted.

Boris scoffed. “Small.”

“I know, but seriously, it’s none of their business,” Bendy hissed defensively.

“I know, I don’t disagree, but…well.” Boris sighed. “You really think we’ll be able to walk anyway?”

“Absolutely, no doubt,” Bendy whispered.

“Even with the New Orleans thing?” Boris sounded nervous. Bendy patted his arm.

“We don’t even know what really happened there,” Bendy said. Boris nodded.

“The prosecution calls Officer Walt Snoutfer to the stand,” Mr. Winky said.

Chapter End Notes

Mercowe: Hey, so, sorry this chapter was posted late. I get seriously sick this weekend and pretty much spent the last two days buried underneath all my blankets. Tap didn't want to post before I edited, so we were only able to get it out after I regained some of my sanity. Anyways, I hope you enjoyed the chapter!
May All Your Bacon Burn

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Mic, the thin man with the head of a microphone, steps out on a stage and looks over the audience. He wears a wrinkled suit with a nice bow tie. He turns to look off stage nervously. "You sure they really liked it that much?" His muffled voice is barely picked up by the microphone in his hand.

"~~~"

"Okay, whatever you say."

He lifts the microphone he holds to his mouth. "Welcome to another chapter of Bendy and Boris in the Inky Mystery! This episode features characters that were long left behind by our daring duo in their hometown! Will the witness clear or condemn them? Find out!"

Chapter Notes

Hello~!

Good day! How are you? This week has been nuts for me (and my friends). It seems everything is falling apart! Don't worry though, we'll survive! Thank you all that wished Mercowe to get well soon! We really appreciated it!

Thank you for all the comments and kudos too, guys. I can't believe how far we've come. It feels like yesterday when I first started this story...Time really flies. And Happy Birthday Mercowe!! (Confetti and poppers go everywhere!) Thank you for being my best friend, my editor, and an all around amazing person! I don't know what I did to deserve someone like you in my life, but if they ever realize there was a mistake, I'm not giving you back! ^^ Here's to hoping you have a great day!

Anyway! We have a trial to get to! Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy didn’t bother hiding his annoyance. The pig? He was here? Great. The last time he’d seen this bacon strip they’d been in an interrogation room, and the pig had threatened to lock him up forever. Dang it. Here was his chance.

The rotund pig waltzed into the room, took his oath, and lumbered inside the witness box. His beady eyes zeroed in on Bendy. Sparks practically flew as the two glared at each other. Snoutfer’s snout twitched as Mr. Winky stepped up.

“Officer Snoutfer, how do you know the defendants?” Mr. Winky asked.

“Simple. They’re the town riff-raff,” Snoutfer grumbled.

“Do you mind elaborating?” Mr. Winky asked.
“They used to be a pair of runaway pickpockets and petty thieves. Always caused trouble with the local shops and stole from visitors,” Snoutfer said. “We had a stack of complaints against them. I’ve had my share of run-ins with them.”

“Did you not try to detain them?” Mr. Winky asked. “What about their parents?”

“Constantly,” Snoutfer groaned. Bendy covered his mouth with a hand to hide his smirk. The cops had been easy to dupe. He and Boris had left the pig and other officers scratching their heads a number of times. “They were kids, so we couldn’t keep them in the jail longer than a day.” Bendy held back a snort. They had only been caught four times. “They were always escaping the orphanage to go back to the streets. We didn’t have anywhere else to put them. And the one time we separated them...” Snoutfer shook his head. Bendy couldn’t hide his smile then. They had sent him to an orphanage two counties over. When Bendy had been done with that place, they refused to take him or consider taking Boris. The smell of rotting eggs would probably be in the head woman’s office forever. He was sure there were still burn scars on the walls and ceiling of the kitchen and dining rooms. He had met up with Boris in their usual alley with a bag of stolen food a few days later. “Absolute disaster. Anyway, them boys have been a pain in the side of Sillyvision for a long time.”

Bendy frowned. Like when they busted that dirty cop and gotten him arrested? Or that time they had helped with the flooded basements a few years back after all that rain? They weren’t always trouble. Hell, most of his fights had been because he was defending himself or Boris.

“So, what happened to Wilson Wiseton was not a surprise?” Mr. Winky asked. “They had always been set against the law?” Bendy scowled. Of course, the pig would jump on that.

“No. Most of the locals know them and would have recognized them. From what we gathered, the demon didn’t show up until after he was hit,” Snoutfer huffed.

“I think there was more going on than what we thought at first. Those detective women showed up with a warrant for the victim. We all thought foul play, but there wasn’t any proof. The breaks on the car that hit Wilson failed on their own. We couldn’t find any tampering. Though, people claimed they saw the victim being chased before he was hit,” Snoutfer huffed.

“Was it the defendants?” Mr. Winky asked.

“No. Most of the locals know them and would have recognized them. From what we gathered, the demon didn’t show up until after he was hit,” Snoutfer said.

“Do you think he worked on setting it up so he’d be there at the accident?” Mr. Winky said.

“I think there was more going on than what we thought at first. Those detective women showed up with a warrant for the victim. We all thought foul play, but there wasn’t any proof. The breaks on the car that hit Wilson failed on their own. We couldn’t find any tampering. Though, people claimed they saw the victim being chased before he was hit,” Snoutfer huffed.

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“No. Most of the locals know them and would have recognized them. From what we gathered, the demon didn’t show up until after he was hit,” Snoutfer said.

“Do you think he worked on setting it up so he’d be there at the accident?” Mr. Winky said.

“Objection!” Mr. Rabbit said again. Mr. Winky growled softly.

“Noted Mr. Rabbit,” Judge Heart said. He turned to Mr. Winky. “Start asking better questions there, sir. We don’t want to be here all day.”

“Yes, your honor.” Mr. Winky gave him a smile. He turned back to Snoutfer. “Do you think Bendy killed Wilson Wiseton?”

Bendy flinched. He hadn’t expected that question so suddenly. Boris’ eyes were huge.
There was a long silence in the room. Bendy could hear his heartbeat pick up a notch. Snoutfer looked a bit taken aback by the question too.

“Oh, that’s a very good question! Well done, Mr. Winky.” The judge nodded approvingly. Snoutfer glanced at the little man in confusion before clearing his throat.

Bendy was sure he saw the whole room lean forward to listen.

“At first, I did. I thought they were suspicious, and I still think they’re hiding something, but,” the pig turned his beady eyes on the boys, “the evidence says otherwise. Bendy didn’t kill him. It really was an accident.” Mutter picked up around the room. Bendy blinked in surprise. He looked over at Boris. The wolf was grinning at him.

“Are you sure about that, Officer? He is a mechanic, and the brakes did fail. He could have hidden the tampering,” Mr. Winky suggested.

“Objectio-”

“Alright!” Mr. Winky barked at the Rabbit. There was a tense silence between the two.

“Mr. Winky.” Judge Hearts raised a brow.

“Sorry, your honor.” Mr. Winky straightened up. “Won’t happen again. A claim was made that Bendy caused the a mechanical failure of another car a week before the fatal accident. Was that a coincidence or not?”

“If ya mean, ‘Do you think he was practicing how to break a car?’ then I’d say yes. I thought that would be our lead to proving that Bendy did cause the accident,” Officer Snoutfer said. Mr. Winky opened his mouth to speak, but Snoutfer continued. “But I looked into that claim, and there was nothing there. No car crash, no damage, nothing wrong with any vehicle that was left at that shop. It was a lie.”

Bendy and Boris shared another amazed look. The porker was actually defending them. Bendy guessed pigs really could fly.

Mr. Winky grit his teeth for a moment before smiling again. “So, it was an accident?”

“That’s what I’ve been saying. There’s no proof otherwise,” Snoutfer said.

Mr. Winky puckered his lips and twisted one of the ends of his curly mustache. “There was proof the fire was started intentionally, though?”

Snoutfer blinked. “Yeah, there was evidence of a start and gasoline.”

Mr. Winky said, “So, the fire at the garage was no accident?”

“No, it wasn’t.” Officer Snoutfer frowned. “Someone set it ablaze.”

Bendy frowned. Well, the miracle had to end at some point.

“And who was one of the first to show up at the fire?”

“That’d be the firefighters, but I was the one that found the starter after the flames were dealt with.” Snoutfer lifted his snout proudly.

“What were the starters?” Winky leaned against the prosecuting desk.
“Gasoline, a lighter, and a pile of work clothes,” Snoutfer replied.

“Whose work clothes were those?”

“We don’t know. They were burned beyond recognition.”

“Who was at the shop at the time of the fire?”

“As far as we know it was only Pete and Boris,” Snoutfer said simply. “There was no evidence of anyone other than Boris and Pete at the crime scene, course something could have been burned away, but…”

“So, according to what you found, the only two who were near the crime scene were Boris and Pete?”

“At the time of the crime, yes,” Snoutfer said. “The firefighters pulled Pete out of the building after we had arrived.” Boris squirmed in his seat. Bendy knew this was a bunch of hogwash. Boris hadn’t been anywhere near that building when the fire started!

Winky nodded. “I see. I see.”

“We had most everything under control when Bendy showed up and made a ruckus,” Snoutfer said. Winky paused. “And why, exactly, was he causing a ruckus?”

“According to Bendy, he thought his brother was still in the garage and was determined to save him,” Snoutfer huffed. “The firefighter that stopped him said he wouldn’t listen to reason. The man had to pin him down to stop him from running into the burning building. Bendy started to threaten the man that saved him. Luckily, the wolf showed up before it got worse.”

Winky raised a brow. “Oh, he wasn’t above threats, then? Bendy was certain his brother was in the building.”

“Yes. Bendy has a history of getting into scuffles every now and then.” Snoutfer eyed Bendy, who looked away with a frown. Wasn’t his fault that big fellas thought they could push him around. “He was sure enough the wolf was in the building that he tried to run in himself.”

Winky tapped his chin thoughtfully. “Is it possible that the fire was a set up? After all, Bendy was so sure that his brother was in there, that he was willing to risk dying in a blazing building.”

“Objection!” White Rabbit stood up.

“Shhh!” Judge Hearts waved his hand. “It’s getting good.” He didn’t even glance at the fretting rabbit.

“Thank you, your honor.” Mr. Winky grinned.

Snoutfer spoke up. “There isn’t any evidence that it was them.”

“Ah! Yes! Evidence! Let’s talk about your evidence, shall we?” Mr. Winky said gleefully. Snoutfer seemed taken aback by his questioner.

“By the evidence you have, Bendy did not tamper with the breaks on the car that killed Wilson Wiseton,” Mr. Winky stated.

Snoutfer said, “That’s what I said.”
“And by the evidence, neither Bendy nor Boris started the fire at the garage,” Winky continued.

“Yes,” Snoutfer said, annoyed now.

“Can we really believe your evidence?” Mr. Winky said.

“What?” Snoutfer’s eyes widened.

“I’m saying that all your evidence has no grounds!” Mr. Winky claimed with a grin.

Snoutfer turned splotchy. “And why is that?”

“Is it true that on the evening of the fire, the police station had a break in?” Mr. Winky asked.

Snoutfer blinked. “Well, yes we did.”

“And is it also true that evidence for this very case was stolen? What was it again?” Mr. Winky asked.

Snoutfer shifted uncomfortably. “It was Wilson’s journal, but nothing else was touched.”

“Are you completely sure of that?” Mr. Winky said.

“Well--”

“Are you one-hundred percent sure that they didn’t mess with evidence? Clean the fire starters of prints and fur for example? Or lose the report on a minor car accident that seemed unrelated at the time?” Mr. Winky demanded.

“N-no!” Snoutfer growled. “The Sillyvision police department is a hardworking, honest, dedicated department. We wouldn’t be so careless as to--”

“So careless as to have a dirty cop accepting bribes for years without anyone noticing? So careless as to allow blatant racism in the town’s businesses?” Mr. Winky accused. Snoutfer snorted in surprise. “So careless as to allow a delinquent demon to adopt after barely turning old enough, just so you wouldn’t have to drag them back to the orphanage? Just so you wouldn’t have to deal with ‘the absolute disaster’ as you put it, that resulted from separating them?” Mr. Winky’s smile grew, and his eyes narrowed. “No, Officer Snoutfer, the Sillyvision police department is a lazy, careless, corner-cutting establishment that only promotes itself as law enforcement and justifies all of its flaws.”

Bendy’s jaw dropped. Snoutfer was so dark and splotchy that Bendy thought he would burst. The pig looked like he was ready to lunge over the banister to strangle Mr. Winky. Yet, the twinkle in the lawyer’s eyes told Bendy that Mr. Winky would enjoy nothing more than tearing him apart legally if he tried. After a few moments, and with visible effort, Snoutfer was able to calm down. The room was buzzing with quiet murmurs and whispers.

Bendy didn’t know how to feel about this. He had always wanted the Sillyvision cops to be called out for their conduct. A small part of him was satisfied, if he was being honest, but now was the worst time for this.

“There are still the witness reports!” Snoutfer argued. He seemed bent on proving Winky wrong now. The pig may have forgotten he was defending Bendy and Boris.

“Oh? We should address those, then. According to witness reports, who was chasing Mr. Wiseton before he was hit?” Mr. Winky asked. He turned and walked over to his table.
Snoutfer ducked his head. “Ah, we-well, there were statements that said he was chased from the woods into the center of town--”

Mr. Winky pulled out a paper and started to read. “Mrs. Deer stated that he fled from the woods into town. She didn’t see anyone chasing him.”

“She had a baby to--”

“Mr. Hooferson said the victim had run past his shop, two individuals with oddly shaped heads chasing him. Mr. Furwise said they were in black. Mrs. Peckerton stated that three tall, skinny figures pursued the victim. Miss Antlerson said they were muscular lions.” Winky was reading faster now. "Mr. Cow said they were wolves with long tails. Miss Sparrow claimed they had devil horns and wings and..." Winky almost laughed. "Jimmy Wingspur said one of them was a fish.” Mr. Winky put down the paper. “I don’t know about you, Officer Snoutfer, but I don’t really have much faith in such conflicting accounts.”

Snoutfer had his head dropped in defeat.

“The prosecution rests,” Mr. Winky said and sat down with a little flourish of his coat.

Judge Hearts whistled. “My! That was something!” He turned to the White Rabbit. “Does the defense have anything to say?”

Mr. Rabbit hesitated. He looked from the judge to the slumped pig. “No, your honor.”

“Oh? Not even a little questioning?” Judge Hearts asked lightly.

“No,” Mr. Rabbit answered with a twitch on his nose.

Bendy watched Officer Snoutfer stand. He walked past Bendy in a daze. Bendy couldn’t help but be just as stunned as him. The mustached creep had completely pulled the rug out from under them all.

“Next witness! Next witness!” Judge Hearts bounced excitedly on his book. For a moment, Bendy thought he would tip over and fall.

Mr. Rabbit stood and cleared his throat. “The defense calls Miss Sasha Swingskirt to the stand.”

Both Bendy and Boris perked up. It had been a long time since they had seen the dance club owner. Bendy was touched that she would come all the way to Toon Town to defend them. The door opened, and the curvy woman walked in. Her flapper dress swished with her every step. Her feathered cap sat askew on her head. She opened her dark eyes, and they instantly zeroed in on Bendy and Boris. Bendy smiled as she walked up to them.

Before either could react, she had pulled them into a hug. Bendy felt his face heat up. Just as quickly she pulled back.

“Sasha it’s so g--”

“YOU IDIOTS!” she snapped. The court room went dead silent. Bendy and Boris froze in shock. “Four letters! That’s all you ever sent me! All this madness, and you couldn’t think to tell me how you were! Stars above, boys! The papers had more information! Sure, there were too many lies in them for me to tell how you were really doing, but at least it was something! At least, I knew weren’t dead! I was worried sick! I should have you tied up and hanging from my second story as decoration for what you’ve put me through! I’ll have grey hairs, thanks to you!”
“Ah!” Boris said nervously. His ears were down, but his smile was genuine. “It’s good to see you again, Miss Sasha.”

“Oh yes, on your trail day! For murder!” Sasha put her hands on her hips and glared at them.

“Hehe, oops?” Bendy scratched the back of his head with a nervous smile.

Sasha scowled and pointed at finger at him. “Oops! No. Oops is when you break the bottle of milk. Oops is when you bump into someone on the street. Murder charges aren’t an oops, Bendy!” Bendy grinned a touch embarrassed. He couldn’t really deny that. Still, it was nice to see her beautiful face again.

“Miss you too, Sash.” Bendy winked.

She narrowed her eyes. “Oh no, don’t think your charm is gonna work today, mister.”

Bendy opened his mouth to retort, but Mr. Rabbit cut in. “Excuse me, but the trial?” He looked back at the crowd of onlookers.

Sasha followed his line of sight and huffed. “Fine.” She turned back to Bendy and Boris. “But, we are talking after this. You boys are in hot water.” Her face softened. “And it is really good to see you two again. Sillyvision just isn’t the same without you.” Boris and Bendy grinned. “Now then.” She straightened up and tugged at her white glove. “Let’s get you outta here so I can give you both a piece of my mind.”

She walked up and took her oath. When she was seated, the White Rabbit hopped onto the floor. “Miss Sasha Swingskirt, how do you know the defendants?”

“They’re usuals at my dance club. I was even trying to hire Bendy on as an employee after his spat with Pete, but then the accident and everything that followed happened,” Sasha said with a tilt of her head. Bendy sighed with a smile. That would have been a swell job too. Good pay, sweet dames, and great music--plus he’d spend the day around Sasha.

“Was he with you when the accident happened?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Objection. He’s leading the witness,” Mr. Winky cut in.

“Noted,” Judge Hearts said.

Mr. Rabbit frowned. The other lawyer smirked.

The White Rabbit turned away with a twitch on his ear. “What happened that day, Miss Swingskirt?”

Sasha eyed Mr. Winky for a second. He winked at her. She narrowed her eyes before looking back at the rabbit. “He had been hanging around my club a lot that week. He seemed down. I was getting worried so I asked him about what happened. Found out he had lost his job with Pete and was job hunting. So, I offered him one at my club. He was just heading out to go home when the car accident occurred.”

“He was with you?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Yes, we were by the door when we heard it. We rushed out, and I lost him in the crowd. I didn’t see him again until the EMTs were there.” She pursed her lips. A ghost of a memory seemed to fly across her face.
“You lost him in the crowd? Where did you find him?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“A paramedic had him in a blanket. He seemed to be in shock. I tried to talk to him, but it didn’t seem to do any good. Then, he snapped out of it and ran away,” Sasha explained sadly.

“Ran away?” Mr. Rabbit asked. “Do you know why he ran?”

“He was worried about his brother. He was scared that something bad was going to happen to him,” Sasha said.

“Why would he think that?” Mr. Rabbit pushed his glasses.

“By what I understand, Mr. Wiseton was a paranoid individual--" "With good reason!!" A voice said resentfully from somewhere within the crowd.

"Order!" Judge Hearts banged his anvil against the book forcefully. "Order in the court! I won't have interruptions! Next one will be taken out of here!" He added a bang of the little hammer. The last thwack seemed to break the book's spine as it sagged to the side.

Sasha blinked, looking back to the judge. "Continue." He motioned to her.

She continued. "He believed he was being followed. When the boys offered him a night on their couch, he spooked them. Bendy might have thought that whoever was after Wiseton got him and that Bendy and Boris were next.” Sasha shrugged.

“Did you know the former professor?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Not really. He came in for a meal once or twice. He was very polite and quiet,” Sasha explained.

“How do you know he was paranoid?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“When you work in an environment like I do, you learn to pick up on things. Mr. Wiseton was always scanning the floor like he was looking for someone. He was very nervous and jumpy. He didn’t want his back facing open spaces either. He always sat with his back against a wall,” Sasha stated and folded her hands in her lap. “He was afraid of someone sneaking up on him.”

“Did you ever see anyone following him?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“No, not really.” Sasha waved a hand.

Mr. Rabbit’s nose twitched. “And how well do you know Bendy and Boris?”

“For years,” Sasha answered immediately. “They've been some of my best customers!” She gave them a dazzling smile.

“Have they ever caused you any trouble?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

Sasha blinked and thought. “Besides causing me worrying about them, no. I mean, Bendy would get in a tussle once in awhile, but he was always trying to talk the other fella down. You know how it goes. A person has one too many drinks, and suddenly someone looking at them funny is grounds for a fight. Bendy was a big help taking care of some of the ruckus that happened in my club.”

Mr. Rabbit nodded. “So, he was with you that day?”

“Yes, he was talking to me before anything happened. He wasn’t near that car. There is no way
Bendy was responsible,” Sasha said confidently.

“Could anyone else support this claim?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Anyone else in the dining room or bar that day. My bartender too.” Sasha shrugged. Mr. Rabbit smiled.

“What about the day of the fire?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“That was his first day of work,” Sasha said. “He was just dealing with a rowdy customer that wanted to cause trouble when we saw the smoke.”

“What was his job?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“I hired him for security. I figured he might as well get paid for it.” Sasha smiled. Mutters went around the room. Bendy was able to hear a couple of them commenting on his size. His eye twitched. Did he just hear the word ‘small’?

“Bendy,” Boris said with a warning in his voice. The wolf put a hand on his shoulder. Bendy scowled and folded his arms.

“Anyway, the fire. It was already going by the time he got there, obviously. I didn’t go, so I didn’t see anything. I heard everyone made it out of the fire okay, though I started to worry when I didn’t hear from them. I thought I would ask when he showed up for his evening shift.” She sighed and frowned. “He didn’t show.”

“Where was he?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Being questioned by the police. He was stuck there all day. They didn’t get out until nightfall.” Sasha frowned.

“But they weren’t arrested?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“No, I would have heard about that,” Sasha said.

“Do you hear a lot of news?” Mr. Rabbit flicked his ear and hopped up to the stand.

“Yes. My clubs is the most popular hangout in town. Everyone goes there, and everyone talks,” Sasha said. “There isn’t a scrap of news or gossip I’m not aware of, whether I like it or not.”

“And what was the news that day?”

Sasha rolled her eyes. “It was madness that day. No one knew the details, so everything was a wild rumor. I knew the garage burned. I also heard that Bendy and Pete got into a bit of a heated argument. I wasn’t willing to believe any of the other nonsense that flew around.”

“But you did believe that Bendy and Pete fought?” Mr. Rabbit tilted his head.

“Well...yes. Pete was a bozo, and he had no problem using people and then throwing them away like a napkin.” Sasha frowned.

“You didn’t like him?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“No. Not at all. I was happy the boys had work, and they are amazing mechanics, but it was no secret that Pete would try to cut corners. There were times Pete would put a car in danger because he didn’t like the costs of fixing it. The boys would have to get creative, but they always managed to get
anything they were given in working order again.” Sasha smiled at the boys.

“Did you know Pete well?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

Sasha huffed. “In a town that small, you get to know people, but I wasn’t close to the shrew. He always wanted to get into business deals. Was always scheming to get more money. And his ‘advice’ to ‘help’ my club was annoying at best and insulting at worst.”

“Insulting?”

“He implied that a woman such as myself shouldn’t own a business. That if people thought it was a joint effort with a man I would get more customers and find better staff.” She frowned. “Not that I’m not used to it.”

“What do you mean, Miss Swingskirt?” Mr. Rabbit asked with lifted ears.

“Well, it’s no secret that...certain people have a more difficult time in Sillyvision than others. It’s a small town that’s been there forever. I moved in and set up shop pretty quick. I probably intimidated a few other business owners. Either way, the comments I have received over the years would be considered...less than inviting.” Sasha said with a shrug. “My position was not traditional and some old locals don’t like that. It’s not only me though. Weasels, foxes, wolves, bears, and yes, demons aren’t treated very warmly either.”

Mr. Rabbit hummed for a second. “Aren’t Bendy and Boris locals, though?”

“Well, yes, and most of the town knows of them if they don’t know them. However, they were more on the side of outcasts, even if they grew up there. It wasn’t like they got to go to school or anything,” Sasha said.

“So, no one reached out?”

“A few, but no one particularly went out of their way for the boys.” Sasha sighed and shook her head. “It didn’t seem to bother them as much as it did me. They were used to it, and I saw it as an injustice. Of course, I was so late to the party that they already had everything sorted out for themselves. They didn’t need my help, but I did what I could when I could.”

“Did anything else unusual happen around that time?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Besides Pete suddenly disappearing, no,” Sasha said.

“He disappeared?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“I think he fled town, but I’m not sure.”

“Were you involved in these events?”

“No. I just run a dance club.” Sasha smiled.

“Do you think either of the boys committed these crimes?” Sasha looked over at Bendy and Boris.

“Not at all. I can understand why they ran, but otherwise they are completely innocent. They were just at the wrong place at the wrong time. Heavens! Not even that! Bendy was with me when those things happened!” Sasha said.

“Why did they run?” Mr. Rabbit sounded serious.
“Well, what would you do? Those cops have threatened to put them behind bars for years. They just needed an excuse. I would be afraid of injustice too. Besides, they wanted to go help people too, right? Ink Illness is deadly, and they would be wasting time dealing with the legal system.” Sasha sighed. “They may have ran, and that was rash but people’s lives are on the line here.”

“So, you believe Ink Illness is real?” Mr. Rabbit asked and rubbed his furry chin.

“Of course! Why would anyone make that up?” Sasha shook her head in amazement.

“Have you ever seen anyone with Ink Illness?”

“Not to my knowledge.”

Mr. Rabbit nodded. “That is all I have. Thank you.”

Sasha smiled again.

“The defense rests,” Mr. Rabbit said.

Judge Hearts was in the middle of a yawn. He shook his head quickly and cleared his throat. “Ah!” He grabbed at the wig that nearly tumbled off his head. “Ah, um, oh...very good! Prosecution do you have any questions?”

Mr. Winky eyed Bendy and Boris. His grin grew wide. His eyes flashed with a dark glee that set Bendy’s nerves on edge. What did he have up his sleeve? “Why yes, your honor. I do have some questions for the lady.”

Chapter End Notes

So, lots happened this weekend. Me and Tap went on a trip. Unfortunately, though, I couldn't seem to get my hands on a computer until now to edit. So, here we are! ‘:D

Here's my favorite typo pun! (She's getting better, so it's getting harder to find them. Dang it!)

The last thawk seemed to break the book’s spine as it sagged to the side.

(I only have one question. What is a Thawk and why is it so violent?)

Anyways, I have one thing to say before we move on...Fear Mr. Winky...
Don't Wink or You Might Miss Something

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Mic stood on the stage. He adjusted his bowtie nervously. "Oh dear. Ladies and gentlemen. This is not a pleasant chapter. Not pleasant at all. Hopefully, Bendy and Boris have a chance." A voice spoke up from off stage. "No, I'm not doing that. It's a rough time for them." The voice murmured again. Mic sighed. "Fine." He turned backed. "Fear the Wink," he said in an annoyed tone.

Chapter Notes

I hate it. I hate this trial. It's killed my creativity. It was so hard to write! Winky is a killer of the creative flow. It's his fault I didn't post last week! I could get him to work with me!! AAAAAAAAGGGGGHHHHH!

Anyway, I was annoyed, but I didn't want to give up. Mercowe sat me down and made me write. She helped out a lot in the chapter. Thank her for this. She forced me through the block. So we determined that we were going to get through this trial and post it all in one go. It was the only way I'd get beyond it. Which turned into three chapters, cause that's how I deal with writer's block. Cussing Winky. He is the worst. My least favorite character to write. Ggggrrrr.

Thank you all for your patience. Tell me what you think. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy scowled at the man as he slipped out of his seat. He stood up proudly before the masses. Bendy did not like that smile. He did not like that walk. He did not like that mustache.

Sasha didn’t smile at him. She sat straight, her head lifted in silent defiance of the man before her. Her dark eyes were fiery with anger.

“Miss Swingskirt, you said you’ve known these boys for a long time?” Mr. Winky asked.

Sasha blinked. “Yes.”

“Do you know how long?”

Sasha raised a brow. “Since the time I moved to Sillyvision and opened my club. About seven or eight years ago.”

Mr. Winky hummed and nodded. “And you came to Sillyvision alone? Did you have any relatives or friends there?”

Sasha blinked in confusion. “Well...no, not at the time.”
Mr. Winky pursued his lips thoughtfully and turned toward the jury. “So, why did you move to Sillyvision, Miss Swingskirt?”

Sasha’s confused frown turned into a scowl. “I don’t see what this has to do with the case, Mr. Winky.” Bendy swallowed. Something was up. What was this creep getting at?

“Are you refusing to answer the question?” Mr. Winky asked. He laced his fingers together in front of himself.

Sasha huffed. “I wanted a new start. I wanted to get out of the city I lived in and have a quieter life. What does that have to do with Bendy and Boris?”

Mr. Winky smiled. “I just want the facts straight. So, you moved to a small town where no one knew you. Did you save up the money for your business or was it a spur of the moment choice?”

Sasha lifted her chin. “I don’t see a reason to answer that.”

Bendy leaned toward the White Rabbit. “What is he doing?” Bendy hissed quietly. Mr. Rabbit shrugged. Most of the room seemed confused by these lines of questions.

“Mr. Winky, I believe we are here for a murder, not a dance club,” Judge Hearts said to the lawyer before turning to the woman. “Though, I’m sure it’s a very nice club.”

Sasha nodded hesitantly.

“It is related your honor, if you will allow me continue,” Mr. Winky promised. Judge Hearts considered before nodding. “Please answer the question, Miss Swingskirt.”

Sasha frowned and glanced at the boys. She seemed uncomfortable. “It was my own money with a little bit of a loan.”

“How odd,” Mr. Winky said. “According to files, you didn’t have a job in your home city.”

Sasha eyes widened. “How do you--”

“In fact, you are originally from here, aren’t you, Miss Swingskirt?” Mr. Winky grinned. Sasha paled. Bendy turned his head in confusion.

The room was silent. Sasha didn’t answer him. She stared at him with wide eyes. “It’s quite a distance to travel between here and Sillyvision. Especially for a place you have no ties to.”

“L-like I said, I wanted to start over,” she said softly. Mr. Winky raised a brow.

“Mr. Winky, please get to the point,” Judge Hearts warned.

Mr. Winky nodded to the man before turning to Sasha. He angled himself so he also faced the jury. “You were running, weren’t you Miss Swingskirt? You went to Sillyvision to hide.”

“Objection! There is no reason to bring this into this case!” Mr. Rabbit stood up.

Mr. Winky laughed. “Oh! There is plenty reason when the little miss has ties to the mob!”

People gasped. Bendy’s eyes widened. What! He looked to Sasha. Her head was bowed. Winky continued. “There have been speculations that Bendy and Boris have ties to mafia, but there was no one in Sillyvision with connections...except her.”
All eyes turned to Sasha. She was staring at her balled fists. She looked pale and scared. Bendy had so many questions buzzing in his head. Sasha? In with the mob? That didn’t make any sense! Sasha was one of the kindest people Bendy knew. It didn’t make sense...But, there were little things. Why would such a classy dame would appear in Sillyvision? Why did she seem to be able to handle herself even against the most burly and aggressive schmucks in her business dealings? Why she seemed never bat an eye at him. How she always had a solution...but that didn’t make her a criminal!

“It wasn’t like that,” she murmured. “It isn’t like that,” she said louder and lifted her head.

“Do you deny your connections?” Mr. Winky said with his starfallen grin.

“Connections?” Sasha’s eyes widened. Her face darkened. “My connections!” she growled.

“Yes, Miss Swingskirt. Your husband, or ex husband. Are the papers still on hold?” Mr. Winky practically purred. “And that little friend of ours?” Bendy looked at Winky. Ex? He looked back at Sasha. Sh-she had been married? This was new. Bendy had never heard about an ex. Bendy looked over at Boris. The wolf pup looked just as lost as Bendy felt. Suddenly, the woman in the chair was a stranger with a familiar face. The world was turning upside down.

Sasha was shaking in her seat.

“Objection! He is leading the witness!” Mr. Rabbit said to the judge before turning to Winky. “Where is the proof of your supposed connections sir!”

Winky smirked.

“Noted. A different question, Mr. Winky,” the judge said. He sounded completely enraptured with what was unfolding before him.

Mr. Winky turned his mustached smile on Sasha. She seemed dazed. “Where did you get the money for your business, Miss Swingskirt?”

“It was mine,” she said with a shaky voice. “I saved it...At first I was gonna use it as a surprise for him...but then...It was mine. I left and used it for myself.”

“He claims you stole it,” Mr. Winky said.

“Of course he did!” Sasha snapped. Her dark eyes turned to Winky with fire in them. “Anything to take my freedom from me! Any way he could control me or tear me down!” She shuddered.

“So you and your husband--”

“Don’t call him that,” Sasha growled. She seemed to get some level of control over herself. Shock was wearing off and grim determination was taking its place.

“Your ex husband, Chad Skirt, is a high ranked member of the Gambino crime family,” Mr. Winky said. “He is in prison for the murder of two men.”

“That’s correct,” Sasha said coldly.

“Did you work for the Gambino’s?” Mr. Winky said.

“If I did, it was because I didn’t know it,” Sasha said. “I had no idea about any of that when I married him.”

“But you learned about it? Was it after you left him?” Mr. Winky asked.
Sasha hesitated for a moment. “No,” she admitted.

Mr. Winky hummed. “But you made quite a few friends in that organization.”

Sasha bristled. “No! I did not! I thought I was, but I was a decoration and a tool. Nothing else. When I asked for help, they all turned their backs on me. All except…”

“Help? Help with what?” Mr. Winky asked.

“Running! I had to escape Chad.” Sasha knit her brows together. “He…”

“So, you fled your husband?” Mr. Winky asked. “Was it because you found out he was mafia?”

Sasha wrapped her arms around her middle and lifted her head. Pain showed in her dark eyes. “No.”

“Why did you run?” Mr. Winky asked. “You were married to him for a year and a half. What pushed you Miss Swingskirt?”

“I-I,” she stammered. Bendy’s fists clenched. This was too much. He didn’t want to know. She shouldn’t have to say.

“Can’t you object?” Bendy demanded of Mr. Rabbit. The man shook his head with a troubled frown. “This is starfallen ridiculous.”

“Yeah,” Boris agreed. His hands were also balled up. His ears were down, and he glared at Winky.

“That day, he,” she swallowed and her eyes became glassy, “He threatened to kill my sister. I knew he would do it too. He had pushed away everyone else I knew. He hated that Sally wouldn’t—that Sally kept in touch. She would talk to me, try to convince me to leave. He caught her at the house. And he--but I couldn’t—”

Sasha sobbed. Bendy’s grit his teeth. He had to do something!

“So, you stayed with him even though you knew he was in the mob at the time. It took a death threat towards your sister for you to leave. Did you ever think to talk to the police?” Mr. Winky asked.

“Leave? Ha! No. You mean escape! I had to escape. The police were easily pa-paid off or threatened. It seemed any person I approached back then was on their side.” Sasha hiccuped. “I had n-n-no one to turn to! Just my sister an-and I was terrified! He had pushed everyone else I knew away. It was ju-just my sister. She was all I had!”

“And what happened to your sister?” Mr. Winky grinned.

“I-I-I”

“You left her to rot, didn’t you?” Mr. Winky asked. Sasha gasped.

“Objection!” Mr. Rabbit barked.

Bendy had heard enough. Boris was growling softly next to him. Bendy wasn’t going to just sit through this. He turned to his lawyer. “Can’t you stop this!” Bendy barked. Mr. Rabbit looked at him alarmed and shook his head. Bendy realized his eyes were red.

“You see,” Mr. Winky continued. “Miss Swingskirt here seems like an innocent victim, but there is evidence that she did delivery jobs for the Gambinos. Folders of information, boxes with bribes, and possibly...drugs?” Mr. Winky turned to the jury. Sasha was shaking her head back and forth. She hid
her face in her hands. “She is close to those boys. The best connection Sillyvision has to the mob and the blackmarket. She had no problem leaving her sister behind to flee. She was--”

“That’s enough!” Bendy spit, and he shot up in his seat. The whole room seemed to tense with his motion. Everyone froze like a wild predator had suddenly broken loose. Bendy glanced around for only a second before focusing on Mr. Winky again. “You’ve said enough! Who the hell are you to drag out all this dirty laundry against her! Sasha is innocent. She hasn’t done anything! You spew one more starfallen lie out of that crooked smile of yours, and I’ll knock that mustache right off!”

Gasps of alarm went through the crowd. Several people looked terrified.

“Is that a threat, young demon?” Mr. Winky turned to face him with that cocky smile.

“Order! Order in the court!” Judge Hearts was banging on his broken book with so much force he was bouncing in place.

Boris stood and had a hand on Bendy’s shoulder in an instant. All the cops looked ready to pounce on him. Bendy didn’t care. He could take them. He just wanted one good hit on that slime ball.

“Bendy no! You can’t!” Boris said urgently.

Mr. Rabbit grabbed Bendy’s other arm. “Listen to your brother! If you hit him, your case is doomed. Sit down, Bendy!” Mr. Rabbit said sternly. His tone was cool and assertive. Bendy glanced at the white critter. He didn’t flinch away. He nose twitched. “Let me do my job.”

Bendy grit his teeth. “But this schmuck is--”

“Bendy!” The demon looked up at Sasha. She was giving him a sharp glare. “I’m alright,” she said slowly. Bendy frowned. “Sit your tail down before you get yourself and Boris into more trouble!”

Bendy opened his mouth to argue. “Thank you for wanting to protect me, but this is something I have to face, Bendy. Me. Don’t get in the middle of it.” She warned...with a smile.

Bendy stared at her. She was still pale and shaken, but she had the fire back in her eyes. Bendy huffed and fell back into his seat. “Thank you,” she said and straightened up. It took a moment for everyone to calm down. Bendy was still steaming in his seat. Boris did not remove his hand from Bendy. It was a physical reminder for him to stay there.

Mr. Winky smiled at the boys before turning back to Sasha. “What happened with your sister? If you were so concerned about her safety, why didn’t you take her with you?”

“I begged her to. I didn’t want her to stay, but she wouldn’t come, and I couldn’t stay. That was her choice, and I respected that,” Sasha stated.

“So, have you kept in contact with the people in Toon Town?” Mr. Winky asked.

“No. Chad was looking for me. Contact would have been a foolish thing.” Sasha frowned.

Mr. Winky pulled out a sheet of paper. Sasha lifted her chin and pursed her lips. “Then, where did you get extra money after you moved, Miss Swingskirt? Your income records and savings don’t match. Your tax files state that it’s trade and investment.”

“I am not answering that.”

“Didn’t you say all your work for the Gambino’s was because you didn’t know you were working for the mob?” Mr. Winky raised a brow.

“Objection,” Mr. Rabbit said. “Self incrimination.”
“Noted,” Judge Hearts said. Mr. Winky growled. For a second his smile slipped as he glared at the White Rabbit. The rabbit returned the look with his own steady expression.

“Where did the extra money come from?” Mr. Winky asked.

“I’m not answering that,” Sasha said cooly.

Someone cleared their throat loudly.

Mr. Winky opened his mouth, but the judge cut him off. “Okay Mr. Winky, I think that’s enough.”

“What!” Mr. Winky demanded. Bendy blinked in surprise.

“I think we’re done here,” Judge Hearts said. “Time for the next witness!”

“B-b-but!” Mr. Winky tried to argue.

“Call the witness!” The judge banged his broken book and nearly slipped off. “And thank you for coming, Miss.” He nodded toward Sasha as she stood up. She seemed as surprised and confused as the rest of the room.

“You’re welcome?” she said behind her hand. The judge grinned. She turned to leave. She gave Bendy and Boris a small smile as she passed by. It looked like an apology to Bendy. He had so many questions, but he couldn’t voice any of them.

Bendy was aware that Winky called the detectives to the stands, but he didn’t pay them much mind. What was this? He had known Sasha for years. How had he never found out about this? Married? Hiding? Was that why she answered her apartment with a shotgun that one time? He didn’t know how to feel. He was shocked, disappointed, and ashamed. Suddenly, someone he thought he was close to was a stranger. He didn’t know anything about her.

No! That wasn’t true. He did know her. He just didn’t know where she had come from. What she had been through. Why she didn’t talk them about this. He understood not wanting to share some things. He understood wanting to leave the past in the past. But...she had to feel paranoid. She had to...Did she rely on anyone with this or had she been carrying it by herself all this time? He hadn’t even noticed.

Bendy looked over to Boris. Boris was staring at the table. His ears were down, and his gaze was far away. He seemed sad. Bendy wondered if his brother was thinking the same thing. They considered her a friend. Turns out they were pretty crummy friends. Bendy tried to see it from her perspective. Telling people would put them in danger, right? He and Boris hadn’t told her about the machine parts or his illness for the same reasons...Right? It didn’t change their personalities. Sasha still knew them. She was still important to them. She was the closest friend they had in Sillyvision.

That made sense. Still...he wished she had relied on them a little. He didn’t know. Bendy went around and around with his thoughts. Both of the detectives were questioned. Bendy didn’t realize how checked out he was until Mr. Winky did something unexpected.

“The Prosecution calls Holly May to the witness stand,” he said. Bendy jerked with a start. Holly? Why was he calling Holly? She wasn’t really involved in any of this either. It didn’t make any sense.

“Holly May,” Mr. Winky called again.

There was a muffled voice from the back right side of the room and Bendy saw Holly slowly stand, still saying something to someone next to her. She shuffled her way down the aisle awkwardly and
made her way to the front. When she passed him, she gave him a brief, confused glance.

Bendy frowned in concern. She hadn’t been told about this. What was that Winky schmuck up to? He looked over at the smiling man. What was going on?

Bendy leaned over to the White Rabbit. “Why did he call her? Did you know about this?”

Mr. Rabbit shook his head. “She has less to do with this than anyone else on the list of potential witnesses.” He sounded completely astonished. His ear twitched nervously.

She was sworn in and took her seat.

Mr. Winky approached her. “Miss May. What interaction have you had with the defendants?”

Holly didn’t answer immediately. Her face was strained and tense, but she studied Winky for a moment. “I met them both when they asked for directions at the college.”

“Directions to where?” he asked.

Holly rearranged her hands on her lap, calm finally settling on her face. “To the house of Dr. Ryan Oddswell.”

“And you gave them the address?” Mr. Winky looked at her with bright eyes.

Holly smiled pleasantly back at him. “Yes. I did.”

“According to the services of the college you broke the policy doing that. Were you aware of this rule when you told them the address?” He pulled at the corner of his mustache.

Holly gave him a level stare. She almost looked insulted. “Yes, I was aware. Are you aware, Mr. Winky, that I already was disciplined for making that mistake?” She looked at the judge. “I fail to see how my losing my job at the school is relevant to this case.”

He ignored her. “Did you know about the brothers and that they were wanted criminals at the time?”

Holly leaned forward, eyes gleaming. “No. I hadn’t heard of them until afterwards, when the issue was brought up. My former roommate can testify to it.”

Mr. Winky nodded. He stepped away from her and turned to the jury. “But you did get curious. After you were released from your employment you started to do research. Extensive research.”

Holly paused. “If you mean ordering a few newspaper articles from Sillyvision and Warnerburg, that’s hardly extensive. I don’t deny being curious. I did lose my job because of them.”

“Well no,” Mr. Winky admitted. “But you also were looking into Dr. Oddswell. You were a student of his, weren’t you?”

Holly shrugged. “For a short time. He was fired halfway through the semester. My curiosity with him, however, was because he was the person the boys were looking for.”

“Funny, the news implied that you were interested in his research,” Mr. Winky said.

Holly’s eyebrow twitched. “Well, as I’m sure everyone has realized, the news isn’t reliable at this point.”

“It seems a lot of things aren’t. You had to face a lot of difficulty since that time at the college.” Mr.
Winky sighed. “You were harassed for helping them. There were rumors that you used magic and worked with them in the mob. Your roommate claimed cruel messages were left on your door nearly every day.”

He felt a pang of guilt. She was harassed because of them? Bendy could see the bottom of her jaw grinding together. “Once again, none of this seems to pertain to the trial at all. I resent that my personal life is being infringed upon to humor a lawyer that made a one of his witnesses cry. I won’t be answering any more questions until they are.” She folded her arms. “Although, for a lawyer you seem to know an awful lot about the mob.”

“Personal life?” Mr. Winky raised a brow. “Is that what had you leave your home and live on the streets? Or was it possible that it had to do with the work you were doing? With those magic runes?”

Homeless! Boris and Bendy shared an alarmed look. She went homeless?

“Objection!” Mr. Rabbit stood. “He is leading the witness.”

Judge Hearts sighed. “I think we all know where this goes.”

Mr. Winky frowned at the Rabbit before turning back to Holly. He straightened his tie. Bendy narrowed his eyes. Runes? Why was he bringing up runes? “Miss May what are your intentions with your runes?”

Holly raised her brows. “If you’ll explain how this is relevant, I’ll answer the question.”

Mr. Winky tilted his head. “Is it possible for runes to cause sickness or at least the appearance of illness?”

Holly’s jaw dropped. Bendy’s jaw also dropped. So did Boris’. Was this mustached snake implying what Bendy thought he was? That was ridiculous! A buzzing murmur went around the room. The judge leaned forward with interest.

Holly blinked, slowly closing her mouth. “I see what you mean,” she said slowly. Her hands curled into fists. “Yes. It would be possible to mimic the symptoms of being sick with runes.” She took a long, deep breath. “However, there is a limit to it. Every single person with the,“ she made quotation marks in the air, “symptoms would have to have a rune written on them. That’s how runes work. They are direct. So, if you are implying that I used my knowledge of runes to fabricate the boy’s claims, I’m afraid you’ll have to look for another excuse. Even if that were the case, I’d never met the boys before I gave them directions. We had no connection to speak of.”

“None that the public know of. Just like how the public was unaware of this ‘Ink Illness’ until recently.” Mr. Winky grinned. Bendy had a bad feeling about this. “For an ‘epidemic’, it sure has remained quiet.” He continued and turned to face the room. “I mean, a killer disease that only shows symptoms for a few minutes? Otherwise the sick are perfectly normal? Mighty convenient. And it happens how often in most cases? A couple times a month, maybe?” Mr. Winky tsked. “Sounds like a scam to me. The chance of a doctor being on hand to witness an attack would be so rare, right?”

Bendy balled his fists and took a deep breath. He was just baiting them. He wanted them to get angry. Bendy knew that. He couldn’t react.

“And I’m sure the limits of the runes could be covered.” Mr. Winky turned his grin on Bendy. “By certain abilities that Mr. Bendy possesses as a demon.” Bendy narrowed his eyes. “After all, demons have always had an array of powers to affect others.”

Holly folded her arms. “Not world wide,” she argued back. “Do you happen to be a rune expert,
counselor?” Her tone was riddled with sarcasm.

“No,” Mr. Winky raised an amused brow. “But you are?”

Holly paused, frowning. “My major is...was ancient civilizations and languages.” She swallowed. “So, yes. I have done extensive studies on runes.”

“Do you have to be the one to activate the rune?” Mr. Winky asked.

She frowned. “If my essence is the one fueling the working, yes.”

“And what about someone like a demon? Or a ghost? Or even an angel?” Mr. Winky smiled.

“Demons and ghosts don’t need runes to perform workings. Angels use them, but theirs are far more complicated and only angels can use them.”

“You can make contracts to use them as energy sources though? A demon could use a rune in theory?” Mr. Winky asked, sounding curious. Bendy blinked. Him? Use a rune? He...honestly had no idea. Magic junk had never interested him. It got weird way too fast for his tastes.

Holly pressed her lips together. “What you are describing is called being a witch. Something which I consider to be very dangerous because it always results in a severe consequence to the contractee. If I were to make a contract with a demon or other being of power, I wouldn’t need to use runes either.”

“But a being of power could get a rune from someone like you and use it? Or even write their own yes?” Mr Winky said. Bendy didn’t really think it was a question anymore.

“They wouldn’t need to,” Holly persisted, eyebrow twitching.

“To do things that would normally be odd for their powers they would,” Mr. Winky said. “Or not. Like I said, I am not the expert. You are.” Mr. Winky pointed out. “So would it possible that Bendy could cause the symptoms for Ink Illness?”

Holly scowled. “Do you even understand what your talking about?” She was starting to get mad now. “Being a magical creature like a demon is a completely different field of power than using runes. They aren’t comparable.” She bit her lip.

“Why not?”

Holly straightened up and her voice took on a teaching tone. Specifically, the tone of someone instructing a very simple child. “Demons have an unlimited internal energy source that they use for their magic. In addition to this, they can shape it directly. Humans can’t. We need runes or other things to shape our energies. Also the energy we have is very limited in comparison. That’s why we need to use runes, spells or make a contract to be able to access it.”

Bendy blinked. Uh? He does what now? He stared at Holly like she grew a second head. Since when did she know so much about demons? How did she so much about demons? She knew more than he did! That...was just embarrassing.

“So he couldn’t do it himself...he’d need help.” Mr. Winky mused.

“Mr. Winky, please. Get to the point,” Judge Hearts asked. “I am expected home for dinner tonight and the mrs. does not like to be kept waiting. Heads will roll.” He chuckled.

Bendy raised a confused brow. The White Rabbit shuddered next to him. Um...
“What I’m saying,” Holly huffed. “Is that no one could do magic this widespread unless they had direct contact with each of the people showing symptoms. Sure, it might be possible with a lot of power. A human certainly couldn’t do it alone. But the amount of power one has only matters if that condition is met.”

“But is it widespread? The only people that have claimed to have the Illness have been here in Toon Town. Sure, a few foreigners that have been visiting also claim to be sick, but it’s still here. There is only one documented case of it in a local hospital here. Everything else has been word of mouth.”

Holly raised a brow. “I’ve personally met at least twenty people with ink illness, sir. They’re everywhere, the only reason ‘no one knows’ is because they’ve been shoved to the side. I discovered them by looking into less reputable newspapers that print conspiracy theories. Those are the only people listening.”

“Ah, and you already pointed out how reliable news outlets have been.” Mr. Winky said dismissively. Bendy’s tail flicked with annoyance.

“My point isn’t about the newspaper. My point is that I’ve met these people,” she shot back.

“Miss May, have you actually seen someone have one of these...attacks?” Mr. Winky asked.

She paused. “I’ve seen the remains of someone suffering from the illness. The newspaper claimed it was a locked room murder, but when I went inside the room, there was a puddle of ink on the bed. That was all that was left.”

“A puddle,” Mr. Winky said flatly boarding sarcasm. “What kind of sickness turns a person into a puddle of ink? No wonder doctor have been having such a difficult time--”

“Shut up,” Boris hissed. Bendy startled and looked up to his brother surprise.

“Bro yo--”

“Just shut up! People have died! You don’t talk about them like that!” Boris stood up and leaned over the table. Tears sat on the edge of his eyes as he glared at Winky. “They suffer! It’s terrible! It’s ter-terrible to see. So don’t. Pl-please.” He was shaking.

“Bro,” Bendy stood up and put a hand on his arm. “It’s okay.” They could get in trouble for the outburst. He got Boris to sit down, but the wolf was still shaking. With so many people watching he wasn’t able to focus on Boris like he wanted to. He rubbed Boris’ arm and focused back on what was being said.

“Your opinion on Ink Illness is irrelevant here, Mr. Winky.” Holly spoke loudly, trying to draw attention away from them here. “Despite what your rather large ego says, we’re not here to listen to you ramble on for no reason. We’re here to discuss facts. And if you want facts, I can list each and every single person I’ve met who has ink illness.”

Winky glanced at her. “That won’t be necessary. Prosecution rests.” Winky’s sudden close seemed to surprise everyone. Holly blinked as he sat down.

“Does the defense have any questions?” Judge hearts inquired.


“Then you may leave Miss May.” The judge told her.
Holly got up from the stand quickly and Bendy couldn’t help but notice that when she sat back down she was on the left side of the room rather than the right, where she’d been sitting before.

Bendy sighed. Were they done yet? If the went on much further he seriously was going to attack that starfallen mook. He needed to get tossed out the window. “Defence calls Yakko, Wakko, and Dot Warner.” Bendy looked over at their lawyer. The Warners! Now! He groaned and dropped his head on the table. There went the last of his sanity. Before he could finish the thought, arms wrapped around his middle.

“Bendy-boo! My sweet mailman! I’ve come to rescue you!” Dot sang gleefully. Bendy growled and tried to pry her off.

“Let go!” he growled. She giggled and puckered her lips to kiss him. Bendy leaned back so far he nearly fell out of his seat.

“Ma’am, please get a hold of yourself,” An officer said. Dot stopped and looked over at the man.

“Don’t get between true love! Don’t you know how long I’ve waited to see him again? And now here he is! Even wrapped in chains, I love him,” Dot declared. Bendy made a gagging sound.

“I’d rather go to prison,” Bendy said flatly. At least she stopped trying to kiss him.

“C’mon sis, we gotta sit over here.” Yakko grabbed her head and tossed her into the seat. She bounced before landing with her ankles crossed. She looked poised, like she had been sitting there the whole time instead of having just been thrown.

Yakko shook both their hands. “Long time no see. Well, for us anyway. You’re all over the tele! Good to be back. How’s prison? They change the food yet?”

Bendy blinked. “Uuuh, good to see you again too.”

“How have you been Yakko?” Boris asked pleasantly.

“Well enough. The doc is having a stressful day, but we got everything done that we needed to in Warnerburg.” Yakko shrugged.

Wakko popped up between them and put a hand on each of their shoulders. “Hi mom! Look I’m on TV!” Bendy rolled his eyes.


“You should have fun while it lasts. Who know when Tap is gonna throw you a curveball,” Wakko said.

“Who?”

“Nevermind.” Wakko waved them off. He winked at you. The boys joined their sister in the witness box.

“Excuse me, you need to take your oaths,” the officer said.

“Thanks but we’re full,” Yakko said.

“Uh?” The cop blinked dumbly.

“Ugh, I don’t even like oats,” Dot grimaced.
“No, oaths, not oats.” The cops shook his head. “You need to be sworn in.”

The three gasped. “For shame, sir!” Yakko shook his finger. “We’re children!”

“I don’t swear!” Wakko declared.

“Oath no, you didn’t!” Dot giggled.

“Oath yes, I did!” Wakko grinned.

The cop (and everyone else) watched in confusion. Bendy smacked his palm to his forehead. They were never going to get out of here.

“Hey! Officer!” Boris called out. The cop looked over his shoulder to the wolf. “It’d probably be best to just leave them. They’ll take all day if you let them.”

The officer blinked. “But, uh, they need to…” He trailed off. He looked at the Warners. The three gave him an amused smile. Daring him to speak. He looked at the judge.

Judge Hearts shrugged. “People lie anyway.”

The officer sighed and walked off. Bendy looked to the White Rabbit. The rabbit was wiping down his glasses nervously. “You ready for this?”

The rabbit lifted his chin. “Oh course. I’m a professional.”

Bendy shook his head in pity. “You just proved to me you’re not. Do yourself a favor. Don’t try to make sense of what they say. Just keep going for the point. Don’t let them distract you.”

Chapter End Notes

This was an interesting week. There were many points when me and Tap wanted Mr. Winky to just be finished! Anyways, the good thing about stress and stuff, is that I finally found some good typo puns...Hehehe...

Bendy compliments Mr. Winky while insulting him. "He just wanted one good hit on that slim ball." Winky thanks Bendy, he's been working out. :D

Holly's call! "Persecution calls Holly May to the witness stand," he (Winky) said. Holly stops and frowns. "No! Why would I purposely accept an invitation to get persecuted! I thought this was a court of justice!" (By the way, this was a very common typo. Holly got persecuted, Bendy, Boris...the Warners.)

There were a couple more, but those were my favorite! Enjoy next chapter!
"I-I really don't have words for this," Mic said to the side stage. "No. I mean, how to I introduce them? They're the Warners!" The muffled voice answered. "Well yeah, but that was really brief." The voice spoke again. "Alright."
Mic turned forward again. "The trial continues! What does the dastardly Mr. Winky have in store for the zaniest siblings in the world? Find out!"
The voice off stage said something. "Aww, thanks." Mic smiled and scratched the back of his head bashfully.

Chapter Notes

I love the Warners. I hate Winky. It's an odd chapter because of it. They took over again, because of course the Warners did. Still, we are getting to the finish line! After what happened last time, I wonder how they're going to turn this around. ;3
Enjoy!

The White Rabbit looked at him one part worried and two parts confused. He glanced at Boris behind him. The wolf could only shrug and smile.

Mr. Rabbit hopped to the floor and eyed the Warners. The three siblings grinned back. "How do you know Bendy and Boris?"

“Oh, they’re old pals of ours,” Wakko said.

“Yep! Bendy and I were in love at first sight.” Dot sighed and little hearts floated around her head. Bendy cringed. Why did she have to say that out loud?

Mr. Rabbit flinched in surprise. “Are you romantically involved with Bendy?”

“Ye--”

“Don’t lie Dot.” Yakko frowned and rolled his eyes.

“What? It’s obvious we belong together.” Dot lifted her chin.

“Only in your dreams.” Wakko smirked. Dot gave him a raspberry.

“Where did you meet the B-brothers?”

“Back home in Warnerburg. They were great! Really fun guys. Knew how to have a good time,” Wakko said. He reached behind himself and pulled out a sucker.
“A good time?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Oh yeah, a great time. Bendy threw me off the water tower. They brought us a guy that tried to rob them--ooh--and then there was the lab!” Dot bounced a little in the seat she shared with her brothers.

Bendy dropped his head on the table. They were doomed.

“Th-threw you?” the White Rabbit asked, startled.

“Yeah, she was fine. He aimed for the trampoline.” Yakko waved off the concern.

“I…It…” Mr. Rabbit cleared his throat. He shook his head. “What about the gentleman they brought you?”

“He was fun,” Wakko said around his sucker.

“Yeah, a fast runner,” Yakko added.

“Eh, he wasn’t my type.” Dot shrugged and pulled out a nail file from seemingly nowhere.

“What did you do with him?”

“Played with him,” the three said together with smiles. Bendy felt a shudder go down his spine. He didn’t want to know what that meant. He knew enough about these three to know when not to ask.

“He was committed to an insane asylum,” Mr. Rabbit said. “Did you do that?”

The Warners shared a thoughtful look. “Eeeuuuuuuuuuh, maybe.” He shrugged. “We just wanted to know where Bendy’s stolen bag went. The guy was a hack that mugged people in alleys.”

“Stolen bag?”

“Yeah, Warnerburg was having a theft problem. Bendy had his bag stolen and all the money they had,” Yakko said.

“We liked ‘em enough to wanna help,” Wakko said. “It was a lot of fun.”

“And why didn’t you three tell the police? Why didn’t you take this man to the police?” Mr. Rabbit asked.


“You’re funny!” Dot giggled.

“W-we wouldn’t take a lost squeaky toy to the cops!” Wakko added. “They take forever!”

“And they’re sooooooooooooooooooo boring,” Dot added.

“Unless they’re chasing us. We help keep them on their toes.” Yakko smiled.

Mr. Rabbit pinched the bridge of his nose. “So, you didn’t trust the police to handle the situation?”

“Naaaaaaah,” the three said together.

“It was a lot more fun doing it ourselves.” Wakko leaned back and propped his feet up on the banister of the witness box.
“You mentioned the lab. What happened there exactly?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Well, first we had to find Who,” Dot said.

“Who?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Yeah Who,” Wakko agreed.

“Cause Who had the key,” Dot said.

“Who had the key?” Mr. Rabbit blinked in confusion.

“Exactly!” Yakko pointed at the rabbit with a grin.

“Wait, what?”

“No. What was guarding the back door,” Dot said.

“Who was guarding the back door?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“No, no, no.” Dot waved her hands back and forth. “Who had the key.”

Bendy groaned and slammed fist on the table. “Stop messing with him!” Several people jumped around Bendy.

The Warners grinned and laughed.

“Your honor,” Mr. Winky spoke up. “I move Mr. Bendy be removed from the room for misconduct. He has interrupted several times now.”

Bendy looked at the mustached man in surprise. Winky grinned back, as pleasant and relaxed as ever.

The judge tugged on his beard nervously. “Oh, I don’t know about that. We need the accused to be around to...accuse, don’t we?” He asked.

“He is getting in the way of the case,” Mr. Winky said. You mean your agenda you slimy snake, Bendy thought.

The judge hummed. Bendy scowled. Like hell he was leaving Boris here alone. “Maybe if he does it again,” the judge reasoned. Bendy let out a sigh of relief. Okay, keep his mouth shut for the rest of this. Got it.

“Back to the lab. You helped them break in and--”

“Objection,” Mr. Winky said.

The judge grumbled.

Mr. Rabbit frowned.

“No worries ears, we’ll tell ya the story,” Yakko said.

“We got in and found the hidden basement,” Wakko said like it was adventure story being shared with friends.

“There was treasure everywhere, and I mean everywhere! Cars, costumes, jewels, clothes, furniture,
“everything you could imagine!” Yakko said. “They were only missing two things!” Yakko held up two fingers.

“Food,” Wakko said.

“And girls,” the boys crowed together.

Dot rolled her eyes. “Anyway,” she said. “My mailman was able to find his bag. I tried on some of the gems. They went wonderfully with my skirt.”

“And then the mob fellas showed up with guns!” Yakko said.

“Oh my!” the judge said.

“We were able to dodge the bullets,” Wakko said.

“And get a snazzy escape car,” Dot said eagerly.

“But the cops were blockading the exit,” Yakko said. “We jumped them and escaped.”

“It was such a fun car chase.” Wakko sighed happily.

“Next day Bendy and Boris were heading out to Toon Town,” Yakko said. “We gave them the good ol’ Warner goodbye and all that.”

“Well, until we came here and found them again,” Wakko said.

“Yeah, by then they were trying to help that doctor guy get a cure going,” Dot said.

“Did you help them again?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Oh, of course we did! They’re pals of ours,” Yakko stated like it was obvious. He pulled out a soda and took a drink of it.

“How do you do that?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Do what?” Yakko tilted his head.

“Pull things out of thin air?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Oh that.” Wakko shrugged. “Guess there’s a reason we’re called ‘zany’ right?”

“You three are what?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Gifted,” Dot said. “And super-duper cute.” She turned her pointer finger on her cheek. Wakko and Yakko rolled their eyes.

“Ah, I...see,” he said. The White Rabbit obviously didn’t. Bendy took a deep breath. He wasn’t going to get a headache. Nope. Not him. He was peachy.

“And you helped them willing, even though you were aware of their criminal status?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Look pal, we judge people by their character,” Yakko said.

“And the plot, but we don’t really have that anymore,” Wakko said. “Much to Tap’s relief.”
“Uh?”

“Don’t worry about,” Dot said. “Anyways, Bendy and Boris are swell boys, and they wouldn’t hurt a fly.”

“Unless the fly was asking for it.” Wakko added.

“So yeah, we helped them.” Yakko shrugged. “We go against authority all the time. It wasn’t a big deal for us.”

“Thank you,” Mr. Rabbit said. “The Defense rests.”

Winky stood up, dusting off his jacket as he walked toward the trio.

“So, is it true that you took items from the storehouse while you were there?” He started with a grin.

“Nooooo—well.” Yakko tilted his head. “We did take the escape car.”

“But we had too! It was an escape!” Wakko said. “Just like the movies!”

“And besides,” Dot said. “They got it back once we were done.”

Winky picked up a file. “Really? According to police report, shortly afterward when the items were catalogued a gold crown was missing. Do any of you know about this?”

“A crown?” Yakko frowned. “Do you guys remember a crown?”

“Nope? Crown who?” Wakko leaned back and laced his fingers behind his head.

“A crown? No, I’m a lady. I would want a tiara.” Dot said.

“Uuuuuuuuh, sorry pal. No crown here,” Yakko shrugged.

“Unless you’re talked about the crown of my head.” Wakko tapped the top of his head with his knuckles causing his hat to shift. Something glinted underneath his hat. Yakko quickly planted a hand roughly on Wakko’s head and moved the hat back. “Ouch!”

Mr. Winky blinked. “Was that the crown?” he asked, dumbfounded.

“What crown?” Yakko asked a touch nervous. He leaned on Wakko’s head like an armrest and crossed his ankles. “There’s no crown here.”

“Th-the gold! I saw gold glinting under there!” Winky looked at them incredulously. He straightened his tie. “If you would remove the hat?” He looked at the judge.

Judge Hearts blinked owlishly. “Um, well, I suppose. I understand the pain of a lost crown…”

“But your honor!” Yakko stood up and pointed up. “This hat never leaves his head! It’s the last thing he has from our parents!”

“And where are your parents?” The judge asked.

The three of them widened their eyes and frowned. Dot pulled out a violin and began to play mournfully.

“Well you see sir. We’re,” Yakko sighed heavily. “Orphans.”
“Oh my!” The judge gasped. “You poor dears.” Bendy rolled his eyes. Oh the terrible drama.

“Didn’t the youngest just say ‘Hi mom’ at the television?” Winky pointed out skeptically. “I’m not asking to take the hat, I just want to see what he’s hiding underneath there. If he’s stolen from the warehouse, who knows what else might be missing.”

“Why does that matter anyway?” Dot put her hands on her hips and pouted.

Winky’s face scrunched. “I just explained that. Please remove the hat.” He pointed at Wakko.

“But that doesn’t involve those two,” Wakko pointed to Bendy and Boris.

“Actually a lot of the stuff he’s said doesn’t involve the bros.” Yakko scratched his chin. “It’s like you’re trying to give us a bad reputation!” Yakko snapped his fingers like he solved something. “For shame.” He shook his finger at Winky. Bendy had to bit his lip to stop from laughing.

The edge of Winky’s mustache was twitching angrily now. “Guardsman. If you would remove the hat for him.”

“Eek! Didn’t your mother ever teach you to keep your hands to yourselves!” Wakko said and hopped up. He grabbed the edge of his hat and held it down on his head firmly.

A guard slowly tried to reach out for the hat.

“What’s that!” Yakko gasped and pointed to the guard’s face. The guard paused.

“What?”

“That on your face,” Yakko said. “Eeeew, get it off!”

Wakko made a gagging sound. “Ugh! Gross!”

It was at that moment of distraction that Winky reached up and snatched the hat off Wakko’s head. “Thank you, guardsman.”

Wakko stood there, crown in place and tongue sticking out. Yakko put a hand behind his back and the other on his chin. “Well, will you look at that! Good job Wakko!”

“Uh?” Wakko blinked. Bendy smacked his forehead with his hand. Those idiots!

“You found the missing crown!” Yakko held out his hands like he was presenting something.

“I did?”

“Yep! It was under your hat the whole time!” Dot said.

“Well, I’ll be,” Wakko gasped. “How did it get there?”

Winky turned to the judge. “This obvious proof of the theft. I move that we strike their testimonies from the record and have the boy arrested!”

The Warners gasped. Boris did too. Bendy smacked his forehead with his hand (He was sure he was going to leave a mark at this rate).

“Now, hold on for one cock-picking-second there, bub,” Yakko said. “How dare you accuse Wakko of stealing! He never takes that hat off! How could he have stolen it! Obviously someone slipped it
“If he never takes it off then how could anyone have--” Winky stopped. “Nevermind. There’s no point in arguing this. Judge!”

The small judge looked on with wide eyes. “Ah! R-right! Umm.” He seemed a little confused.

“Why did he have?” The little man couldn’t help but ask.

Yakko smiled and shrugged. “Weeeeeeell, he may have a little bit of a kleptomania problem.”

“What are you talking about?” Wakko said. He was weared the judges wig and...Winky’s suit? Bendy glanced at the lawyer. He looked down at himself. He was only in a muscle shirt and boxers with dollar sign print. Bendy and Boris couldn’t help snickering.

“H-How did you--gave me back my clothes!” Mr. Winky darkened with a heavy blush.

Yakko blew a kiss to the audience. “Good night everybody.”

Mr. Winky grabbed his attire and pulled on his pants. The lawyer took back his wig with a frown. He banged his anvil on the broken book. “Guards...er, officers! Arrest this boy!”

“Told you we should have tied him up,” Dot said.

Yakko shrugged. “Yeah, but let’s be honest. We weren’t going to get through this without one chase scene.”

Oh no.

What happened next was rather predictable for the Warners.

“Come on,” one officer said.

“We can’t have little kids causing a scene now. Ya want to be good, right?” another said.

“We resent that! We’d rather be called vertically challenged pre-adults,” Yakko said. That caused them to pause in confusion for a second. Enough time for Yakko to gasp and point behind the approaching men. “Holy cow! Is that Yen Sid?” The mooks actually looked. Of course, when they turned back the Warners were gone.

“Where did they go?” one demanded.

“Not very perceptive there are ya?” Yakko said from atop his head. “Ya know, monkeys always look!”

“AH!” the officer tried to grab him, but he hopped up and dove into the crowd. Screams ensued.

“Get him!” one of the men commanded. The officers went into the crowd.

“Order! Order in the court!” Bendy looked over to see Wakko wearing the judge’s wig again. He was leaning over and banging the anvil on the wood banister. Judge Hearts was clinging to the book that was threatening to topple over from Wakko jumping up and down.

“Enough! You are in contempt of this case!” Mr. Winky pointed at Wakko and scowled. He was still only half dressed. His shirt wasn’t fully buttoned and tucked. He was missing his tie and coat.
“And you are in contempt of reality!” Wakko said back. “And give me back my hat! Don’t you know that’s stealing!”

“I’m fine with being in contempt as long as Bendy is the one to hold me.” Dot sighed on Bendy’s lap. Bendy jumped in surprise. When had she--

Mr. Winky lunged for her, and she hopped away. Bendy pushed back and stood. Mr. Winky huffed in pain when his stomach hit the edge. Dot jumped onto his head and then the floor. “Na-na-na-na-na-na-na,” she taunted and ran.

Mr. Winky glared up at Bendy. “Tell them to stop!”

Bendy blinked twice then smirked. “Why? You wanted to catch them. Congrats, this is what happens when you try to catch them.” Bendy chuckled with his best evil smile. “Besides, you really think I have any control over them? Please. The reason we are friends is because they haven’t broken us.”

Mr. Winky looked at Bendy in horror. He looked over at Boris. The wolf nodded. “If ya don’t want the building to come down, you should probably do something soon, sir.”

“Good luck.” Bendy crossed his arms.

Mr. Winky’s scowl became villainous. “You did this on purpose. You brought them here knowing what they’re like.”

“Please.” Bendy rolled his eyes. “The Warners are no secret. They practically have their own page in the local papers. Ask anyone who has ever been in Warnerburg. You knew too. This is on you sir. I sat here and watched.”

There was a shout. Bendy and the rest looked up to see an officer hanging from the ceiling by something that looked like a giant wad of chewing gum.

“Oh dear,” the White Rabbit muttered. Bendy and Boris agreed. Shouts and general chaos was now in effect.

Mr. Winky stood. Something seemed to change in his demeanor. Bendy didn’t like the change. He thought he hated when the scum was smiling. Now he was scowling. He calmly finished his shirt, put back on his tie and coat. He adjusted his tie.

In the meantime, Bendy looked out to the crowd. One officer was tangled up with a giraffe woman. Yakko stopped next to Holly. Bendy couldn’t hear them over the madness, but it was obvious what Yakko said. ‘Hellooooooooo gorgeous.’ Holly gave him an alarmed and confused look.

Dot was flirt/running from two officers in the walkway to the open floor. Wakko was shouting directions from the judge’s chair. Bendy realized that the other two were following them and dodging the officers easily.

“ENOUGH!” Mr. Winky grabbed Wakko around the throat and yanked him down to the open floor. The lawyer held him up like a caught chicken. “You three are menaces! Keep this up and you will all be behind bars for years to come!” The other two siblings stopped.

“You can try,” Yakko said from atop a chair’s backrest. “The last place lasted a day.”

“Nah, we were out before dinner,” Dot said from a cop’s head.
“And you!” He turned to Wakko. The Warner boy smiled from behind a large curly mustache. Mr. Winky paused in horror and lifted a hand to his lip. Bendy noted that the kid also had his hat back on his head.

Wakko chuckled. “Had you going there for a second, didn’t I?” Mr. Winky looked terrifyingly angry when he realized that the boy hadn’t stolen his facial hair (Bendy was sure they could if they wanted to).

“That’s it! I want them out of here! Throw them into the deepest hole you can find until they can be here for their own trial!” Mr. Winky raved. “Get these monsters out!”

Dot and Yakko were snatched at the same moment. “Hey! Don’t you know it’s rude to grab a lady?” Dot said. An officer had her in the air by her arm.

“Watch it! This is authentic fur!” Yakko frowned and tried to turn to look at the cop that held him up by the scruff of the neck. “I demand my one phone call!” The fella brought him into the aisle with his sister as Mr. Winky stood on the open floor.

“I will not stand for these heathens to be here any longer!” Mr. Winky shook Wakko around.

“Then you should take a seat,” Yakko snarked. Bendy couldn’t help but chuckle. This was bad, but the Warners were still smiling and acting carefree. It was hard to take the situation seriously. The room was half trashed. The audience either pressed against the walls of the room or half fallen out of their chairs. Members of the jury looked anywhere from mildly entertained to traumatized.

“All you had to do was say please,” Dot said.

The officer holding her blinked in surprise. “Please stop acting like this.”

“Oh, we’re not acting,” Yakko said. “We’re always like this.” Bendy heard Boris snort next to him.

“Enough! Stop talking!” Mr. Winky demanded forcefully. “Take them out!”

“Out? Do you like Mexican or Italian?” Dot asked.

“AAAAH!” Mr. Winky was changing into some...rather interesting shades. Bendy started to worry for Wakko’s safety.

“N-n-now, now, Mr. Winky--Oof!” Judge Hearts was attempting to straightened himself out when his book finally gave way. It slid to the floor, taking the little man with it.

“Well, there’s no reason for shouting. We’ll head out ourselves,” Yakko tsked.

“We know when we aren’t wanted.” Dot raised her little round nose in the air with a huff.

“Yeah, we don’t ne--,” Wakko cut off to cough.

“Not another word from you three!” Mr. Winky sneered. Bendy tensed. Was he choking Wakko? “How you three freaks have stayed on the streets is beyond me, but no more! I don’t care if you’re children! I’ll make sure you never see the light of day again!”

Wakko cleared his throat. “Oh yeah, well, ugh!” He pulled his legs up and curled into himself as he coughed. He covered his mouth with his hand.

“We need to get this room back in order and get back to the trail. Take them away.” Mr. Winky gestured for one of the officers to take the kid. The other to officers that held Dot and Yakko took a
step back toward the doors.

“Wait a second!” Yakko shouted. “Hold on!” Bendy looked over to the Warner. Suddenly the guy’s tone had changed. The joking manner he had used this whole time was gone. Yakko actually sounded worried. He was reached for the hand holding him up.

“He said stop! Let go, meathead!” Dot struggled equally. Bendy’s eyes widened in surprise. What?

“Are you okay your honor?” Mr. Winky was ignoring them now. He was trying to spot the little judge.

“I’m fine,” Judge Hearts said cheerfully. “Golly, that was exciting!”

An officer approached Mr. Winky. Wakko was curling into himself more. He coughed again. It sounded wet. Bendy felt his heart drop and his blood turn cold. He was sure he visibly paled.

“Bendy? What’s wrong?” Boris asked, noticing the change immediately.

Bendy was on his feet in an instant, his hands planted on the table. He was ready to jump over it. The White Rabbit jumped in surprise. “HEY!” Bendy barked. Shocking everyone.

Yakko wrenched himself free and sprinted down the aisle. “Wakko!”

Wakko pulled back his hand to reveal the black splatter on his hand. “Ugh, crud.”

“What in the world?” Mr. Winky’s eyes widened. He let go of Wakko. The officer had taken a startled step back. Yakko dove between them and caught Wakko just before he hit the floor. He landed on top of Yakko.

“Hey! You okay bro?” Yakko asked. He gently sat up and adjusted Wakko in his arms.

“S-Sor-”

“Shhh, it’s okay Wakko. I got ya.” Yakko smiled at him. Wakko shivered and squeezed his eyes shut.

“Letmego! Letmego!” Dot screeched. She twisted around and bit the officer. He cried out in pain before letting her go. Dot was by Wakko and Yakko in an instant. She had a bottle of water in one hand and a towel on the other. “It’s okay Wakko we’re here,” Dot said.

“What in sam-hill is going on here?” Mr. Winky demanded. The officers were edging forward cautiously.

Nope. Bendy was stepping in. The demon hopped over the table in one fluid movement. He was between the officers and the Warners in the blink of an eye. The officers froze.

“Step aside,” the one in front of him ordered.

Bendy lifted his chin definitely. What could he do? If he got into a fight, it was over for all of them. But he couldn’t just stand aside. Not while Wakko was in pain. Not with Ink Illness. He knew how horrible it was. Boris stepped up with him. Bendy glanced up at him. The wolf pup looked just as determined as him. He wasn’t going to move.

Well then…

“Bendy,” Yakko said. “Don’t. We can handle it.” The police officers tensed. They weren’t going to
wait much longer.

“It’s an Ink attack,” Bendy said suddenly.

“What!” Mr. Winky barked.

Bendy noticed the camera angled toward them. An idea came to mind. A desperate idea, but what other choice did they have? “He has Ink Illness.” Bendy moved aside enough to the crowd of onlookers to see. There were a few drops of ink running down his face. Wakko coughed and gagged on a mouth full of ink. That left a bit of a mess on the towel. Bendy’s face tightened in empathy. He knew how that felt. Dot used a corner of the towel to wipe his face. His hat was gone. Dot was wearing it backward. Probably so ink wouldn’t stain it...

People gasped. Then, the room fell completely silent. Bendy turned back to them. He focused on faces. Surprise, horror, suspicion, confusion, disgust, concern, sorrow, pity, even anger, it was all there in the staring faces. Bendy hated attention like this. Hated being in the spotlight like some sort of freakshow. But if this was the only way he was going to get these people to listen, so be it.

“Are you serious?” Mr. Winky asked with narrowing eyes. He looked down at the Warners coldly. “They are menaces. They were hopping around like wild animals not a minute ago.”

“Exactly!” Bendy snapped back venomously. His eyes flashed red. “It happens that fast. Just like you said. Minutes! So you better look and look good because this is what we’re dealing with!” Bendy said. Winky seemed to bristle with his words, but before he could speak Bendy turned to the crowd, the jury, the camera.

Winky recovered. “Now wait just a sec—” He made to motion to approach Wakko.

Bendy growled at him. “Don’t you dare.” Winky stopped and scowled. Wakko groaned behind the demon. Bendy glanced back to the Warners. Dot and Yakko wore serious looks for once. Dot was focused on Wakko. Yakko made eye contact and nodded. He understood. Bendy swallowed his nerves.

He took a deep breath. Bendy lifted his chin as he looked out to the sea of faces. “This is Ink Illness. Stop pretending it’s not here,” he said in a loud clear voice. “It’s already hurt too many families! Stop getting in the way of the people that are trying to help! Wilson died trying to find a way to stop this! Dr. Oddswell is in prison right now because he was trying to do something to help! My brother and I have been running around this country because of it! We are all risking our lives, and you people have just stood on the side lines! You’ve turned your backs on the sick!” Bendy looked at the jury and then at Winky.

Wakko cough again and wiped at his mouth.

“Shoul-d-dn’t someone call the boy an ambulance?” Judge Hearts came around from the behind. He was eyeing Wakko with concern, his light-heartedness gone, replaced with a stern seriousness.

Bendy frowned. “By the time they show up it’ll already be over.”

“But he’s dying!” someone in the audience cried.

“No! He’ll be fine!” Dot snapped. Bendy and the others near her flinched. Whispers went around the crowd. “He wouldn’t die.”

“B-But didn’t you say—”
“Shut it!” someone cut them off. Bendy silently thanked the individual for their tact and consideration.

“Can’t anyone do anything?” Others were asking.

“And what would you have them do?” Bendy demanded. The room went quiet. “By the time someone professional comes, the attack will end. The only evidence will be the ink on the towel. They’ll test him, observe him and find nothing. They’ll dismiss him like they have every other time! Like all the others! There is no cure. That’s what we’re all looking for! Don’t you get it! All of you have been getting in the way! If you want someone to do something, get Dr. Oddswell out of prison! Get other doctors to work with him! Give him supplies and resources! Help us!” Bendy cried out. He wasn’t sure what face he was making. Did he look as desperate as he felt? Bendy had never had the crowd on his side. He was always the outcast. He felt pathetic begging for them to understand. They never did. Society was always cruel and cold.

“Please!” Boris spoke up next to him. His ears were down and his eyes were watery. “We’ve already lost a friend. He was just a little kid!” He choked up. “Pl-please! Help! We’ve been doing our best, but we can’t help everyone! Dr. Oddswell and those around him have sacrificed so much al-ready! This isn’t something we’d m-make up! We’re just mechanics! We came so f-f-far b-b-but!” Boris sobbed. His eyes were large and running with tears. “Don’t make me lose more than I already have.” He covered his face with his hands.

Bendy’s eyes widened. “Boris.” He whispered and put a hand on his arm. Bendy’s heart twisted uncomfortably in his chest. He hated seeing Boris like this. What could he even do?

Someone cleared their throat behind them. The boys looked back to see Wakko half sitting. He was drinking from the bottle that Dot had. “Sorry that I crashed the party.” He croaked. He tried to clear his throat and cough up a little ink. “Ugh. Nasty.” He took another drink.

Bendy smiled in relief. It seemed he was already recovering. “Don’t worry about it. This was a pretty boring shindig anyway.”

Wakko snort. Yakko sighed.

“Are you going to be okay?” Judge Heart asked. “Should we call that ambulance?”

Dot frowned and stood up. She still had her brother’s hat on and the ink stained towel in her hand. “Didn’t you hear Bendy at all? What good will it be? They’re useless! Are you deaf?” The judge ducked in embarrassment.

“I’ll be good in a minute,” Wakko said. “Just tired.” He brushed the back of his hand against his forehead. Some ink stained the already ruined glove. He grimaced. “And a little messy.”

“No worries.” Yakko held up a pair of clean white gloves. “We always have spares.”

Mr. Winky was frowning. “That’s it?”

Bendy narrowed his eyes at the mustached man. “If you’re smart, you’ll be very careful with your next choice of words.” Mr. Winky raised his brows and almost looked bored.

Wakko finished of the bottle and sighed. “Sorry everybody! Didn’t mean to get so serious!” Wakko waved a touch embarrassed.

“Well, I think now is a good time for a short recess. The room can get straightened out and everyone can take moment.” Judge Hearts sighed, and his carefree smile returned. “Let’s meet back here in an
hour or so. Go have lunch. I think a cup of tea sounds delightful.”

“But your honor.” Mr. Winky turned to the tiny the judge.

The man lifted a hand to stop him. “That’s my final word on the matter.” He turned to the Warners. “Thank you for coming. I’m sorry you had to go through that.”

Wakko and his siblings gave him baffled looks. “Sorry? We were the ones going nuts over your trial, si, uuuh, your honor,” Yakko said in surprise.

“Shouldn’t you still be raving mad?” Dot said. “I mean, we stuck one of the on the ceiling.” She pointed up to the cop that was still there. He waved down, his face flat with acceptance.

The judge chuckled. “Chaos or not. That should have been handled differently. We’re the adults after all. It’s our job to watch out for children. Especially me, I’m used to chaos. I should have stepped in more. I hope you will be able to forgive me and the officers that are here today.”

The Warner siblings truly looked taken aback. They didn’t seem to know how to respond. Bendy wondered if they had as little positive adult interaction as he and Boris. It would explain a lot. Their hometown did lock them up in an empty water tower for the trouble they caused…

“If ya pay for our lunchs we’ll call it a deal,” Wakko said. The judge chuckled.

“Alright then. Let’s go.”

Chapter End Notes

I think it's so ironic that the adult that treats the Warners the most like kids is the King of Hearts. Although, I guess he is used to mad, zany people.
The Verdict

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"In today's final episode, the trial, with its many twists and turns, comes to an end! But what is the verdict? Are the boys free to go or locked up for good? Find out!" Mic said. The microphone man grimaces. "Boy, this job is intense when you know what's about to happen. I may need a vacation."

Chapter Notes

Done! \T-T/ Finally done! Sweet freedom! No more witnesses! No more questions! We can finally move forward after this! (Whether that's in prison or on the streets, you have to read to find out. ^^) I am so happy. Thank you Mercowe, for all the amazing help. Writer's block won't stop this story! HAHA! Now, if you don't mind. I think Winky stole my soul, and since I'm a ghost, that means there is nothing left of me. XoX

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The judge turned to the back door. The officers opened the doors. People were shuffling out with whispers and mutters.

“You three will be okay?” Bendy asked.

“I don’t think they’ll try to arrest us now, so yeah.” Yakko shrugged. “Thanks for stepping in there.”

“Sorry I turned you into a stage piece Wakko.” Bendy sighed.

“No worries.” He stood and waved a hand. “I like the limelight. ‘Sides, you stopped them from dragging us off.”

“Yeah! You’re our hero Bendy!” Dot said. Bendy leaned away from her, but she didn’t try to grab him. Wakko snatched his hat back. Dot smiled and shrugged. The Warners gave one last goodbye to the brothers before following the tiny judge to the back door. Bendy smirked when he noticed a wary officer following the four.

“This is all most unprecedented,” Mr. Winky sniffed. “Our judge is taking thieves out for lunch!”


The grin he gave the White Rabbit was down right malicious. “Our job is to win, isn’t it?” Bendy felt his eye twitch. A prick of hate heated his blood.
“Come along, boys. We best leave.” the White Rabbit gestured for the door. Bendy stuck his hands in his pockets and turned his back on the snake. Boris stuck close to his side. The boys eventually found themselves back in the prep room, where they had met earlier that day. Mr. Rabbit and the guards brought them sandwiches and fruit. After a little chat with the lawyer, they were left alone to eat and rest.

Bendy took a long drink of the water cup and sighed. “Man, this trial is such a hassle. It’s been nothing but trouble for our friends.”

Boris hummed an agreement.

“We’ll have to apologize to Holly and Sasha.” Bendy puckered his lips. “I hope she’ll talk to us.”

“Yeah,” Boris said distractedly and took another bite of his sandwich.

Boris’ tone pulled Bendy away from the questions he had about Sasha. Bendy looked over his brother. Boris had a far away look in his eyes as he ate mechanically. “You okay, bro?”

He hummed, obviously not paying attention. Bendy raised a brow.

“I guess we’ll just have to blow up the whole building,” Bendy said.

“Yep.”

“And we can tie up that mustached mook and hang him up on the flagpole outside the capitol building for the mayor to see. We should leave him in his money boxers. He can curse us to the high heavens up there. Might even teach him to chill out,” Bendy continued and smirked.

“Oh-huh,” Boris said and took a drink.

“And then I’ll ask Sasha to marry me,” Bendy said.

“Wait. What?” Boris blinked a couple times and looked at him.

Bendy laughed. “Geez, bro. You were agreeing to some pretty crazy stuff there. What are you thinking about so deeply?”

Boris’ face darkened a touch. “Whatever,” he muttered and looked away.

Bendy waited with half lidded eyes. Boris sighed and finally turned back to him. “Okay, so that was the first time I’ve seen someone other than you go through that.”

“Uh?” Bendy’s brows furrowed in confusion.

Boris took a deep breath and let it out in a quick huff. “I mean, it’s different. Your attack and Wakko’s. I didn’t know what to expect...and the difference between hearing that Wakko has Ink Illness and seeing him have it. Well...” He trailed off.

Bendy frowned softly. Ah. That’s what he meant. Bendy didn’t know what it was like, being on the sidelines for that. He admitted, in the back of his mind, he had been worried. Dot had been so sure, but he couldn’t help think it. ‘What if he dies right now?’ Is that what Boris had to go through every time Bendy had an attack? Even though Bendy had protected them from Winky and the cops, he still felt like he hadn’t been able to really do anything. He didn’t like feeling so useless. It was frustrating.

But that was why they were going after the machine pieces. Once Holly got those runes on the map, they would be able to find the parts and get a cure. Hopefully.
“I hated seeing him like that,” Boris said. “I don’t want to leave another friend.”

“You won’t,” Bendy said. “We’ll get that machine fixed before that happens. ‘Sides, Wakko is tough. I’m sure they’ve done things way more dangerous.” His assurance was automatic.

Boris smiled. “Yeah, you’re right. We’ll be able to fix this. Everyone is doing their best, after all. Everyone will be fine.”

Bendy nodded. “Of course.” He hoped.

Time seemed to go by quickly after that. After what only felt like a moment Bendy found himself back in the courtroom. Most of the mess had been cleaned up, except a stain on the ceiling from the gum and a couple of specks of ink on the floor.

The room was buzzing with voices. Bendy felt the stares, but didn’t look up from the floor. He wondered if he left behind any stains like that? Would they ever come out? Were he, Wakko and everyone else that coughed up ink going to become that? Just stains on a floor?

Bendy was so distracted that he didn’t notice when Mr. Winky called the next witness. He looked up to see the boy was already sitting in the witness box. He immediately saw the family relationship between this kid and the Voodoo Queen. They had the same smooth complexion, and sharp eyes. He was tall and wiry. Probably younger than Boris. Bendy would guess around ten or twelve. He had a mop of hair that stuck up in all directions. He was scowling at the room in general. He wore a necklace with either a fang or a talon on it.

“Mr. Facilier, tell us what happened that day,” Mr. Winky asked.

The kid sighed. “I was coming home from school. I was going to run some herbs to some’a the people that see my mother. I was real excited ‘cause I was thinkin’ we were gonna have jumbo for dinner, but…” The boy trailed off. He glared at the floor.

“But what?” Mr. Winky asked gently.

“I got home and mom wasn’t in. I figured she had to be in the shop at the back so I headed that way.” He shrugged, barely. It was a small movement of his narrow shoulders. “There was a racket. Mother warned me to never go in if there was a racket. I tried to listen to her. She was always serious ‘bout her warnin’s. So I wait in the hall for it ta get quiet. When it did, I opened the door a crack and peeked in.”

The kid suddenly turned his glare on Bendy and Boris. Boris flinched in surprise. “An’ I see those two standing over my dead mother.” Bendy blinked. He hadn’t noticed the kid at all. He had been there? Seen that? Bendy couldn’t help feeling like scum. A kid shouldn’t have to see something like that.

The audience was a flurry of murmurs. The judge had to hush them. “They weren’t the only ones there, either. There were these two strange men and an old woman with a snake.”

“Strange men?” Mr. Winky asked. The kid didn’t look away from the brothers. His eyes were focused completely on the boys. They were full of hatred.

“Yeah. They weren’t normal fellas. They had cups fer heads and straws comin’ outta them! They were really weird,” he said. Every word from the kid just made Bendy feel worse. He wasn’t even saying anything directly to them! Boris whimpered and dropped his head.

Bendy looked over to the pup was shaking. That’s when Bendy noticed it. Something was off. Why
was he feeling this way? Sure, he felt bad that the kid had seen that, but why was he feeling worse? It wasn’t like the kid was talking about his relationship with his mom or what she looked like. None of that. These were mundane facts about the Cupbros. Completely unrelated to the dark feeling in Bendy.

“Cups for heads? Were they allies?” Mr. Winky asked.

He looked back at the boy. “I don’t think so, monsieur. See, one of those fellas started shooting at them two with colorful blasts from their hands. Those two had to run away.” The kid wasn’t looking away from them. He wasn’t even blinking. Most would think he’s just glaring at them angrily, but that wasn’t it. There was a...pressure.

Bendy blinked as realization dawned on him. This brat was doing something to him and Boris! Bendy looked over to the White Rabbit. He didn’t look like he had changed. He was focused on the questioning. Looking over at Boris, the pup’s head was practically touching the table. He seemed to be sinking into some kind of despair. The same that was twisting Bendy’s gut.

Bendy turned a knowing glare on the kid. His expression probably gave away that he’d figured it out. The kid raised a brow, was that a smirk? The kid finally looked away, but the pressure wasn’t disappearing. Bendy reached over to Boris. “Boris,” Bendy whispered. The pup whimpered quietly. “Boris, it’s not real. Whatever you are feeling right now. Is. Not. Real. That kid is doing something.”

“That old woman got in the way, and they escaped,” the kid said. “Then those weird men left.”

“But the old woman?” Mr. Winky asked with a pleased smiled.

“She stuck around. Poked about mom’s place.” The kid frowned. “She knew I was there somehow. She tried to talk me into makin’ promises or somethin’. Of course I ran away an’ called the police.”

“You were very brave.” Mr. Winky praised.

“Didn’t do my mother any good,” he said. It was like the kid chucked a brick at Bendy’s heart. How was he doing that? Bendy thought it might have been the eye contact? But that didn’t work now. Did cast some voodoo spell on them? He didn’t see any of the colorful symbols around. He wasn’t glowing. How was he doing this! This was more than guilt! “She was the only family I had. I’m alone now, and they killed her!” Facilier pointed at Bendy and Boris.

Bendy glared at the youth. The White Rabbit elbowed him. Bendy looked over. The rabbit was giving him a disapproving look.

Suddenly there was a scream in the audience. “Fire! Fire!”

Smoke started up in the corner of the room. Officers rushed to the spot. Panicked people were running to the door. The pressure on Bendy broken. His head snapped back to the kid. He was fast enough to see it. A thin, unnoticeable shadow pulled away from the their table and back to the witness. The only reason Bendy saw it was because it moved. Shadows. Of course! Those shadow monsters that woman used! Why wouldn’t he use them too? So that was it!

“Order! Order!” the judge demanded. “If you’re leaving, exit in an orderly fashion!” Bendy wondered if they should make a run for it.

The cops were able to dowse whatever had been burning and everyone that was left saw the culprit. An officer had Wiston by the back of the neck. Xedo was talking to the officer, but Bendy wasn’t able to make out the words. Wiston was wearing a guilty smile. The two foxes were taken out of the room. Bendy really hoped they were getting arrested.
It took a moment for things to calm down again.

“My, this is one of the most exciting trials I’ve ever been a part of! So many interesting interruptions!” Judge Hearts smiled.

Winky frowned. “Your honor,” he said it like the title needed to be a reminder. It seemed to work too.

The judge dropped his smile and cleared his throat. “Right, sorry. Let’s hope that’s the last one.”

Winky rolled his eyes before focusing on the kid again. Bendy kept his eyes on the floor. “I have just one more question for you, young man.”

There it was! A tiny line of darkness inching its way toward them, as thin as a wire. Bendy wouldn’t have seen it unless he was looking for it. Well, two could play at that game. Bendy focused on the shadows around himself. He wanted to twist and writhe with the residual fear, panic, and anger from the fire. Bendy didn’t allow them to. He kept them where they were at. Instead, he focused on giving them a little substance. He tried to influence them into a barrier between that and that approaching line.

He wasn’t sure if it would work.

“What did the police tell you?” Mr. Winky asked.

Bendy waited. He held his breath as the line came closer and closer.

“Well, they didn’t want to tell me anything for a while. I had to beg for the details and still, they barely had anything,” the young Facilier said sadly. “They didn’t have any leads. They didn’t have a weapon. They couldn’t even tell me how she died.”

Mr. Winky pulled up a paper. “The report states that her heart gave out. The one mark on her body was a burn on her arm and a strange bruise on her back.”

The line touched the shadows under the brothers.

There was a hiss like a snake. Mr. Rabbit jumped and looked around. Bendy flinched too. He felt it hit his little line of defensive shadows. Mr. Rabbit and Boris were looking around for the source of the hiss. Bendy kept an eye on the line. It pulled back and tried again. Bendy could feel it try to push through. No luck. Bendy’s shadows were stronger. It pulled back and went around, out of Bendy’s sight. It felt it try from the sides, the back, closer to Boris. No luck. Bendy had them completely covered. He looked up to the kid.

The brat was glaring at him in disbelief. Bendy couldn’t resist giving him a little knowing smile. The kid scowled, his eyes burning. “Bendy did you hear that?” Boris whispered.

“Yeah, don’t worry. I took care of it,” Bendy whispered back. Boris blinked at him confused.

“Yeah, that’s why I think the demon did it. He killed her,” the boy accused. Bendy frowned. Of course. Mysterious death? Blame the demon in the room. That was the easy answer. The kid wasn’t giving up on his secret attack. Every few moments Bendy would feel it poking and prodding his shadows, looking for a weak point. Bendy wondered why the kid was trying. Did he just want them to feel bad, or was he trying to do something else to them?

“Prosecution rests.” Mr. Winky sat down. Mr. Rabbit stood and walked onto the floor. Bendy followed his first instinct and kept ahold of Mr. Rabbit’s natural shadow. Good thing too because the
moment the rabbit was before the kid, the little stinger went in for a vicious jab. Bendy almost lost his concentration. He closed his eyes and rested his head on his hand. He needed to focus.

“Young man, I am sorry for your loss, but I have some questions about that day,” Mr. Rabbit started.

“Did you actually see Bendy or Boris attack your mother?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“No, I got there too late.” He frowned in annoyance.

“Was there a murder weapon?” Mr. Rabbit asked. The jabbing got stronger. Bendy didn’t yield. The shadows he was using wanted to go after the attacker. He didn’t let them. It was a hard balance to keep between stopping the attacking shadow and keeping his own in line.

“No,” the kid answered hesitantly.

“Did the police consider it a murder?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

Facilier scowled. “No, they didn’t! They wouldn’t listen to me! Even when I told them the demon did it! They wouldn’t do anything about it!”

Rabbit nodded. “Did you ever consider that those other two men attacked her? The ones are used magic blasts?” The boys startled at that. The jabbing stopped for a moment.

“Objection!” Mr. Winky said.

“Noted.” The judge grumbled without even looking at him. Mr. Rabbit frowned.

“The fact of the matter is that there is no evidence that Bendy did anything. Did she die mysteriously? Yes. But that doesn’t mean he did it. No,” Mr. Rabbit said. “Just because he is a demon doesn’t mean he is automatically to blame.”

“B-but!” The boy looked uncertain now. “She didn’t have a mark on her! Only a demon could do that!”

Mr. Rabbit straightened out his glasses. “Was your mother practicing voodoo magic?”

That seemed to take the kid by surprise. The room filled with murmurs of surprise.

“No!” he said too quickly. Bendy snorted. He almost lost his hold for a second there.

“Young Mr. Facilier, do you honestly expect me to believe you?” Mr. Rabbit said in a kind tone. “Young man, it’s important that you tell us the truth. People’s lives are in the balance here.”

The boy hesitated, looking from the White Rabbit and then to where Mr. Winky was seated. Winky shook his head, just a bit. Facilier ducked his head. His face turned a darker shade as he stared at the floor. “I don’t want my mom’s killers going free.”

“Are you sure they killed her?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“They were there!” he snapped. Bendy peeked open an eye.

“And so was the old woman, those other men, and you!” Mr. Rabbit pointed out. “It could have been any of them!”

The kid looked over to Bendy and Boris. This time with confusion and alarm. It was like he never considered it wasn’t them.
The White Rabbit turned toward the jury. “Ladies and gentleman. It is clear from the boy’s testimony that he has suffered great trauma, of which I feel great sorrow. However, it is also clear that he has no solid testimony as to who his mother’s killer truly is, if indeed she was murdered. I rest my case. The defense rests.”

The shadow attacks had seemed to retreat a while ago, but Bendy wasn’t going to let up on his defense until the kid was out the door. He seemed to be in some sort of daze as he walked out the room. He did feel bad for the boy. He really did, but he couldn’t go to prison over this. More people will die if he did.

“Alright,” the judge said. “Are we done here?”

“We still have to look at the most important people,” Mr. Winky said. “The prosecution calls Boris the Wolf to the stand.” Bendy twitched. He completely lost focus and the shadow under him hit the chair before he could stop it. He chair nearly fell back, and he had to catch himself. The room looked at him in surprise and confusion. Bendy smiled nervously. The shadows dispersed enough he didn’t have worry about them doing worse.

Boris watched him suspiciously.

“Mr. Wolf,” Mr. Winky called again. Boris turned to him. “Today please.”

The wolf pup scowled and got up. He took his oath and sat in the witness box. Boris kept his face carefully neutral.

“Mr. Wolf, at what age did you meet Bendy the Demon?”

Boris blinked at the question. The image of that amassiated wolf came to Bendy’s mind. That cold snowy night in the alley with a shared ham.

“Golly, that was a long time ago,” Boris muttered. “Um, I would have to guess I was about...maybe five?”

Winky nodded. “I see. And at what point did you start seeing him as your guardian?”

Boris’ ear twitched. “Well...I asked him if he’d be my brother immediately.” Boris glanced at Bendy and smiled. “So always.”

“According to the records the two of you were caught in many occasions stealing and getting into fights. Out of the two of you, who instigated these events?”

Both of Boris’ ears fell to his skull. “Instigated?” he whispered.

Mr. Winky sighed. “Whose idea was it to do those things?”

Bendy’s eye twitched. Boris knew what ‘instigated’ meant, he probably just never thought of it like that. How dare this schmuck treat Boris like an idiot.

“Um, w-well, we were always struggling to find something to eat so...I mean, it wasn’t like we had sat down and planned things. One of us saw something that looked like a good dinner and snagged it.” Boris shrugged. “Back then it was just survival.”

“And the fights?”

“Well, that was usually Bendy defending us. He had too!” Boris defended with a frown. “If he didn’t
we’d have been in worse trouble.”

Winky raised a brow. “The orphanage had food, shelter and safety. Yet, according to reports, Bendy took you from the orphanage at nearest opportunity.”

Boris scoffed. “Food? Sure they had food. Shelter? Barely. That place was horribly rundown. I was more likely to get sick there than any alleyway in Sillyvision.” He crossed his arms over his chest. “And as for safety…” Boris blinked and shook his head. “The punishments were harsh for breaking rules, the other kids were mean, and adult treated us more like...things. I watched kids practically selling themselves to anyone that walked through that door. I didn’t like it. I didn’t like how I was treated. And Bendy. He had it worse.” Boris shoulders drooped. “No one wanted to be around him. They would constantly be separating us. Both the kids and the adults. They wanted me to leave him.” Boris glared at Winky. “And I wouldn’t! Bendy suggested we run away the first time. We kept doing that any time we ended up there.”

“He has always looked out for you?”

“Oh yes! Bendy as always protected me. He would do a lot for me and still does.” Boris said. “He was able to find us the fellas that taught us mechanics, and he got us the place we lived at.” Bendy felt a swell of pride at the praise.

Winky paused, smiling lightly. “And who’s idea was it to leave town?”

“Well, Bendy, but we had to! It was dangerous,” Boris said. “We were being chased by the people that were after Mr. Wilson.”

Mr. Winky leaned against a desk. “So, Bendy comes up with a lot of the ideas you two go with, then?”

Boris seemed taken aback by the question. He furrowed his brows. He gave Bendy an uncertain glance. Bendy returned his baffled look. What was the schmuck getting at? Bendy thought back. He really did make a lot of the calls. Especially since they left Sillyvision. If anything happened to Bendy would Boris be okay? Would he know what to do? A feeling of uneasy crept up on Bendy.

“He, uh, I mean, I guess?” Boris said glancing around the room of watching faces. “I don’t know.” His eyes were wide with anxious suspicion.

Winky’s eyebrows bobbed. “I suppose you’d have to ask Bendy to be sure.” He turned to the jury. “I have a list of witness statements, as well as legal reports. My assistant will pass a copy to each member of the jury listing the specifics of these statements. However, one common theme my team found in all of this is that despite the good intentions and calm demeanor of the younger brother, the elder one has always called the shots. Considering he was raised from the age of five by a demon, it is no curiosity that he should end up in this position in this court. However, I fear that the boy is more victim to conditioning than criminal himself.”

Bendy’s eyes widened. Boris’ jaw dropped. “Wha-what! You can’t just go off saying that! I had a say in ev--”

“The prosecution rests.” Winky grinned at Boris and sat down. Boris looked a bit like a dog that just had his bone stolen. Bendy wasn’t fairing much better.

Mr. Rabbit stood up calmly. He adjusted the glasses on his nose and hopped onto the floor. “Boris, why did you come to Toon Town?”

Boris had to still take a moment to process what happened. “We came to talk to Oddswell,” he
finally said.

“Why?” he asked.

“We wanted to know if there was a cure and when there wasn’t, we wanted to help find one,” Boris said. He sounded a bit dazed still.

“And what has happened since then?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Golly, a lot.” Boris swallowed.

“Do you mind elaborating?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Well, we went down to New Orleans and looked around there for help. We were chased and shot at. We were attacked by shadow creatures, alligators, and a giant snake,” Boris said. “But it wasn’t all bad. We got to meet some good people too! They were a lot of help. Then, we got back.” Boris sighed and looked down. “We found out that some passed away. A kid named Steven. We only got to know him for a little while, but it really brought it home for me, this was important.”

Mr. Rabbit nodded. “And what do you think of your brother? What do you think of his choices in handling these things?”

“Well,” Boris blinked. Bendy fidgeted in his chair. “He’s honestly doing the best he can. It feels like the whole world is against us, but he still gets up and smiles in the morning. I don’t always agree with his choices, but I know where he’s coming from. I know why he is trying so hard. I really look up to my brother. I don’t care that he’s a demon. I don’t care if he can be rough. He’s a good person and nothing anyone else says will change my mind.”

Bendy was stuck somewhere between feeling deeply touched and horribly embarrassed. He didn’t know if he wanted to sink into his seat and disappear or grin proudly. He was probably flushed.

“Boris do you regret coming here?” Mr. Rabbit asked. “If you could change anything what would it be?”

Boris twisted his muzzle into a thoughtful look. “I don’t really regret coming here. I couldn’t sit around and do nothing. I still can’t! I want to help and I can! But I can’t do that from a cell. If I could change anything at all it would be that I already found a cure.”

“Okay, last question Boris. What would you do if you were freed right now?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

Boris looked at Bendy and then the jury. “I would go right back to looking for a cure for Ink Illness. There are good people like Wakko that are suffering. I have to find it.” He said it with such determination that Bendy could believe that Boris would succeed. Even if anything happen to him, Boris would be okay.

“Thank you Boris. The Defense rests,” Mr. Rabbit said. Bendy was all grins when the wolf sat back down with him.

“Nicely done, bro,” Bendy whispered.

“Yeah, right! That dirty lawyer painted me as a lap dog!” Boris huffed and shook his head. “I didn’t see it coming. I expected it, but he still had me around his little finger the whole time.”

“Don’t worry about it. That guy’s more of a mook than Snoutfer.” Boris snorted.
“Are you ready Bendy?” Mr. Rabbit asked. Bendy nodded. Nope, not at all, but he wanted this done and over with.

“Defense calls Bendy the Demon to the witness stand,” Mr. Rabbit said. The room suddenly was a buzz of tension. It was too small and hot. Bendy swallowed and got up. He took the oath and sat at the witness chair. It was a little tall and to his annoyance he had to hop a little to reach it. He looked out on the crowd of viewers, the jury, his brother, and that snake. He was able to see the detectives in the crowd. He also spotted Holly. The mix of people gazing back at him was unsettling.

“Bendy, you were the last one to see Wilson Wiseton alive. Can you tell us what happened?” Mr. Rabbit asked gently.

Bendy looked at the rabbit and let the memories come back to him. “I heard the car crash and rushed out. I saw him in the street and didn’t really think, I just ran. He...he wasn’t in good shape. I tried to reassure him, but he wouldn’t listen to me. I...couldn’t do anything.” Bendy swallowed. His throat felt tight. “I just heard him out. I listened to his final wish and then he was just gone.”

“That wish is what brought you to Toon Town?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Yeah. We were trying to find his old pal Oddswell. We didn’t really know where to start, though. We decided to go to the school and ask.” Bendy smiled apologetically. “I never imagined that one question would bring someone so much trouble. Anyway, we found him, and he wanted our help. It was just him and his assistant and the sick.” Including himself.

“You were moved enough to agree to help?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

Bendy looked up. “Steven was a good motivator.” Which wasn’t untrue. The kid had left an impression. “And Oddswell was sure that we could get it.”

“How do you plan to find a cure, Bendy? Aren’t you a mechanic?” Mr. Rabbit asked. Bendy frowned. He didn’t want to talk about the machine here.

“I’m sorry. I can’t say. The people that have been trying to stop us, the ones that are trying to stop Oddswell and Wilson, I don’t want them to know,” Bendy said.

“Why would anyone want to stop looking for a cure to a deadly disease?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“I don’t know. You’d have to ask them,” Bendy said and looked Mr. Winky. The lawyer frowned.

“How do you feel about bringing along your brother if it’s so dangerous?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

Bendy snorted and chuckled. “Like I could actually leave him behind. If I tried, he would hunt me down and chew me out. There is no way I’d be able to leave my bro. Besides, he keeps me out of trouble.”

The courtroom was filled with snickers.

“Bendy, in your time in New Orleans, there was a mysterious death. Do you know what happened to Mrs. Facilier?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

Bendy took a deep breath. “Honestly, no. I mean, I saw it but I still have no clue.”

“Do you mind explaining it?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Well, I mean, her crystal ball broke. I don’t know how that tied in, but next thing I knew, she split
in two.” Bendy frowned.

“Split in two?” the rabbit blinked.

“Yeah.” Bendy furrowed his brows. “Two...selves? One was, well, I guess it was her body. It looked like she had fainted and the other came outta her. A long black shadow thing. It was...disturbing.”

“What happened to the shadow?”

“It disappeared into some portal in one of the masks. I don’t know. It wasn’t until after it was gone that we realized she was dead.” Bendy still shook his head in amazement.

“You didn’t do anything to her?”

“Like take out that...whatever it was? No way. That’s not one of my skills.” Bendy blinked back to the present.

“Do you mind demonstrating what you can do?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

“Uh?” Bendy blinked. “Um, what?” Him? Use his talent in front of all these people? Uh, no? Bendy glanced at Boris. The pup was watching him anxiously. He wasn’t supposed to use his talent. It made the sickness worse but...if he wasn’t let go he wouldn’t get the cure anyway. But did he have to in front of all these people? He wasn’t a freakshow to be gawked at! He had never done this with such an audience watching him. He really didn’t want to.

“Can you show us what you can do--within your means of course. Nothing big, just a little demonstration?” Mr. Rabbit asked.

Bendy glanced at the judge to see if he would stop this. Didn’t look like it. The little man was leaning over the edge, completely focusing on what was going on. Bendy sighed. Cussing starfallen moon dust. Fine! “Alright,” he muttered uncomfortably. Boris was shaking his head. Sorry bro.

Bendy reached out to the shadows around him with his talent. They were calmer with that shadow voodoo kid gone. Still, they pulsed with energy. Nothing big, he told himself. Just a little trick. “Can I see a pen?” Bendy asked. Mr. Rabbit gladly handed him a pen.

The demon put it on the ledge so everyone could see it. He gave the shadows a little substance and willed them to move. There was a slight shift as the tendrils of darkness did as he directed. The onlookers gasped. He was sure his eyes were glowing. A couple of shadows lifted the pen up. Bendy lifted a finger. He moved his finger one way, the shadows holding the pen swayed with it. He moved his finger the other way and it followed. He tried to get it to flip the pen. The pen was tossed in the air. Someone gave a small shriek of alarm. The pen went end over end and clatter on the banister before falling to the carpet.

“Oops,” Bendy said. “Sorry. I don’t have the best control.” He admitted sheepishly. The shadows slipped down and nabbed it off the floor before returning to the banister. They tapped it on the wood a couple of times before dropping it and disappearing. He let out a long breath. Well, that went better than he hoped. Nothing broke.

“Thank you Bendy,” Mr. Rabbit said. The fella gave a big hop to grab his pen. He nodded to Bendy before falling back to the ground.

He readjusted his tie before asking another question. “Bendy. What would you say your shadows are
capable of?”

Bendy tilted his head thoughtfully. “I can move them around, make them solid enough to touch and pick up things, and pick up on strong negative emotion. That’s about it, and you saw that they aren’t very coordinated. They definitely can’t thread the eye of a needle.”

“What do your shadows have an effect on the Ink Illness or visa versa?”

Ah. Bendy almost said, ‘just on me’ but that would have given away everything about his health. “Not that I have noticed.” Bendy shrugged with a furrow on his brows. “It’s not like I can tell who’s sick or not. I never tried to do anything to anyone that has Ink Illness either.”

The rabbit nodded thoughtfully. “Now, I know this next question might be difficult, but have you ever made a contract with anyone?”

Bendy startled. “Have I--No! Stars no!” Bendy shook his head. “I don’t know the first thing about contracts. The last contract I signed was for my apartment.”

The white rabbit smiled. “Thank you. One last question and the defense will rest. How much do you know about demon society? Or in other words, how did you come to grow up here? I believe one concern that the jury has is that most demons are well known for very malicious things. And young demons are unheard of. Why are you different?”

Bendy frowned. It wasn’t an angry frown. It was more annoyed, like a parent that got tired of answering the same question a hundred times. “Look. I don’t know jack about demons. All I have ever known is Sillyvision. For all I know I have always been there. If I have parents I sure don’t remember them, and I really don’t care to find out about them. Your guess is as good as mine on how I got here.” Bendy sighed. “As for that malicious thing, could you all stop judging me for stuff I’ve never done? I’ve only seen one other demon, and I didn’t really care for the guy. I don’t know what the rest of them are like.”

Bendy shifted. “I’m not really sure why I’m different either.” Bendy glanced at Boris. “It really doesn’t matter. I have a little brother to watch out for. I have friends that need my help. I got a goal to reach. Those are the only things that are really important to me. Honestly, I’m just a fella trying to get by.”

The white rabbit smiled. “Well, with that heartfelt statement, the defense rests.”

The crowd buzzed for a minute as the white rabbit sat down. It seemed like a good buzz. Bendy couldn’t be sure. He hoped it was. A moment later, Winky stood up slowly. His face was still smiling, but his demeanor told a different story. If anyone was feeling malicious at the moment, it was him.

Oh boy. Bendy watched him with the wariness of a shrew watching an approaching weasel. After hearing the questions this mook asked, Bendy knew not to let his guard down. Keep it short and don’t get confused. Don’t let the schmuck get under his skin. Winky had been trying to anger him the whole time...and it had worked. Bendy was angry, but he wasn’t always a hothead when he was angry.

Winky’s eyes were unblinking as he approached the demon. “Bendy. Is it true that you handed over a bear by the name of Vincent to the Warner children for the purpose of extracting information?”

Bendy blinked. He quirked his mouth. Did he? Warnerburg seemed so long ago. “I guess, but he--”

“And is it true that he ended up in a mental hospital because of the psychological torture that the
Warners inflicted on him?"

"H-he did! I didn’t know that!" Bendy’s jaw dropped. What the hell were those Warners’ doing!

Winky raised a brow. “Did you even bother to ask?”

“No,” Bendy frowned. “I was a little distracted at the time. I was tr--”

“Did you suspect that something of that manner might happen to the bear?”

“Well,” Bendy frowned. “It is the Warners.”

Mr. Winky made a distant listening noise. “Thank you. Moving on…” He picked up a sheet and looked at it. “You stated that Mrs. Facilier’s crystal ball broke and she collapsed, dead. Were you the one to break the crystal?”

Bendy narrowed his eyes. This schmuck wasn’t giving him the chance to explain himself. “I had to. She was trying--”

“Did you do it with the intent of stopping her in mind?”

“Honestly, we had run out of ideas by then,” Bendy said. “So yes--”

“That is disappointing. Is it true that the altercation started because you were attempting to steal something from the woman?”

Bendy stopped. He stared at the lawyer with an unamused frown. He took a deep breath. “Depends. Are you gonna let me finish a thought?”

“Mr. Bendy. We’re here to examine the facts, not listen to justifications.” Mr. Winky folded his arms.

“The facts. Then the facts are that woman stole from us.” Bendy said. “The things we were after weren’t hers to begin with.”

Mr. Winky raised his brows. “Were they yours?”

Bendy wasn’t sure if he could say the machine piece was theirs. “I plead the fifth.”

Mr. Winky chuckled without humor. “I see. I suppose you’ll plead the fifth about being involved with the disappearance of your former boss Pete as well.”

Mr. Winky turned to Judge Hearts. “As it seems that the witness is no longer willing to answer truthfully or otherwise, the prosecution rests.”

Bendy blinked. He was surprised that he let him go that easily. The demon narrowed his eyes suspiciously. He was up to something. He was still smiling. No rug to pull? No big--ah ha!--moment? No dirt on him that would completely upend any argument he had? Nothing? He didn’t trust this.

“Oh?” The judge looked just as surprised as Bendy did. “Oh! Ah! Well, I guess we’ll move on. Jury, I’ll give you some time to discuss. I think it’s about time we wrap this up.”

Judge Hearts shuffled some papers on his new book. The group of twelve characters got up and left the room from a side door. Bendy went and joined Boris.

“Nice job Bendy,” Boris smiled.
Bendy gave him a weak smile. “Thanks, but I can’t help feeling that he gave up too quickly.” Boris’ ear twitched and his smile fell.

“Do you think he’s up to something?” Boris asked, looking over to the mustached lawyer.

“Maybe. Be ready for anything,” Bendy said. Bendy wasn’t sure how long the jury took. Any time was too long in his opinion.

Finally they filtered back into the courtroom and took their seats.

“Has the jury reached a verdict?” Judge Hearts asked.

A striped cat with an abnormally large smile stood up on his chair. “Yes your most honorably honor. We have come to a verdict.”

“Wonderful, and what is it?” Judge Hearts asked.

“What is what?” The cat turned his head in confusion.

“Oh, the verdict?” Judge Hearts asked.

“What verdict?” The cat blinked and turned his head further.

“The verdict for the case today,” the judge said pleasantly.

“There was a case today?” the cat asked. Before the little judge could answer the cat’s head fell off! “Oh, seems I’ve lost my head.” There was a scream in the crowd. Bendy and Boris watched in transfixed horror. The White Rabbit next to them rolled his eyes.

“Why yes, Cheshire Cat, we just finished with it,” Judge Hearts explained like nothing happened.

“Say your majesty, can you stand on your head?” The cat’s stripped body hopped up on his own talking head.

“Oh, I haven’t tried in years.” Judge Hearts chuckled.

“Excuse me your honor, but the verdict,” Mr. Winky interrupted with a sigh.

Suddenly a stripe curled around atop the prosecution’s table. The cat appeared in the coiled stripe. He grinned at Winky. “A bit impatient, aren’t we? Tell me, where do you have to be?”

“It’s no matter to you, just get on with the verdict!” Mr. Winky snapped at the cat.

The cat chuckled. “No reason to go mad over it. Ha! Mad.” He purred like he made a joke.

“You’re the mad one.” White Rabbit sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose.

“Quite,” the cat agreed. “We should go for tea after this, Rabbit. You and I haven’t had a spot in such a long time.”

“I’d rather not.” Mr. Rabbit’s nose twitched. “You always invite Hatter and Hare.”

“But they know how to make it a mad time of a party!” The cat laughed, swung his tail and disappeared.

“Please Cheshire, the verdict.” White Rabbit looked exasperated.
“Oh, very well.” The cat’s voice took on an echoey tone. Bendy rubbed his forehead. Zany. This cat was like the Warners. Stars above. The cat appeared next to the Judge. The little man smiled pleasantly at the insane creature. “The jury finds the demon and wolf...” He paused.

Bendy scowled. He was going to get up and walk out if this cat dragged it out any longer.

“Not guilty.” The cat grinned. Bendy’s jaw dropped. Boris let out a loud whoop. They were free? They were free. They were free! Cheers and voices filled the room. Judge Hearts was smiling.

“We did it Bendy! We did it!” Boris’ tail was going a hundred miles an hour. Bendy let out a laugh. He couldn’t believe it.

“Yes, yes, well done everyone. Well done,” Judge Hearts said. “Congratulations, boys. Your are free of all charges! You must feel pretty great. Thank you jury. Yes, thank you.” He nodded to the strange mix of people still in the jury box and the cat next to him. “You all have a wonderful day. Court adjourned.” He banged his anvil on the book, then hopped off and disappeared from view.

“I so hope I get to do this again. It was maddening.” The cat laughed and disappeared with his stripe unwinding.

Bendy and Boris stood up and hugged. Holy stars above! They could leave. They were free! No more running from the cops!


“Thank you so much for your help!” Boris said.

Bendy turned around to shake his hand. “Yeah, thanks. You really saved us.”

“Nonsense. I barely had to do anything. You two did the true convincing,” the White Rabbit said. “Still, you’re welcome. Good luck in your endeavors.”

“Thanks,” the brothers said.

“Hey, Bendy, Boris!” Ringtail called out to them. The boys shared a look before approaching the detectives. “Congrats on the freedom. If you’ll come with us, we have your stuff.”

“Thanks,” Bendy said.

“And thanks for all the help! You got all the evidence for White Rabbit.” Boris grinned.

“Just doing our job.” Featherworth smiled.

“Let’s get out of here,” Ringtail said. The boys agreed. It took awhile for the crowd to filter out. People kept congratulating and pausing to look at them. Bendy didn’t see Holly in the throng. He was able to see Richard again, however. He thanked the guard for everything. The old man grinned and teased him to take care of his girlfriend with his new freedom. Bendy blushed. Boris was saying goodbye to the guards from the juvey center when he heard Richard’s comment.

“What girlfriend?” Boris asked when he turned to Bendy. Richard burst laughing. Bendy stammered out excuses. He couldn’t say what Alice had to do. Not with Richard right there. The old man wished them luck, and then they were finally out the doors.

If the room was crowded, the steps of the courthouse was a mob. Cameras flashed and reporters shouted questions. Bendy felt like he was going blind and deaf. The detectives had to shoulder the
boys through all the people. Bendy couldn’t see anything but tightly packed bodies. He stuck very close to Boris. “There’s a car ready,” Ringtail promised.

Half way down the stairs there was a terrified scream. The questions turned to shouts of fear and surprise. Bendy looked around trying to see what was going on.

“He’s got a gun!” someone screamed. Featheworth shoved Bendy and Boris. Three bangs went off to Bendy’s right not a second later. His knees hit the step painfully. His ears were ringing. What the cuss! Bendy looked over to see a scowling weasel holding a handgun aimed at them.

Chapter End Notes

You have no idea how happy finishing this trial has made Tap and me. There’s going to be a lot of action (And much less talking! Yey!) from this point on. Be ready!!! :D
Chapter Summary

The thin man with a microphone for a head shifted uncomfortably on stage. "Are you sure that's all you want me to say?" The indiscernible muttering answered him. "Well, I understand that, but so much more--" More muttering interrupted him. "Alright! Alright! I just think you could handle this differently!" He cleared his voice and faced forward. "Welcome again readers, to another exciting chapter of Bendy and Boris in The Inky Mystery! This episode the boys get to meet their idols! But is all well in the bustling city of Toon Town now that they're free? Find out!"

He turned back to face the left stage. "So, my vacation is coming up soon, right?"

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello~! Oh my! I am so excited to share this chapter with you! XD It's a bit longer than usual, but that's good news for those of you that love it! I don't want to take too much of your time up here! Just go read!

Buckle up! It's gonna be a ride!

Bendy couldn’t believe he let this happen. He should have known! He knew that Winky had been up to something! That he let the demon go way too easily. This gunner was linked to that snake. That was the thought that came to Bendy as he locked eyes with the beady gaze of the weasel. Then, the screaming and chaos came crashing in. People tripped and shoved, trying to scatter and get away. The weasel shot again. Featherworth blocked Bendy’s view.

“Get to the car! GO!” she shouted. The crow shoved him and Boris away. Boris stumbled and nearly fell down the stairs. Bendy grabbed his arm on instinct and, without a thought, sprinted down the stairs. Ringtail was waving them toward the car. Bendy glanced back as they climbed in. He saw Featherworth clutching a growing dark patch on her shoulder.

“Take them to the police department!” Ringtail barked at the driver. The cop nodded.

“Wait! Featherworth is--”

“We’ll meet you there!” Ringtail shouted from over her shoulder. She was racing toward her bleeding partner, gun out. Bendy didn’t see the weasel anywhere in the chaos. The cop driver sped away and soon the courthouse was out of sight. Bendy sat numbly in the back seat.

“That was scary,” Boris said in a strained voice. Bendy looked over to see Boris clutching his knee. W-was that blood?

“Boris!” Bendy gasped in horror.
“I’m okay!” Boris said. “It’s just a scratch!” Bendy pulled Boris’ hands back to take a look.

“Was it a bullet? Did you get hit?” Bendy demanded as he looked at the blood.

“Um.” Boris’ ears fell. “I don’t really know, but like I said, it’s just a scratch, Bendy.”

Bendy turned to the driver in the front seat. “Do you have a handkerchief or bandage or anything!” The cop jumped at Bendy’s harsh tone. He fumbled in the glovebox and pulled out a cotton handkerchief. Bendy snatched it away and turned back to Boris.

“Bendy, calm down. Golly, you’d think I’m dying back here or something.” Boris rolled his eyes. “I could’ve just landed on the stairs. I don’t know, I fell pretty hard, and it was all so fast.”

Bendy focused on Boris’ leg. He carefully wiped away the blood and inspected the wound. It looked burned, so it was probably a bullet. Bendy grimaced. That weasel cussing shot Boris. Bendy took a deep breath and kept looking. It didn’t seem to have gone in. Like Boris said, it was just a graze. It was barely worse than a scraped knee.


“All right, bro. I’m okay,” Boris promised with a smile.

“Let’s bandage your knee,” Bendy said around the lump in his throat.

“We have to get our stuff back for that,” Boris said. Bendy sighed and dropped his shoulders. “Hey, we still won. Even twice! They couldn’t lock us up, and they didn’t get us outside the courtroom,” Boris reminded him.

Bendy agreed. He forced a smile for the wolf pup. “You’re right, bro. We won,” Bendy said.

“And now we can go back to finding the--”

“Yeah! You’re right!” Bendy waved his hand to cut Boris off. “I can’t wait to get back on the road.” There was still another person in the car that could hear them. Bendy still didn’t think it was smart to talk about the machine around others.

It wasn’t much longer before the boys were at the station. They were escorted in. Many of the police eyed them, and Bendy returned the stares unflinchingly. It seemed not everyone was happy that they had been set free.

Bendy and Boris stepped up to the front desk. The woman behind it was a bit pear shaped and had wiry looking black hair. She was writing on a document. Judging from the stack of papers next to her elbow, she had a long day ahead of her. “Excuse me, we’re here for our things,” Boris requested.

She glanced up with annoyance. She did a double take when she saw them. “Oh, it’s the B brothers.” She sneered.

Bendy scowled. He didn’t have anymore patience today. The trial, that snake, and the weasel hurting his bro had spent it all. No. He was absolutely done. “Yeah, it’s us. Now, give us our cussing moondusted stuff before I give them a real reason to throw me in jail.” The woman paled and rushed to get up. She hurried so much that she tripped on her heels and nearly fell down the hall.

“Bendy.” Boris was giving him that disapproving look. Had he accidentally used his eyes? Well, either way, he was fed up. He wasn’t going to take anymore of their star dust.
“I’m sick of people with that attitude, bro. I’m not sorry,” Bendy grumbled.

“But you should be.” Boris sighed. The demon looked away in annoyance.

“Whatever,” he muttered and crossed his arms.

“You’re better than that, Bendy,” Boris pushed.

“There are days I don’t want to be. Today is one of them,” Bendy retorted. Boris rolled his eyes.

The woman returned with a large box and Boris’ backpack. She set it down on the table. Boris was quick to grab his bag. Bendy started pulling out things. He found his goggles, his knapsack, and a few other things. Bendy opened his bag and made sure everything was there. He saw his busted book, the last of their money, clothes, journal, and so on. Luckily, it didn’t seem like anything was missing...Well, except the map, but they knew why that was.

“Good,” Bendy stated. Boris’ bag was also all good. “Thanks.” He turned his back on the woman without looking at her. Boris apologized and gave her a more sincere thanks. The demon took his brother aside and bandaged his knee. They were about to leave when the woman stopped them. She was a bit more mellow now.

“Excuse me. The detectives want you to wait for them in their office. They wish to speak to you before you go,” she said. Bendy was about to brush it off, but Boris pulled him to a stop.

“Okay, thank you,” he said with a smile.

“What are you doing?” Bendy whispered.

“They saved our lives back at the courthouse and helped clear our names. The least we can do is wait and hear them out,” Boris said.

“But we’ve already lost so much time,” Bendy said irritatedly.

“I know Bendy, but it might be important,” Boris said and pulled the puppy face. Star fallen cuss. Bendy couldn’t argue with that. With a sigh, Bendy followed Boris to the detectives’ office. They waited for half an hour before Ringtail came through the door.

“Boys! You’re still here! Good!” She smiled. There was a bandage on her cheek. There were also some blood stains on her white shirt.


“She took one in the shoulder, but don’t worry. It’s just a flesh wound. She’s getting treated at the hospital right now,” Ringtail said with a smile.

“What about that weasel?” Bendy asked.

“Ah, well. He disappeared,” Ringtail said.

“What!” Bendy growled. “All those cops around, and you couldn’t get him!”

“It was a mob of panicking civilians. Honestly, we have no idea how he slipped away, but we have a face and name, so it’s only a matter of time.” Ringtail went to her desk and collapsed in her chair with a groan.

“What’s his name?” Bendy demanded. This was ridiculous! How did he get away!
“Duke Weaselton,” Ringtail said and reached into a drawer. “We’ve booked him before for theft, illegal goods and smuggling. The great news? He may have ties to the Sykes brothers and Winky. If we play our cards right, we can nab them all!”

Bendy still frowned. She wasn’t going to impress him. The guy shot his brother and was still on the loose!

“So, what are you doing now?” Boris asked with a tilt of his head.

“Paperwork. There is always a ton of paperwork.” Ringtail sighed and pulled out a pack of documents and a pen.

“Why did you want to talk to us?” Bendy asked. He just wanted to get to the point and get out of here.

“Well, because he got away, the safest place for you was here,” Ringtail said. “Though even that is questionable,” she muttered and eyed the room. Bendy narrowed his eyes at her. “Now, I want to ask you two about witness protection.”

“Uh?” Boris raised a brow.

“Some very dangerous people are after you. I can offer you protection. A hideout, new identities, new life. I can help you two disappear until this thing ends,” Ringtail said.

“But what about Oddswell and all the others?” Bendy asked.

“You wouldn’t be allowed to be in contact with them. It could blow your cover. You’d have to disappear completely, even from your friends,” Ringtail explained.

“No way,” Bendy said. “We have stuff to do. We can’t disappear on everyone just because some mooks think they’re tough.”

“Are you sure? You’ll both be risking your lives. I can’t force you, but this is the safest choice for you guys,” Ringtail said as she wrote. “Thanks to the chaos around here, we won’t be able to help you much beyond this.”

Bendy looked at Boris. He could say yes, get his brother out of this. He wouldn’t be shot at, wouldn’t be running for his life, wouldn’t be on this dangerous quest.

But.

Bendy closed his eyes. He knew better than that. Boris wouldn’t leave people to suffer if he could do something about it, even if it did risk his life! The kid would never go into hiding under these circumstances. Bendy fought down his natural reaction to ask if Boris would go. Instead, he forced a smile.

“Thanks,” Boris said. “But we can’t. Not until there is a cure for the Ink Illness.”

Ringtail looked between them. She seemed conflicted, somewhere between proud and sad. “Alright then, mind if I give you some advice?” Boris indicated for her to go ahead with a wave of his hand. “Since the little gunner got away, I think you two should avoid your usual hangouts at least until nightfall. And even then! Be careful. They’re probably looking for you.”

Bendy scowled. Well great! That’s the news he wanted to hear! Wait until nightfall! Wait a few hours! Avoid meeting up with everyone! Just great! Like he hadn’t done enough waiting already!
“Sure thing,” Boris agreed easily. Internally, Bendy screamed in frustration. HE DIDN’T HAVE TIME FOR THIS! Luckily, his face was a smooth mask of indifference. “Isn’t that all right, bro?” Boris turned to him.

Hell no. “Sure. We need dinner anyway,” Bendy said. Seemed they weren’t going to grab their grub from Granny then. No homemade celebration meal. Cussing great. “If that’s all, we’ll be heading out.” He went to the door, but stopped. “Oh, and one last thing. It’s about that thing Alice asked for.”

“She got it. No problem,” Ringtail said with a wink.

“Thanks.” Bendy pulled opened the door.

“Goodbye, Detective Ringtail.” Boris waved.

“Stay out of trouble.” The raccoon smirked and waved a hand before focusing on her papers. Bendy smirked back.

It didn’t take them long to get back onto the streets of Toon Town. It felt amazing to be outside again. No guards, no inmates, no striped pajamas, no curfew and no cussing disguises! Sweet, sweet freedom. Bendy took a deep breath and just basked in the sunlight.

“So, where should we go to eat?” Boris asked.

“I have no clue,” Bendy stated.

“How much cash do we have left?” Boris asked. Bendy swallowed with a grimace. With freedom came responsibilities. Dagnabbit.

“If we go cheap?” Bendy assumed. “A couple meals and maybe three nights at a place.”

Boris turned his muzzle thoughtfully with his brows knitting together. It was an old expression that Bendy was unfortunately familiar this. “Gettin’ a little short on cash then.”

Bendy grit his teeth. “We’ll be fine.” Boris nodded in agreement, but Bendy couldn’t tell if he was doing it to calm him or if the pup actually believed him.

There was also noticeable difference that their little courtroom drama had caused too. People saw them. Since Bendy wasn’t wearing a disguise, he got the glances he had grown used to...but now they were followed by double-takes and whispers. A shiver ran up his spine. He. Did. Not. Like. Attention. This was odd, but maybe not...terrible? Some people smiled at them, others frowned. It was obvious that they had been the talk of the town.

Maybe the raccoon dame had been right about them lying low today.

“Hey, what’s in there?” Boris pointed to a little grocery store. “Think we can restock?” Bendy bit his cheek thoughtfully. Whelp...make it one meal and a three night stay.

“Sure,” Bendy said. The boys headed in and immediately raided the canned and travel foods. There were even a couple of cans of bacon soup! Score one for the demon!

It was at check out when the ‘occurrence’ happened. “Boris?” a somewhat high pitched voice inquired. Both Boris and Bendy straightened. They recognized that voice immediately. The inspiration and idol of children everywhere. The boys turned around to see Mickey Mouse rush up to them with a huge smile plastered over his face. “Oh, Boris! It’s so good to see you again! We watched the trial on the telly, and oh my goodness! Why didn’t you tell me you were in that kind of
trouble!” He pulled Boris into a tight hug. “It must have been terrifying!”

A duck came up to Mickey’s side with a beak that seemed to be etched in a permanent frown. “Why? It’s not like you coulda done anything,” he quacked. Bendy raised a brow. He knew this duck’s name...Right? He had heard it once before. What was it?

“But you’re free now! And the public knows! That’s absolutely amazing! I hear they’re moving up that doctor fella’s trial to be sooner now. It’s probably thanks to you and all your hard work!”

Mickey pulled back enough to look at him.

Boris darkened with a blush. “M-Mr. Mickey! Ho-Why are you here?” he stammered.

“We were getting groceries.” Mickey tossed a thumb over his shoulders. Behind him was the Goof and...a rather shaggy looking rabbit with a couple of the bunny kiddies behind him. “My goodness! I can’t get over how brave you are! All those people and that lawyer!”

“Friggin’ creep,” the duck muttered while glaring at nothing in particular. Bendy raised a brow at that. Uh. Seemed to Mick-crew approved of them.

Mickey pulled Boris into another hug. “You poor thing! Don’t worry. It’s okay! I’ll always be here for you,” the idol promised.

The duck scowled. “No. You won’t.”

Bendy blinked. Um...

Boris was another shade darker, but he had a huge dopey smile on his muzzle. He was drinking up the attention like a sponge. Bendy raised a brow, but decided to keep his mouth shut.

If he were a cat, he’d be purring. Bendy smirked. “Aw,” Mickey cooed. “I missed you too.”

That seemed do snap Boris out of whatever cloud his mind had floated off to. The pup hopped back with a surprised yip. He tried to straighten himself out and act ‘cool’ and collected. His face still burning, he leaned back, crossed his ankles, and used Bendy’s head as some kinda armrest.

“He-Hey! Mickey! G-good to see you again,” Boris tried to sound suave. “It was no big deal.”

Bendy grit his teeth as Boris’ arm pressed his goggles into his head.

“As if! I saw the whole thing! You went through quite an ordeal,” Mickey said. “I’m glad it turned out al--Oh! But then there had been that shooter!” Mickey’s worry was almost tangible. Bendy’s fists tightened.

“We’re fine! He missed me. It was just a graze,” Boris said quickly. Kissup. The arm shifted. Clenched fists tightened.

“Grazed you!” Mickey...well...squeaked. “What happened?”

“Ah-uh. W-well you see, um,” Boris floundered.

“Uhhh Mick, we’re kinda holdin’ up the line,” the duck squawked.

“Oh, what?” Mickey looked back to see a line of less than happy people, waiting to pay for their chosen goods. “Goodness! I am so sorry! We’ll get out of your way,” Mickey told them. When the mouse looked away, Bendy pushed his brother’s arm off. Boris nearly fell over. With a grunt, he saved himself. When he looked over to give Bendy a disgruntled look, Bendy turned a warning glare
The wolf’s ears dropped, and he looked down, a bit chastised. Good. Bendy reached up and adjusted his goggles. He was lucky that he was Bendy’s little bro. If anyone else tried that, they’d have a cussing busted arm right about now.

“C’mo—”

“Let me take you out for dinner!” Mickey cut the demon off. The brothers did a double take. The mouse and his crew had arms full of bags.

“You seem busy,” Bendy said. He glanced at his brother to see literal stars in his eyes. He inwardly cringed. Oh. There was no way they weren’t going.

“It’s fine! Please, I insist!” Mickey said. “I know the perfect spot. It’s not far from here.”

Bendy didn’t even have to look to feel the most intense puppy eyes he had ever witnessed turn in his direction. He was going to melt if the kid kept this up. “Sure.” Bendy shrugged. “Why not?” The yowling cheer was so loud that windows shook. Mickey grinned. The duck rolled his eyes. Goof smiled warmly along with the kids. The rabbit...didn’t really react. The guy looked completely checked out.

“Fantastic!” Mickey was beaming at them.

It was only a couple of minutes walk down the street. They came up to a simple looking restaurant. The windows were tinted a shade darker, but not so much that Bendy couldn’t see in it. There was a bar area against one wall and a scatter of tables on the other side. Bendy raised a brow.

*Petula’s Place* swung on the sign above the door. Mickey ushered Boris in. It seemed the kid’s humility had reared its head between here and the grocery store. The pup walked bashfully by the mouse.

“Mr. Mickey, you don’t have to,” Boris was saying. Bendy rolled his eyes. Oh, his dear sweet brother. So easily flustered.

“Nah, It’s fine! My treat!” Mickey promised. Bendy looked around the place. It was simple, rustic, with dark wood and old photographs. There was a cat sitting at the bar, but otherwise it didn’t have anyone inside. It was a little early for dinner, so it made sense.

“It’s like I’m talkin’ to a friggin’ wall,” the duck--Donald! That was the grump’s name!–grouched. One of the bunny kids copied his frown and in the high pitched tone of a youth muttered, “Friggin’ wall.”

Bendy raised a brow. Note to self: don’t curse around the kids. They will hear it, they will remember it, and they will use it.

The rather dazed looking rabbit walked beside the duck. His rumpled hair stood out in several directions, and his ears hung low in front of him. It was like the guy barely had energy to hold them up. His collar was half up too. Did this guy just roll out of bed and walk the door? His glazed over eyes looked around the room dully. Bendy had no idea what the guy’s deal was, but he definitely seemed out of place here.

Goofy took the bags of groceries through a room in the back of the restaurant. The group approached the bar when the rabbit suddenly perked and lunged for the cat.
“Miiaoooo!” the cat called out in surprise. Bendy blinked at the sudden hug(?) attack. What the--?
“Uh! S-sir?” The cat turned to face the rabbit. The rabbit leaned in closer, and the cat blushed deeply.

Donald burst into laughter. “H-holy cussing stars!” His laugh sounded like a broken squeaky toy. Maybe a squeaky toy that smoked…? Bendy decided that was a good description of the sound that was penetrating his ears.

“Donald!” Mickey chastised. “Watch your mouth!” The mouse then turned to the...situation unfolding before them. Was that he about to…! “Um, uh...Ozzy?”

The rabbit seemed to snap out of it. He lowered his hand from the cat’s chin. Mickey approached his side. Ozzy took a step back, releasing the now very flustered cat. “What’s gotten into you?” Mickey asked. The rabbit’s gaze turned to the floor. Mickey lead Ozzy away and turned to the cat. “I am so sorry. I don’t know what--”

“O-oh no! It’s okay! Who can say no to a hug.” The cat chuckled awkwardly. He lifted a hand and scratched the back of his head. Bendy gave Boris a quick glance. Yep, the pup was watching in concern, ears down, eyes wide. Dear, oh dear. Bendy turned back to the scene in front of him. The rabbit was led to a table.

The cat was sitting with the tip of his tail flicking back and forth. Bendy narrowed his eyes. Dark black fur, a wide brimmed fedora, a weathered coat, hiking boots with pants tucked in. Wait a second. Bendy felt a jolt go through him. That couldn’t be--

He took a step forward. Oh! Oh! But it had to be! Bendy took a deep breath. Okay, he had this. Bendy came up to the cat. He leaned on the chair next to the cat. He had his arms resting on bar countertop with a dazed look in his eyes.

“Hi there.” That was dumb, Bendy! Be cool. “Mr. Felix, right? I love your books.” He lifted a hand to gesture nonchalantly. The cat looked over, snapping out of his thoughts.

His face lit up. “Wow, thank you!” He shook Bendy’s hand. “I’m glad you too, Mr…” he trailed off, waiting for Bendy to fill in the blank.

“Bendy!” The demon grinned cheerfully. Holy stars! He was meeting Felix!

“I finished your latest release. It was amazing! Were the fire ants really that big?” Bendy couldn’t help asking.

“They were!” Felix said with a flick of his tail. “I was lucky I got away without a bite.”

“No kidding! Have you ever gone into a temple or site that didn’t have traps?” Bendy asked.

“Oh, many times! No, traps are more uncommon.” Felix shrugged. “But I like finding those places that no one has been to in a long time. Those always have risks. If there are no traps, there could be structural damage, flooding, venomous animals and poisonous plants.”

“Poisonous plants?” Bendy tilted his head.

“Yes! There was this one tomb out in the Great Dunes of Martos. A friend of mine finally found the tomb of the great king after hunting for twenty years! And it was amazing!” Felix explained excitedly. His voice lowered dramatically. “No grave robbers, but the locals heard rumors it was cursed, and that we would die if we entered it.” Bendy nodded excitedly.
“What happened?” Bendy asked.

“The first three people that went in got horribly sick and two of them died,” Felix said gravely.

Bendy’s jaw dropped. “Was it the curse?” Bendy’s mind went back to the Voodoo Queen, and a chill ticked down his spine.

“That’s what everyone thought. I had my doubts, and so did my friends. You see,” Felix smiled, “The answer isn’t always magic, even when there is evidence. Here, there was nothing. I took us some time to figure out what was going on.”

“What! What was it?” Bendy asked.

“Fungus,” Felix said.

“Uh?”

“The fungus was ancient. It held a deadly virus. People would touch the walls and then their faces,” Felix said. “With that figured out, we were able to get in and take the artifacts safely.”


“Do you like archaeology?” Felix asked.

“I’ll be honest, it was the adventure and travel that actually got me into your books, but the history side of it has grown on me a little. You’re a really good writer.” Bendy held back on gushing. He was completely level headed and cool.

Felix nodded. “Why thank you. I should have a new book out soon, too. I hope you’ll like it.”

“I’ll look forward to it.” Bendy grinned.

Felix glanced at the group that came in with Bendy. “So, are those your friends? You know, the little mouse and the rather...handsome bunny?”

Bendy looked over at the two. “Nah.” He shrugged a shoulder. “They just invited us to come out to eat for some reason.” Bendy blinked. “Wait wha--”

“Nothing!” Felix said quickly and looked away. Bendy raised a brow. Uh? Bendy turned his attention to the two again. Mickey was talking, and it seemed that the rabbit was getting up.

“Do ya need any help Mr. Mickey?” Boris asked with a hint of worry in his voice.

Mickey smiled over his shoulder. “No! No! Ozzy just needs some rest. I’ll be back with ya soon Boris.” Bendy blinked. There was something up with that mouse. Bendy didn’t want to say anything to Boris since he was his bro’s idol and everything, but there was just something...off. Bendy couldn’t put his finger on it. The two disappeared in the back. Boris returned to Bendy and plopped down in the seat Bendy was leaning against.

“He seemed so sad. I wonder what’s bothering him so much?” Boris asked. He stared down at the table with large far away eyes and downturned ears. Bendy could only shrug. There was something up with those two. Bendy just didn’t know what.

The duck approached the bar. The fella behind the counter bumped his fist with the duck. He couldn’t be much older than Bendy. Maybe he was one of the local college students?
“Hey Uncle Donald! What’s up my Quackers?” the kid asked. He was a dog with thin, droopy ears, a head of messy dark hair, and a half smile. He looked familiar for some reason. He was wearing a uniform, a half button up that was tucked into simple high waisted pants and a bowtie around his neck. Bendy fought back a small grimace. There was a reason he’d chosen a job that was full of oil and grease as a career. No one would ever expect him to dress up for anything.

“Hey, mini Goof,” the duck greeted. Mini Goof? Ah! Bendy saw it now. The ears and teeth were definitely like Goofy! They had to be related.

“How is the gang?” the fella asked.

“Oh, ya know, the usual. Your dad oversleeps and that bunny is being a whiny little starfa—”

“Be nice, Ducky.” The kid pointed at Donald waringly, a small frown on his face. He walked up to them and lifted a paper sack. “Sir.” He looked at Felix. Bendy glanced over at the cat too. He seemed to be lost in his thoughts as he stared at the wall. “Sir?” The fella coughed. Felix twitched.

“Uh?” Felix blinked and looked at him.

“You’re order’s here.” The kid, Bendy looked at the name tag, Max. Max held out the sack.

“Oh! T-Thank you, little man.” Felix chuckled nervously. He seemed to be flushed. Max raised a brow, but didn’t comment. Felix took the bag and stood up. He turned to Bendy. “It was a pleasure meeting you, Mr. Bendy.”

“The pleasure was mine, Mr. Felix.” Bendy grinned and shook his hand again. Felix also shook Boris’ hand and introduced himself. He wished the boys well.

“Excuse me, what’s back there?” Felix asked Max.

“Hm? Just more dining room and an attachment to an apartment,” Max said.

“Would the bunny and mouse…?” Felix asked with a knot between his brows.

Max shrugged. “You can check the back room.”

“Thank you.” Felix nodded gratefully.

“You stay here Ozzy, I’ll get ya something to eat,” Mickey said with a smile. Poor bro must be really tired. The rabbit pulled out a small chalkboard and chalk. Mickey blinked as his older bro started to write.

“What chu writing there? S-O-R-R-Y?” Mickey smiled. He was apologizing? “Aw.” Mickey pulled him into a one-armed hug. “No need to be sorry, bro,” Mickey said. “Like I could ever be mad at you!” He turned his tail to make a little heart shape.

He really wasn’t mad. Just concerned. Very, very concerned. He pulled back. “I’ll be right back, bro,” he said and headed back out. He passed the cat Ozzy had hugged on the way out. Mickey smiled and nodded as he passed. The cat returned the smile.

Mickey went through the door.

“Um, Mr...Ozzy?” the cat asked hesitantly. “I don’t mean to be nosy but…” The cat cleared his throat. Mickey tensed. “I hope I didn’t upset you in any way...I’m sorry if I did.” Mickey blinked and relaxed.
Mickey heard the scratch of the chalk on Ozzy’s board. “Muuuyu!” The cat exclaimed. “O-oh no! There’s no ne-need to be sorry!” Mickey smiled and turned to get some food for his bro.

“Bro, that was the Felix the Cat!” Bendy said excitedly. He rested his chin on his hand. “He said he’s gonna write a new book soon! I can’t wait!” It was fine in front of Boris. Boris never judged...much. Bendy grinned.

Boris grinned back. He’s eyes brightened and his ears came back up. “Looks like we both got to meet our idols!” He winked. “Today seems like it’s turning out to be great day, all things considered!”

Bendy wasn’t sure he could completely agree with that, but the good was definitely outweighing the bad today. So he nodded.

Suddenly, the door to the restaurant slammed open loudly. Boris flinched as they both looked up. Ice went through Bendy’s veins.

Cuphead glared at them from the entrance. He looked like death. Dark shadows sat under his eyes. His frown was steely. The few shadows in the room withered in excitement...and bloodlust.

Bendy was sure he visibly paled. He knew Boris had from what he could see at the corner of his eye. The wolf sat closer to the door, blocking Bendy. There was a heartbeat of frozen silence, then Boris turned in his chair. He lift a hand toward the crazy killer, his ears down and his eyes wide. The pup’s pupils were constricted with...fear? Worry?

“M-mister?” Boris asked with a shaking voice. “Is...is your brother okay?”

Bendy snapped out of whatever paralysis his shock had brought him. He turned around in his seat and latched onto Boris’ sleeve and arm.

The shadows were getting more...agitated. “Boris! No! We have to get out of here!” Bendy gently yanked the pup’s arm back. Couldn’t he tell this nut was out for blood! Their blood!

The hand came up. Bendy had just a second to notice the schmuck point at them, before the blinding blue light burst forth. Bendy shoved Boris off his seat and to the floor. The blast hit the counter above them. Bendy rolled, taking Boris with him. Blasts followed them with barely a gap between shots. He rolled them under a table and cradled back. Cup rushed into the room, blasts going everywhere. Tables and chairs burst.

They had to get out! Bendy looked toward the door. Cup left it unguarded. He’d only have one chance! Bendy turned to Boris. “Run when I say!” The wolf stared at him with huge, fearful eyes and nodded. Bendy got up in a crouch. He grabbed what was left of a table and chucked it at Cuphead. “NOW!”

Boris sprinted for the door like an olympian, Bendy right on his tail. There was a huge blast behind him. Bendy didn’t dare look back. Boris swung the door open and the boys bolted onto the streets. Maniacal laughter followed them. Bendy glanced back...and wish he hadn’t!

The nut’s eyes were glowing a fiery red! Shadows danced around him like he was a demon! What was this! Bendy had no clue! Worry about it later! They just had to out run the psychopath!
“Alley!” Bendy panted. Boris darted into the first alley he saw. Bendy was right behind him. A couple of blasts hit the walls and pavement around them. Bendy flinched when heat raced past his arm. Too close!

The boys ducked and weaved through piles of garbage and trash cans. Cuphead simply blasted anything in his way. Boris took one sharp turn after another, trying to confuse their pursuer. It seemed to be slowly working. The boys were pulling ahead of the nutjob cursing at them.

Bendy’s lungs and legs were on fire. Boris found a narrow space in between two buildings. It was just wide enough for someone to slip in if they turned sideways. Boris shimmed in first, then Bendy. Bendy didn’t see a promise of escape back on the streets at the other end. Cuss! Had they cornered themselves?

Heavy footsteps pounded the cement. The sound echoed at them from the stone and brick walls. Bendy and Boris covered their mouths to quiet their panting. The steps slowed.

“There’s no need to hide, you GUYS!” he sang in a creepy as cuss voice. There was a loud crash. He might have kicked over a trash can or...blasted it. “I just wanna cussing kill ya, that’s all!” he shouted. Boris gulped. Bendy kept his eye on the opening of their little alcove. He would just have to spot them, and it would be all over. He would be able to shoot them like fish in a barrel. Bendy felt his throat go dry with the thought. “I’m gonna enjoy it,” Cuphead hissed.

A shiver raced down his spine. The maniac started to chuckle. “I’ll find you!” he shouted. “I always do! I’ll make sure you never rest! Ya hear me! NEVER!” He dissolved into maniacal laughter. Bendy grit his teeth and glared at the opening. Any second. The laughter broke. “I’ll--I’ll make you pay! You’ll never rest!” Was...that a...sob? “N-never.” Bendy’s eyes narrowed. The sobbing grew louder. Something hit the cement. Had the nut collapsed?

“A-alright M-mugs,” he muttered loud enough that Bendy could still hear him. “Le-let’s split up!” His voice was hoarse and shaky. “You l-l-look over to the r-right.” He chuckled softly. Oh boy. “N-n...No! My r...right you i-idiot!” He was blubbering. Bendy shook his head. This guy...he had...clearly lost it. Bendy didn’t have to guess. Stars. He...was really dead. Cussing stars. Bendy’s fists tightened.

“YAAAY TEAMWORK!” the lunatic cackled. Oh stars. This was painful to listen to. He was laughing and sobbing. Bendy shook his head. The nut had completely broken from reality. Boris twitched. Bendy looked over to his brother. Ears down, tail tucked, those huge eyes were tight with worry. His hands were lifted to his chest, clenched fists so tight they shook. Damn it. He wanted to go out and help the nut. Of course he did! The big softie was just so--ugh! Bendy grit his teeth. He was about to whisper for the pup to forget it...Then a memory came to the forefront on his mind. Bendy on the ground, gagging on ink, that nut standing over him...and his bag landing in front of him. His pain relief in reach.

Cussing. Damnit!


No kidding.
Bendy took a deep breath as he inched down the narrow crevice. The laughing had subsided. There was just quiet weeping now. Bendy felt a drop of sweat run down the side of his face. What in the world was he getting into? He reached the corner way too quickly (even though it felt like an eternity) and with one more deep breath he peeked around the cold cement. Bendy’s jaw dropped as he gasped, and his eyes widened in horror. Cussing hell! What was--

He was kneeling in the middle of the alley. Tears ran down his face. His shoulders were sagged in defeat. His eyes were shadowed as his glowing finger was aimed at his temple.

Bendy’s stomach twisted, and his heart dropped somewhere near his toes. He reacted before he could think. The demon was in front of the cupman in an instant. Bendy grabbed his wrist and wrenched it back, away from his head.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing! Are you MAD!” Bendy bellowed in his face.

Cuphead tilted his face up to look at Bendy. His hand was limp in Bendy’s tight grasp. His brows were knit together, tears still running down his face. There was only despair in his light, watery eyes. “W-who am I ki-kidding?” he sobbed. “I’m the o-one who ki-killed him.” Bendy felt his throat tighten. “I’m the one w-who needs to die!” He was shaking.

What...was Bendy supposed to do? What could he...possibly say? Hadn’t he said something similar? Stars. His chest clenched. He swallowed the lump that threatened to strangle his words. “You know well that was an accident!” Bendy softened his tone. He loosened his grip on the other’s wrist.

Cuphead lowered his head a bit. It seemed the weight of the world was crushing him. “My fault or not...an accident or not...why would any of this matter? It’s-It’s all over! It’s either both of us or nothing!” he croaked bitterly. Bendy grit his teeth. Cuphead lunged forward. Bendy didn’t flinch. The cupman grasped Bendy’s arms for dear life. He sobbed into Bendy’s chest. “I just wish I could’ve told him that I loved him,” Cuphead hissed. His shivered with each sob. The painful clench in Bendy’s chest tightened. He wrapped the mourning one in a hug.

Bendy...didn’t want to imagine what he was going through. Yet...his mind brought on the thought, regardless. A world without Boris...Bendy’s hug tightened marginally. He...couldn’t live in a world like that...He wouldn’t have a purpose anymore. There wouldn’t be a point to try anymore...Stars. His throat tightened again. He didn’t want to think about it.

The weeping grew quiet, and Cuphead went limp. Bendy blinked. “Umm.” He tensed. “Y-you okay?” Bendy asked gently. He shifted Cuphead. The cupman’s strange featherly light hair brushed his cheek as the demon turned him in his arms. He looked down and let out a shaky breath of relief. The fella was still breathing. Bendy had thought that he...might have died for a second there! Bendy could see the dark, bruise-like shadows under his eyes. Tears still sat in the corners of his eyes. Had...he slept at all since the incident? Had he passed out from exhaustion?

“B-Bendy is he alri--”

“Yeah, just sleeping!” Bendy said quickly. Boris came around the corner and looked down at the wannabe attacker. At least the pup didn’t look so miserable now. “Let’s just find a comfortable, safe place, so we can leave him there.” Bendy shifted the cupman until he had a hand under to crook of his knees and under his back. He lifted the man easily. “Then, we’ll be on our way,” Bendy muttered.

Boris’ eyes widened. “Wait, we’re leaving him?”

Bendy frowned and raised a brow. “Umm, duh! Why? You had something else in mind?”
Boris grimaced. Had he seen everything? The pup probably heard it all at least. Bendy looked down at Cuphead. “We won’t always be there for him, and it’s true, he...might try again...So, if that’s how it’s gonna be...” They didn’t have time to watch out for someone else. People were suffering! Dying! Bendy couldn’t put off their quest, dammit! If he did, there would be more Stevens! And he didn’t know how long he could last either...

Boris gasped. “Wh--”

Bendy was quick to cut him off. “I’m sorry Boris. There’s no hope for him.” The demon didn’t look up. He couldn’t. Bendy was making a choice here...He couldn’t save everyone, dammit! If Boris could just understand that!

“But--”

“Besides!” Bendy snapped. “He might seem harmless now, but who knows when he might snap on us again! I don’t wanted to be blasted in the back!”

“Bendy,” Boris whimpered. “He’s broken.”

Bendy grit his teeth. “Please Boris...don’t make this more difficult for me! I’m just doing what’s best for us!”

Boris whimpered again, but stayed quiet. Bendy sighed and started to walk. They stayed quiet as they traveled. Bendy decided to drop Cuphead off at the hospital. It was the same one Wakko had gone to, Bendy realized. In a flurry of motion, the cupman was whisked away. Bendy dug in his pocket and pulled out his wallet. He pulled out enough to cover for the guy for a few hours. “Here.” He turned to the nurse that had stuck around to ask him questions. She was a pretty song bird with dark tips on her feathery digits and a line of black over her petit beak. Her large, dark eyes blinked in confusion. “Thanks, and please don’t tell him about us when he wakes up,” Bendy requested. The guy had been practically out of it. He probably wouldn’t remember much. Bendy hoped he won’t.

“Umm...” The nurse didn’t seem to know what to do as she stood there with the money. Bendy turned on his heel. He stuck his hands in his pockets and walked away. Boris stayed close to his side. Bendy dared to glance up to him. He was met with the image of absolute misery. Boris’ eyes were swollen, ears down. He was gripping his elbow in dejection. Bendy hunched his shoulder and walked a touch faster. Starfallen cuss.

Boris noticed his change in pace because he spoke up for the first time since the alley. “You’re right, bro,” he muttered. “It’s just a big risk for us to bring him along.” Bendy glared at the sidewalk. “B-but it’s just not fair.”

Life...wasn’t fair, bro.

“So, we’re heading back to restaurant to meet with Mr. Mickey?” Boris asked half heartedly.

Bendy pursed his lips. They had already wasted. So. Much. Time. “Sorry Boris, but that mouse was a little too nice for no reason.”

Boris raised a brow. “So?”

“Come on, bro. No one is that nice without wanting something in return,” Bendy grumbled, exasperated.

Boris narrowed his eyes. “Thanks, but I know what I’m doing!” he snapped. “Besides, I can’t just turn down an invitation like that...especially by someone as amazing as Mr. Mickey! He was there
for you too, remember?” Boris growled.

Bendy tensed and grit his teeth. This stupid pup! Didn’t he realize that his starfallen bleeding heart was going to get them killed? Bendy had just carried their attacker to a cussing hospital because he felt bad for the guy! Stars! He had been shot at today! Twice! How could he not be suspicious? There was something up with that mouse! How was he so cussing blind!

He half turned to glare at Boris. “You’re so easily trusting. Why can’t you grow up for once?” Bendy hissed. Boris flinched like Bendy had struck him. His eyes widened and became glassy. His ears dropped, and he grit his teeth. Boris squeezed his eyes shut while he lifted his muzzle. The pup’s face flushed. He crossed his arms. Cuss. Bendy had...gone too far.

“I...I am a grown up,” he muttered. “I won’t act like...like--yip!” Bendy grabbed Boris shoulders and pulled him down to his level...Well, to his knees...which were below his level...Whatever!

Bendy cupped the pup’s face and turned it to look at him. Boris keep his gaze firmly away from Bendy. Bendy felt his heart twist. “I hope you’re not forgetting that I love you more than anything...are you?” Bendy asked quietly. He hated this. Being like this! He...he just...that guy...and that thought...a world without Boris...

“Of course not!” Boris pouted. His shoulders relaxed. “You always want what’s best for me. I know, I know. But so far...what’s best for me has felt like the worst…” he mumbled back. Bendy sighed. His shoulders dropped.

“Sor…” He couldn’t. He couldn’t apologize for wanting to protect his brother. Boris suddenly pulled Bendy into a hug. Bendy twitched in surprise, but relaxed instantly.

“I know, bro. I know you want me to be happy,” Boris said. “But we’ll have to go back to the restaurant anyway.”

Bendy felt his eye twitch. “And why would that be?”

“Because.” Boris pulled back and looked at him sheepishly. “We left our bags back there.”

Bendy smacked his forehead with the palm of his hand. “Fine,” he muttered. “But we’re not sticking around. We’ve wasted four days already. We find Holly, get our map, and get going.”

Boris nodded and pulled himself back up on his feet. The two headed to the restaurant, this time with purpose in their steps.
Reunion

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Mic dried his eyes and sniffed. "Wel-Welcome to another episode of Bendy and Boris i-in the Inky Mystery!" He blew his nose on a tissue. "'Cuse me! Uh, just enjoy. Oh, that was so--" He sniffled. "My goodness."

Chapter Notes

Hi, hi! Hello, my wonderful readers!

I hope life is being kind to you. If not, I hope the chapter can at least give you a little break from the tough times. I am nearly done with school for the semester and getting ready for my wedding! (Not nervous at all). Nope! No stress in my life! I'm not stress writing or anything! Hehehe...he.

Okay, so I am. BUT. I am trying to get ahead so we can stay on schedule and Mercowe has something to post while I'm off traveling with my honey on our honeymoon.

Of course, all of this had to go down when we finally got to a part in the story I have been soooo excited to write for sooooolong. =~= Oh well.

ENJOY!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy and Boris came across quite a scene when they found the restaurant again. The walls, floors, and furniture were full of holes and burn marks. Donald’s tail feathers had a number done on them. Mickey was trying to calm down the shaken employee. They were so wrapped up in their little show that no one noticed the boys’ entrance.

“You alright Max?” Mickey asked. He rested a hand on his shoulder.

“Alright! W-w-who cares? The boss is gonna kill me!” Max held his hand to his mouth in fright, looking at the destruction.

“No, no, it’s okay!” the mouse responded quickly with a reassuring smile. “We’ll explain things to him, no problem!...Just explain it to me first!” Mickey asked to sniveling young man.

“Those two had to run out!” Donald quacked.

Mickey’s eyes grew the size of saucer plates. He threw his hands up to either side of his head. “My Boris!” he cried. Bendy felt something twist in his stomach. The cuss was that! His Boris? Excuse me! Bendy’s eye twitched.

Mickey turned on his heel, ready to dash out the door, his eyes full of fierce determination...when he saw the two of them standing right there by the door. Mickey froze.
“Hi, Mr. Mickey.” Boris gave him a little wave. Neither of them had much energy after...everything. Bendy shot a glance toward Boris. The wolf’s ears were down, his face flushed. Was he...pleased?

Bendy turned a glare on the mouse. It was official. Bendy didn’t like this guy. The flustered mouse quickly back peddled. “Oh, thank goodness you’re safe!” he squeaked. The flush on the mouse’s face was not helping his case in the least. That’s right. Bendy heard you, you shady creep. “B-both of you, of course!” He chuckled nervously and shrugged. Oh yeah, like Bendy was going to buy that load of hogwash! Now that he thought about it, this mouse had hardly acknowledged the demon’s existence. Bendy didn’t really care about that. Hell, he was used to it even, but this--this! Stupid. ‘His Boris’? What the cuss, man! It was a whole new level of--what the cuss even was that!

“Do you know what happened here or did you miss it like I did?” Mickey asked Boris with a relieved smile. He lifted a hand and rested it on Boris’ arm.

Bendy scowled. “Why indeed!” he growled. His Boris! Bendy couldn’t get over it! What schmuck in his right mind just says something like that? He said he had watched the trial. Did he believe that snake lawyer? Was he judging Bendy on how he was raising the pup? He wasn’t a good guardian? Was that it! Or was it because he was a demon? He didn’t seem prejudiced when they had first met the mouse...Was it about the Illness? Bendy blinked. Nah, that didn’t make any sense. The guy may be a creep, but he wasn’t cruel.

Boris turned a heavy frown on Bendy. “‘We don’t do touching’? ‘It’s a family thing’? What was that?”

Bendy lowered his brows and looked across the street, away for the pup’s large, scolding eyes. “Well, I may have lied about the family thing, but I still hate touching,” he muttered, pushing his hands deeper into his pockets. The pup still didn’t see that claim as creepy or insulting. Then again, this was the Mickey Mouse. The fella his brother has looked up to ever since he found out what television was. Of course his idol could do no wrong. Bendy fought off the urge to roll his eyes.

“Yeah, but that’s you,” Boris pointed out. “And you never have that problem if it’s a woman.”
Bendy felt his lip twitch. “Man, I could use a dance.” And a dame...and a drink.

Boris snorted and rolled his eyes. “Think Granny will have any food for us?”

Bendy shrugged. “Maybe. I’m just hoping Holly and the others are there.”

“I saw Xedo and Wiston at the trial,” Boris said.

“Hope they didn’t get arrested for that stunt they pulled,” Bendy muttered.

“Me too.”

“I didn’t see Granny or Alice though,” Bendy said. If Holly had been there, then Alice was probably okay. He must have just missed her in the crowd. Boris hummed. As they came to Baker Street, the boys slipped into the shadows of the back path. They walked along the backyard fences with nearly silent steps. It didn’t take long for the boys to reach the familiar backyard. Bendy opened the gate and back door when he suddenly had to duck to dodge a cane in the face.

“Take that yo--oh! Hello Bendy, dear! I was wondering when you boys were going to get back to me!” Granny Gopher lowered her cane with a warm smile.

“Good to see you again too, Granny!” Boris said. Bendy straightened up and gave the older gopher a shaky smile. Geez! That woman was fast! Note to self: Don’t underestimate Granny!

“Is anyone else around?” Bendy asked.

“Yes! The Warner siblings are here with their guardian. And your little friend, Miss Swingskirt! I told them you might show up here tonight, so they’ve been waiting.” Granny tapped her cane on the floor before heading into the kitchen.

“Any word from Holly or Alice?” Bendy asked.

The gopher tilted her head. “Not yet.”

“What about the foxes?” Boris asked.

“Xedo gave me a call earlier today.” Granny Gopher smiled. “Invited him to dinner, but he’s busy finishing that article on the Ink Machine. He wanted it ready for Oddswell’s trial.”

Bendy pursed his lips. Made sense. People would be asking about that cure. “How is that all going? You haven’t been overwhelmed, have you?”

Granny perked up. “Oh no! Actually it’s getting much better. After Wakko’s incident, I had a few doctors drop by and ask about the pain medicines. They wanted to help! I have been pointing a few new cases in that direction after talking to them about their symptoms.” She was absolutely beaming at them. “And I have your rewards!”

“Rewards?” Bendy blinked.

“Why yes, dear! We’re celebrating!” Granny said. "I hope you two are hungry!"

“Celebrating?” Bendy raised a brow. “Okay?”

Granny frowned at him. She raised a finger and shook it at him. “What’s with the wet blanket attitude, young man? You should be elated! After all, you did it!”
“Do? What did we do?” Boris blinked.

Granny laughed. “Like you don’t know! Boys! Come now! It’s official! No questions asked! Ink Illness is an official disease! People are listening for once!” The old woman cackled. “Do you know how many apology calls we’ve gotten!”

The boys blinked and shared a look. “Ah,” was all Bendy said.

“Ah? Ah!” Granny laughed loudly, almost sounding giddy. “You solved a problem we’ve been struggling with for over a year and all you can say is ‘Ah’ Hehehehe!” Granny cackled again and shook her head. “Oh, you two!” Definitely giddy.

“Don’t throw a party yet, Granny. We don’t have that Machine.” Bendy couldn’t help the half smile that took over his face. The old gopher was exuding joy. It was fun to watch her flit around the kitchen. Why did she need a cane?

She laughed again. “Oh, you! So ambitious! I like that. You two are just gonna go solving all our problems, aren’t ya!” She stopped at the oven and pulled on an oven mitten. “Oh fiu! Nearly forgot. Go up and say hi to everyone! Can't hog you all to myself! I’ll be there in a moment with your rewards. Now, go on! Shoo! Leave your bags in the closet and enjoy your friends!”

The boys did as told and went into the dining room. There a long table was surrounded by familiar faces. The Warners grinned at them. That odd doctor guardian of theirs was looking over a book. Sasha nodded at the boys. Next to her was a stranger. She was a woman that looked similar to Sasha except where Sasha’s hair was dark, curly and short, the woman’s was light, wavy and came down to her shoulders.

She stood up and hugged the boys. “Thank you so much!” Bendy’s throat went dry. That was a pleasant surprise.

“No prob, ma’am,” Boris answered. “But who are you?”

“I’m Sally Swing, Sasha’s sister. You’ve been good friends to her! I have been so worried,” she said and pulled back. “We couldn’t write much since circumstances didn’t allow it! Still, she mentioned you two!” She smiled at them.

“Sally, calm down. I’m sure the boys have had a long day,” Sasha scolded gently.

Sally pulled back. “Hush you! I finally get to meet the famous Dancing Demon and his musically gifted brother.” Sasha flushed.

Bendy grinned. “Oh, so she talked about us.”

“Absolutely! You two need to hit the dance clubs around here! You’d become legends quick if what sis has said is true! Not that you aren't famous already! And oh! I have wanted to talk to you two since forever! I’m sure Sash never said much to you about anything! She’s so private! Of course, it was dangerous too!”

“And still is,” Sash added with a raised finger and a condensing tone that siblings kept exclusively to use only on each other.

“Please! Did you see how today went?” Sally gasped and raised her brows at the other woman. “They obviously can handle themselves. Chad wouldn’t be able to lay a finger on them!”

“I...actually wanted to talk about that,” Bendy said hesitantly.
Sasha waved her hand in a dismissive gesture, but Sally was the one to speak. “Oh we will, but for now let’s focus on good things! This is a happy meeting after all!” She grinned.

Bendy and Boris smiled. “Yeah, that sounds swell,” Boris replied.

Sally stared at them. Her eyes became glassy with unshed tears. “It’s like I’m meeting stars, or legends.” Sally sighed. “It’s surreal.”

Sasha frowned. “Careful Sal, Bendy’s ego is impossible when it’s bloated.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about, Sash! I’m the most humble guy around.” Bendy winked. Sasha rolled her eyes, but she was smiling.

Sally giggled. “He is as much a flirt as you said, too!” She sounded gleeful.

“Flirt? Me? Only if the truth in flirting. I’m charmed to meet another beauty. Who knew that the gorgeous Miss Sasha had an angel for a sister?” Bendy kissed the woman’s hand. Boris rolled his eyes.

“Smooth,” Yakko smirked. Wakko and Dot covered their laughter. Aaah, the joys of a peanut gallery.

“Yeah! My mailman is the best!” Dot added. She bounded over and tried to jump into his arms. Bendy dodged her, and she ended up clinging to Boris. The wolf startled. Dot giggled. “Hard to get! One of my favorite games!”

“Stars, no!” Bendy snapped and jumped away again when she dove for him. Crazy job nut!

“Bendy,” Sasha said in mock surprise. “You didn’t tell me you had a girlfriend!”

Bendy’s jaw dropped. “She not my–”

And the smallest Warner tackled him to the ground in a fit of giggles. Boris rolled his eyes again. He was smirking. Traitor.

“Hey, think the readers are here?” Yakko suddenly asked Wakko. The younger Warner stuck out his tongue and shrugged.

“Yes, of course they are! Bendy and I are together! Why wouldn’t they be here to read this important part of relationship development?” Dot claimed and snuggled into Bendy's chest. The demon grimaced. He attempted to push her off. Arms like steel, the little girl wasn't budging. What was a zany made of! Bendy blinked and shared a confused look with Boris. The wolf shook his head and shrugged.

“Well,” Wakko said from the table. “There is a new person they’re meeting too, so it’d make some sorta sense.”

“Alright!” Yakko stood up and cleared his throat. “Sorry I can’t see ya guys anymore! Fourth wall breaks are hard when it’s all fuzzy. Just wanted to thank you all for your well wishes. Tap wanted us to know that a lot of you said hi.”

“Yeah, we appreciate it,” Wakko added.

Dot nodded. “Good to know we still got pals on the other side.” She winked.

“Get off!” Bendy managed to toss her aside and jumped up. She giggled and was back on her feet in an instant. “What the heck are you three going on about?”
“Oh nothing,” all three said together. Bendy scowled. Didn’t sound like ‘nothing’ to him.

“Don’t bother. They iz jest trying to drive you ups da wallz, Mizter Bendy,” Dr. Scratchansniff said idly, his rather large nose still in the ‘Biology and Classes of Zanies’ book he had with him.

Granny came in with a large roast in her hands. “It’s so good to see everyone so lively.” She smiled. “But I think it’s time for some food. It’s been such a wonderful day that I pulled together a bit of a feast!” Cheers went around, and the group was quick to claim seats. It was nice to have good food with good company. Dr. Scratchansniff even set aside his book and joined the conversations and jokes. Sasha and Granny did a great job involving everyone and yet kept the chaos to a minimum. All in all, it was a dinner that the boys sorely needed to relax after such a day.

Still, Bendy couldn’t help but think about those that weren’t around the table. Where were Alice and Holly? When would Oddswell and Miss Hood finally be allowed to walk free? They still had a long way to go.

And at the very back of Bendy’s head sat the image of a tear stained cupman kneeling in a pool of guilt.

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Cup grit his teeth. There was so much blood. It wouldn’t stop! He was way too pale. “H-hang on, bro!”

“Cuphead,” he groaned.

He was awake! “Mugs! Oh, Mugs! I--”

“Why Cup? Why did you do it?” Mugman demanded.

Cup’s eyes widened. Ice trickled into his veins. “I-I didn’t mea--”

“Why did you kill me, Cuphead!” Mugs yanked Cup’s down by the collar. They were nose to nose. Mugs opened soulless black eyes. Cuphead gasped. Mugs glared at him with dark, empty hatred. “Now, I’m burning in hell! He has me! And it’s all your fault!”

“No! Mugman! Nonono!” Cup sobbed. “M-Mugs.”

Cup gasped and opened his eyes. He shot up and looked around him. No blood covered Mugman. No alley. Where was he? He was sitting...in a bed? The white walls were simple with pictures of nature and flowers around. There was medical equipment by the head of the bed and a side table with an empty vase.

A...hospital room? How did he get here? Why was he here? He scratched the rat’s nest that was his hair in confusion. His coat was gone...He was in a change of clothes? Oh boy. Hospital garb. He threw the sheets off and pulled his legs over the edge of the bed. His bare feet brushed the cool tiles of the floor.

He...had blacked out...Had he...done anything? If this was an insane asylum then...probably. Not that it really mattered anymore…

He felt his throat tighten. He attempted to clear it roughly. Cup tried to remember what happened.

After...what happened...He had turned around to hunt down those two worms for what they did. He lost their path pretty quick, though. Instead, he went and chased down Mortimer. He took every scrap of info he could from the rat, even did some kinda favor. Scared a little no-name out of town.
for him.

Still, even after that, the little...starfallen cusses were nowhere to be found. It wasn’t until he passed a news stand and saw the papers that Cup found them. Cussing arrested! Seriously? He headed straight for the jail. Screw being careful, he just went. And cussing n-o-t-h-i-n-g. Another dead end. Back to Mortimer.

He hadn’t cared about time. He hadn’t cared about sleep. Food wasn't a thing. Nothing mattered except his revenge. Then, that court day happened today...If today was the same day...and he had waited. He had been planning on taking them out the moment they walked out of the courthouse. But there had been a crowd.

Cup dropped his throbbing head into his hands. By then, his memories were already pretty fuzzy. How...long had it been since...He had no idea….

He remembered the weasel gunner. Seeing red because how dare he try to take Cuphead’s targets from him. He remembered he had grabbed the little furry worm and dragged him away...What...did he do to that guy…? Stars, he had no clue. He didn’t think...he wanted to know what he did. Cup grimaced.

Not again. I have had a blackout like that in years.

...Anyway…

He had found them. He knew he found them but...what happened? Where had it been? A store? No, some alley? He didn’t really…

He dropped his hands and sighed. No bandages, no pain, no needles in his arms, so he didn’t get into a fight with them and lose. He hadn’t been here for long if he didn’t have an IV. Had he...Had he killed them? Then, how did he get here? If he had and someone found them, then he would be cuffed to the bed!...right?

He didn’t think he killed them. He rubbed his sore eyes. Stars.

“Oh!” a high pitched voice chirped. “Mr. Cuphead! You’re awake!” the little bird nurse said. Her little heels clicked as she walked into the room. Cup dropped his hand. He...thought he recognized her from back then. So...he was in the general hospital then...not an insane asylum. Uh. He was almost disappointed.

“You!” a deeper voice snapped. Cup’s eyes snapped up. A bunny nurse stood in the doorway. Her hands were planted firmly on her shapely hips as she glowered at Cup. Her full, painted lips turned down in a sharp scowl. Her shaped brows knit together as they arched down over shadowed half-lidded eyes. Her dark eyes were framed with long lashes and they gleamed with annoyance that reflected in her tone of voice.

“Nurse Fanny?” the other nurse asked. “Is there a problem?”

The rabbit flounced into the room. Her heels clicked sharply with her every step. Her long stockings brushed the hem of the short nurse’s shirt. She grabbed a fist full of his shirt and yanked him up. “Geez!” Cup hissed as she pulled him behind her. He grabbed her wrist, so she didn’t rip his shirt. Her grip was like iron. He had to bend over a bit because of the height difference. She dragged him out of the room and into the hall.

“Come on, stardust!” she growled as she kept up a brisk pace in her clacking high heels. Cup stumbled behind her.
“Stars! What’s your deal, lady?” Cup demanded with little bite in his words. She completely ignored him. How could someone in heels move so fast?

The bird nurse fretted beside them. “N-Nurse Fanny! Please be nice,” she begged. What kind of bedside manners were these?

She dragged him down a couple of hallways. Doctors and nurses barely gave them a glance. Was this normal here? There was a family entering a room. A little bear girl was on the bed. There was an old turtle couple in another room. Suddenly, she threw him into a room. Cup stumbled again to save himself from falling. “You don’t just throw your trash here!” she growled. “You’re supposed to come back to pick it up!”

Cup shot her an annoyed look. This rabbit was nuts!

“C-Cup?”

Cuphead stiffened like he was electrocuted. It couldn’t be.

He slowly turned around. He was terrified to hope. He was shaking. No, it had to be in his head. This wasn’t real. He had already imagined stardust illusions just like this the last couple of days. He...couldn’t...handle hoping. If his spirits lifted now, the fall would be so much worse. His mind would literally break.

And yet…

Cup lifted his eyes. And--

“Cup! W-where have you been?” Mugs hiccuped. Tears rolled down his face. His light eyes were huge with fear, hurt, betrayal, sorrow. There was a bandage in the corner of his mouth. His wrapped up arm rested on his even heavier bandaged chest. “I thought you l-left me here forever!”

Cup trembled. It...couldn’t be real. This...this was too good to be real. He stared at Mugs with wide eyes. Mugs frowned and turned away. He quickly wiped the tears from his eyes. The other cupman glared at the bedsheets and refused to look at Cup.

Slowly, Cup approached the bed. He lowered himself, enough to be eye level with Mugs. He didn’t dare sit on the bed. What...what if he disappeared? What if Cup blinked, and he was gone again.

Sweet stars above, if this is a dream, don’t let me wake up.

With shaking hands, he gingerly reached out. He cupped Mugs face, angling it toward his. Mugs stubbornly kept his eyes turned away, still fixed to a point on the bed. His warm, smooth porcelain skin felt real. Could he be?

“You’re re-real, right?” Cup whispered, his rough voice cracking.

Mugs frowned, his brows lowering over his eyes. “Don’t talk to me. I’m mad at you.”

Why did you do it?

Cup was shaking so hard he started to rattle. He brushed Mugs cheek with his thumb, right above the small band aid. Warm, smooth, alive. “I...I’m n-not going crazy...right?” he choked. His throat tightened. “I-I can s-see you.” Was this real? “I c-can touch you.” Please...please…

Mugs eyes softened with confusion. He looked at Cup. They were almost nose to nose. “Cups?”
Mugs breath brushed against Cuphead’s face. He was breathing. This had to...It had to be real.

The last of Cup’s hesitation broken. He pulled himself onto the bed and wrapped his arms around Mugs. Tears ran down his face as he sobbed. He was alive! Mugman was alive! His baby brother was alive! Sweet stars above, he was alive! He kissed Mugs cheeks again and again and sobbed and hugged him tightly. Mugs laughed wetly as he fought his own tears and hugged Cup back. Cup had no idea how long they stayed like that, long enough for those nurses to disappear.

Their tears slowed down, and Cup was able to calm down. They didn’t part, though. Mugs stayed tucked under Cup’s chin. A happy little smile on his face, a sharp contrast from the tear stains on his cheeks. The boys just stayed like that for another undetermined amount of time. Just...existing. Enjoying each other’s silent presence. Eventually, Mugs pulled back. He laughed and ran a hand through Cup’s messy hair. “Aww man, you’re so floofy!”

“Heh,” Cup chuckled. He probably looked like a mess. The nurses returned with breakfast for the both of them.

Dovil, the little bird nurse, stepped up to offer Cup some papers to fill out. “You two are ready to check out today! These are your checkout forms. Please fill them out. Nurse Fanny will let you know what you need to do once you both get dressed.” The little bird disappeared and came back with both Mugs’ and Cups’ things. She cheerfully returned their effects. Cup handed her the signed papers.

He quickly checked his jacket’s hidden pocket, and with a sigh of relief, got dressed. It felt good to be back in his turtleneck and coat. He turned the collar on the jacket up. Good. Now he just had to fix the nightmare that was his ‘floofy’ hair. He pulled a comb out of his pocket and attacked the knots.

Finished, he turned around to see Mugs wince as he tried to wrap his long scarf around his neck. Cup was quick to help him. With that done, Nurse Fanny returned. She scowled at the two of them before turning to a few papers she had in her hands.

“You.” She pointed to Cup, nearly poking him in the nose. Her dark eyes blazed at him. “Were just exhausted. You idiot. Take better care of yourself!” Cup felt his face heat. He silently ducked his chin into his turtleneck. She narrowed her large eyes threateningly. Her long lashes shadowed their fire.

“Now you,” she looked at Mugs, then the papers again, “You had three busted ribs, a punctured lung, second and third degree burns on your chest, back, and arm, internal bleeding, and massive blood loss. Frankly, you are lucky we have the best damn surgeon in the city. Most people don’t survive a blast or laser or whatever through the chest!” Mugs gulped and nodded.

Cup felt a chill shoot down his spine. Lucky. If it had been his heart or if Cup had been any later…

She turned her large, sharp eyes on Cup once again. “He needs to take it easy for six weeks. Don’t let him push himself! The bandages need to be changed twice a day. Once in the morning, and once at night. Don’t let him rip any of his stitches. Don’t let his burn get infected. Don’t let him itch his wounds while he’s healing. He’ll get them infected for sure! If there is any oozing or swelling get him back here asap.”

Mugs raised a brow. “Golly, is there anything I am allowed to do?” Mugs asked. Nurse Fanny turned a heavy scowl on him. Mugs shrunk into his scarf.

Fanny ripped something off the papers in her hand and practically slapped Cuphead with it. “That’s
the prescription for his pain medication. Two a day. Again, one in the morning and one at night. There’s enough for four weeks. After that, you can come back to get the stitches removed. If not, take them out yourself.” She shrugged. “I don’t care what you idiots decide to do myself. And here-” The bunny shoved the stack of papers into Cup’s chest. He bit back a grunt of surprise. “These explain how to clean his wounds, bandages, and baths. No showers.” She pointed at Cup’s face threateningly. “Got it?” Cup nodded. Geez! What did he do? Shouldn’t she be snapping this at Mugs? She turned on her heel and flounced away. She paused at the door and looked back at them. “Now, get out of my hospital. You’re taking my patients air!” Cup watched the curvy cottontail disappear with a raised brow and a flushed face. What...kind of experience was this place? He swallowed...his throat remained dry. That nurse was something else...

Mugs chuckled. “What’s with that look, Cups?”

“What look?” Cup grumbled.

“That one.” Mugs pointed at his face.

“This is just my face, Mugs.” Cup shoved his hands in his pockets.

Mugs raised a brow while his smile turned into a smirk. “Alright, sure.”

Cup scowled. “C’mon. Let’s get outta here.”

“Righty-o. Where we headed?” Mugs asked.

“I was thinking we’d go back to the hotel and relax today,” Cup said with a shrug. Mug raised a brow.

“You don’t wanna try and find the B-bros today?” Mugs asked, his tone in awe. His little brother’s eyes were wide and his jaw even dropped.

Cup frowned at the displayed disbelief. “What? Can’t we have a day off? Besides, you’re recovering. That nurse told you to take it easy.”

Mugs snorted. “But we know they’re in town! The court thingy was only yesterday, so they’re probably at that doctor’s house!”

“Yeah, but they are also surrounded by all their friends.” He glanced at Mugs with narrow eyes. “Ya know, the ones you promised we wouldn’t touch?”

“Oh yeah.” Mugs chuckled nervously. “But we’ll find a way! We always do. This could be our chance bro!”

Cup slowed down and looked at Mugs. His brows knit, and his frown softened. “You sure you don’t need more rest?”

Mugs chuckled again. “I had all the rest I needed while you forgot me here!”

There wasn’t any edge, no resentment, no anger in his tone or expression. Still, Cup felt his stomach twist. He clenched his fists in his pockets before relaxing them.

“Don’t...joke about that Mugs,” Cup murmured. He gently wrapped an arm around Mugs’ shoulders and pulled Mugs into a half hug. “I went through the worst days in my whole life without you,” he admitted. Mugs arm went around Cup. “And all the time, I just couldn’t forget about you. Not even for a second, not even if I tried.” He had thought Mugs had died. He...had given up.
Mugs flushed, but the smile didn’t waver. “Cuppy please! I’m not used to all this love.”

“Well, let’s at least fill your proscription.” Cup pulled back. Mugs smiled warmly, and they headed off. So, Mugs wasn’t used to... affection? When... did that happen? Mugs used to be very affectionate. Growing up, there had been times Cup had woken up to his kid brother wrapped around him even though he had his own bed. Mugs would sit on Elder Kettle’s lap when the old man read to them. He used to always grab Cups’ arm or pull him into a hug or... just some kinda touch.

When had that gone away? Why had Cup not noticed before? Was it when they started collecting contracts? Or after they had lost to the Devil? Or was it when they started living with Black Hat? After that?

Cup... didn’t remember. He had focused so much on making sure they succeeded, that they survived, that the boss had no reason to go after them, that no one tried anything against him or Mugs. He had been so busy completing their missions and watching their backs... Stars. He still had to watch their backs. They had to report soon. A lot has happened in a little time. So... Cup grimaced.

First though, the pills. Then maybe check with Mortimer, then... he could worry about the rest later. Yeah...

The pair made their way into a little pharmacy and didn’t have any trouble getting Mugs his medication. There was also a quaint flower shop. Cup noticed the wall of herbs through the window. He headed in and asked the little mouse woman with the round ears if she knew anything that would help sore muscles and burns. She gladly explained several options and recommended lavender. Cup bought it and thanked the nice little mouse before heading to the bar.

“Just in case you start feeling uncomfortable, bro.” Cup answered Mugs unasked question. The younger cupman blinked and raised his brows.

Next stop was the bar. The moment he walked in, everyone went quiet. Cup frowned and let his gaze sweep the room. No one dared to make eye contact with him... except the always calm ram behind the bar counter. He gave them a little bob of the head in greeting.

“Mortimer?” Cup asked.

The ram indicated a back corner of the room. Cup gave him a couple of bills. The rat was chatting it up with a couple of clean cut mooks. Cup guessed they were Gambino, but he really didn’t care to make sure. Cups’ shadow fell across the table and all three looked up at him.

“You gotta a--” One of the Gam’s started to snarl, but the other elbowed him in the ribs.

“Good morning, Cup brothers.” Cup raised a brow. So, there were at least two wise guys here. His smarmy friend paled at the title.

“Cuss.” The idiot hissed as he rubbed his sore side. “The Cups.”

“We got business with the rat. Clear off. We won’t take long.” Cup said. The idiot scowled, but his friend grabbed him under the arm and the two quickly left the table.

Mortimer swallowed a scowl and put on what Cup guessed was what the rat considered a charming smile. “Cuphead! You look better pal! Finally got that night’s sleep, I see! And looky here, it’s Mugman! Well, I was wondering what was up. Cup wouldn’t say a thing. Were ya on some secret errand for your boss? Don’t worry, I won’t tell anyone!”

Cup growled. Mortimer instantly pulled back. The spineless ninny. “Not that ya have to say
anything, Mugman, of course! Judging by those bandages on your arm, it was one hell of time!”

Cup growled again and narrowed his eyes. This schmuck was fishing. It was one of the many reasons Cup kept him at an arm's distance. “What's with the act, Mort? You tryin’ to get somethin’ outta us?” He hadn’t been the other day...Then again no one was stupid enough to hold up Cups with murder in his eyes the other day.

“Who me? Never. I’m your pal!” Mortimer said quickly. Cup stared at him, deadpan. “Sides, you still owe me that favor for the ‘Orleans run. If I wanted info, I would just ask for it.” The rat dropped his overly cheery tone. “Guess those twerps got away from you again.”

“How’d you know?” Mugs asked.

“’Cause you came to see me again,” Mortimer said. He pointed at Cup. “Third day in a row I might add.”

Cup grit his teeth. Mortimer tsked. “Those two are either some of the sliest creatures on this planet or you boys are losing your edge.”

“What?” Cup asked.

Mortimer shrugged. “Just saying. Your rep is starting to come into question, boys. First that owl and now these kids?” He smirked. “People gonna start thinkin’, if ya know what I mean.”

Cup frowned. Their rep? Seriously? Cup used to care what others had thought of him and his bro. Fame may have sounded interesting at one point in his life. That was before...everything. Now, he didn’t give a flying leap what other people thought. As long as they left him and Mugs the cuss alone, they could say whatever the hell they wanted. So what if their jobs made them a bit infamous in the underworld on the big cities? Didn't matter in the long run.

“Look rat, I didn’t come here to be insulted,” Cup said.

“Mouse!” Mortimer corrected immediately. “And no. You came here for information on the Bbros. Again!” he said with a smug smirk.

Cup raised his brows over his half lidded eyes. “No.” The smirk dropped off the rat’s face in an instant. “I want to know why there was a starfallen, cussing weasel taking a cheap shot at my targets.”

Mortimer startled. “O-oh?”

Mugs blinked and turned surprised eyes on Cup. “You know who he was with. Spill, rat.”

“Mouse,” Mortimer corrected weakly. He looked around the room and then back to Cup. “Okay, I’ll tell ya, but you didn’t hear it from me! That weasel was one of Mr. Winky’s. Heard he's in with the Sykes brothers as of late.”

Both cups tilted their heads in confusion. The Sykes? Those greedy debtors? What did they have to do with the Bbros? Hell, they were debtors. They should know the boss had the Cups on the job. “Why?” Cup murmured.

Mortimer shook his head. “Not sure. The details are a bit fuzzy. Word is it’s something big, though. Like city wide big.” Cup narrowed his eyes. What?

He threw a few bills on the table and got up. “Thanks, Mort. See ya around.”
The rat sniffed...but pocketed the cash. Cup put his hands in his pockets and headed for the exit of the bar. He paused at the door to the basement. If it was one of the debtors, then the boss or at least Dice would know about the meddling weasel...right? Was the risk worth knowing?

“The worst we can do it ask.” Mugs answered his question like some kinda mind reader. “I mean, the Sykes aren’t exactly guys you push around, right?”

Cup huffed and lifted his chin. “We can push anyone in this town around, bro.”

Mugs shrugged. “Well, we’ll have to report soon, anyway.”

Cup hesitated a moment longer. Ah, screw it. He headed down the rickety wooden stairs into the cellar. The burn marks from before were still visible, but much more faded. The cupman was quick to write out the letters on the wall and wait while they glowed blood red.

“Think he’ll be mad?” Mugs asked. Cup shrugged. He had no cussing clue. It took noticeably longer than normal for the hole in the ground to appear. Cup and Mugs tensed until a certain diceman appeared...sporting a rather dark shiner.

Cup scowled. “You again?”

Dice mirrored the scowl. “Good to be seein’ ya again, too!” He sneered. “What the hell game are you two playing? Why are they still alive? Do you realize how very ticked the boss is?”

Mugs whistled. “Golly, what happened, King Dice? How’d ya get the black eye?”

Dice cut a green glare back at the younger cup.

Cup stepped in front of him. “Funny, I was calling to demand why the hell there are people getting in my way. What the cuss was that weasel, Dice! I would have had them! What, you putting the Sykes on my targets without tellin’ me? Does the boss know about this?”

Dice narrowed his eyes. “The weasel?”

“Yeah, the cussing weasel!” Cup snapped. “I was right there, Dice. I had them right in front of me and then that starfallen weasel makes a mess of it! He didn’t even hit them!”

“Did you--”

“Of course I did,” Cup snapped. “I hate when people get in my way.” He didn’t need to know that Cup didn’t technically remember what he did with the weasel. Just that he...took care of it.

Dice chuckled and Cup tensed. Why was he smiling like that? Shouldn’t he still be as annoyed as Cuphead? Mugs was staring at Dice in bafflement. He raised a questioning gaze to Cup. The elder shrugged. The king of gambling leaned against the brick wall, crossed his arms, and looked between the brothers with a cruel amusement that spelled trouble for them. Stars, what was it this time?

“Well boys, since you’ve come to me with this rather...interesting news, I guess you can get involved. After all, they are the reason for your latest failure, right?” Dice turned a piercing gaze on Mugs’ bandaged arm. Mugs stiffed and pulled his arm behind him. The right hand man chuckled.

“The Sykes were supposed to take care of that annoyingly fast-growing group that have rallied around your targets and that doctor,” King Dice said.

Mugs blinked. “They’re not still trying to hide things, are they? I mean, that Ink thing was on
television. I don’t think--”

“Of course not, moron.” Dice frowned and rolled his eyes. Cup’s brow twitched. “We are past the
point of recovery, sadly.”

“...But you still want us to take out those two?” Mugs asked. “If there are no more secrets, then why
bother?”

Dice sighed. “Because this is only one battle. We are still fighting the war.”

Cup swallowed. “What does that mean for us?”

Dice raised a brow. “You remember that doll you two miserably failed to collect?”

Cuphead scowled and glared with half lidded eyes. Mugs eyes fell to the floor and his chin
disappeared into his scarf. How was Cup supposed to know it was important if Dice had made it
sound like an afterthought? Idiot.

“That was a machine piece,” King Dice said. The brothers blinked. “They’re trying to get all the
pieces and build the starfallen thing. The boss doesn’t want that. We need to get those parts before
they get that thing running.” Dice fell silent. The two continued to stare at him.

Mugs cleared his throat. “Why?”

“Not important to you. Just make sure that machine doesn’t get turned on,” Dice said.

“Why not just go get the parts before the pipsqueak and his brother find them? There are several
debtors around, shouldn’t be so hard,” Cup muttered.

Dice chuckled. “They’re hidden by powerful magic. Near impossible to find.”

“Then how are those two finding them?” Mugs asked.

Dice’s expression became impassive. “Boss thinks they might have gotten their little mitts on a
special map.”

“Okay,” Cup said slowly.

“Just saying, those parts could put you two back in the boss’ good graces.” Dice adjusted his large
bow tie.

“Are you telling us that for our sakes or yours?” Cup muttered.

“Is an angry boss good for anyone’s sake?” Dice shot back.

"Touche."

“But first, I want to cash in on that favor you two owe me.” Dice smirked. Cup groaned. Cuss. He
knew that smirk had meant something earlier.

“What?” Cup growled.

Dice lifted a hand in a placating gesture. “Just a bit of cleanup. Like I said, the Sykes were supposed
to deal with this Toon Town mess but…”

“Collect them?” Cup said. “We ain’t--”
“Not them, and it’s not a contract thing. At least, not yet. They still have a few days.” Dice waved off Cup’s comment. “They got a little gang together to split the job, but one of them got cold feet and is trying to run.” Cup snorted. This was grunt work on the lowest tier. “He’ll be trying to leave town tonight at the train station on the edge of town. If he shows up, take care of him.”

Mugs frowned. Cup sighed. “Really? We owe you, and that’s the favor you want?”

King Dice smirked. “I find this kind of sloppy situation beneath me.” Cup scowled. Cussing egotistical schmuck.

“Then, get the Sykes. It’s their cussing dog. Make them deal with it.” Cup’s tone had an edge.

“They’re busy and besides, their work is starting to unravel. They need an example set. Something to motivate them.” Dice said.

“And you don’t want to do the dirty work,” Cup growled. King Dice grinned like a cat that got a canary.

“Their contracts are coming up in a few days too. Why don’t you go as the reps and deal with them when they fail?” Dice said.

Cup grit his teeth. Mugs scowled. “How come you’re so sure they’ll fail?”

Dice gave him a half-lidded stare. “I’ve been in the business long enough to know when someone’s hand is a dud kid. Those two have gotten sloppy. It’s only a matter of time.”

Cup felt his throat go dry. “And if I say go jump in your starfallen hole?”

Dice’s lip curled with amusement. “Do you really have the merit to turn me down right now, little Cup?” Cup’s hands fisted in his pocket. The owl was already a strike against them, the Bbros’ ever extending escape was edging on a second, and now with this televised Ink Attack and the secret of the Illness getting out...well. Cup should be grateful the boss himself wasn’t here.

He took a deep breath, his shoulders dropping with the action. Dice grinned, showing his perfectly white straight teeth. “Good boy.” Cup’s fist tightened more.

“So, stop the runner, collect a couple contracts, and find the parts?” Mugs tapped out the list on his fingers. He raised a brow at the right hand man. Dice grinned.

“Let me know how the clean up goes, boys.” Dice chuckled mockingly before giving a little hop and disappearing.

The boys stood in a heavy silence. “I...really hate that guy,” Cup muttered. Mugs grimaced. The two headed out. Now with the a list of rather...bleak tasks the two made their way to the edge of town.

Chapter End Notes

Haha! I find it ironic that she gets to this part just as she's going to be gone too. There are benefits and drawbacks to this for me as well.

Benefit (definite benefit): I can read along as she writes, so I'm getting good stuff to read nearly every day! Haha!
Drawback: When she leaves on her honeymoon, I will have nothing (nuzing!) for an entire month!!
Benefit: I get to help a dear friend go and have fun, leaving the worries behind her.
Drawback: OMGoodness!!! My best friend is getting married!!! AHHHHHHHHHHH!
Chapter Summary

"Welcome ladies and gentlemen to Bendy and Boris in the Inky Mystery chapter 66!" Mic announced proudly. "Seems the boys have a good morning, but can it possibly last? Find out!"

Chapter Notes

Hello, Hello! My dear readers! Happy day! I'm almost free!
FINALLY FREE!!!!...or at least for the next seven weeks before classes start again. T.T
This coming week will be a week of changes. Mercowe and I are moving out of the apartment (I'll miss her so much!), and she's leaving me to graduate!
(Mercowe: You realize, you were getting married anyways...)
(Mercowe: Hehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehehe.)
She's not just leaving school, but the state too. T-T I'll have to make special trips to visit her. BUT! By the power of technology and the internet, we'll be able to stay in contact easily (and work on this, of course).

Now, all I need is for everything to go smoothly for my boo and I at our wedding, and I'll be set...ish.
Enough about me. Go enjoy the chapter! Have a good day!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy opened the door for the sisters to come in. Sally and Sasha were quick to make themselves comfortable in the front room. Boris ran to the kitchen to grab a pitcher of lemonade that Granny had made that morning.

“Sorry about last night,” Bendy apologized. “The Warners are always a handful.”

“Are they still around?” Sally asked, scanning the room.

“They aren’t morning people, so we have a few hours of peace,” Bendy promised.

Sasha chuckled. “I’m amazed that you’re so patient with them, Bendy. You usually can’t stand rambunctious people like them.”

Bendy rolled his eyes. “I keep owing them! Seriously, every time I think we may be even with them, they pull a fast one on me!”

“Oh, poor thing.” Sasha faked a pout before smirking.
Bendy gave her a deadpan glare. “Oh gee, I’m so touched. No, don’t get up on my account,” he said flatly.

Sally had a hand on her mouth, trying to hold in her laughter. Bendy again was struck by how similar the two were. They sat with the same straight pose that bled confidence and control. They held their hands like they were dainty attachments that drifted with their wrists. Anything they held up seemed to float. It was the delicate movement of a song bird hiding the fierce lion underneath.

Boris returned with drinks and the four chatted away idly. Sally wanted to know all about Sillyvision and what her sister had been doing. She seemed to drink up every little tale the boys told, like a man trapped in the desert. Finally, Bendy was able to switch the topic over to Sally.

Sally was her twin sister, her ‘little’ sister, according to Sasha.

“By thirty seconds!” Sally said indignantly, but with a knowing smirk. She worked at a talent agency and it's adjoining hotel as a cleaning maid. Originally, she had wanted to try out for singing herself (and if she sounded anything like Sash, Bendy knew she’d land a gig) but the cheese in charge was a scoundrel. The lech would try to pressure the women talents into...favors. Sash scowled along with Bendy.

“You’re still there, Sally? I thought quit last year! You told me you got a job at a grocer,” she huffed.

“What was I supposed to do? You were threatening to practically fly over here to give that man a piece or your mind! I couldn’t have that happen with his hearing coming up! His slimy little friends always comes prowling around whenever he has a chance to be social,” Sally tisked. Sasha’s scowl deepened, and she paled. Bendy narrowed his eyes. “Besides, I’m a big girl, sis. You know I can take care of myself. I wear only the worst, loose fitting clothes at work, no makeup, and hair in a mess.” She patted Sasha’s hands.

Sasha sighed. “Why don’t you just come with me, Sal? You can sing at my club. The town will love you, and you won’t have to watch your back everywhere you go.”

“Now, sis. You know why I can’t do that.” Sally shook her head with a loving smile on her face. “Why?” Bendy asked. Boris frowned at him. Bendy shrugged. He didn’t care if he was being nosey. He was curious! Sue him!

“Two reasons.” Sally held up two fingers with a smirk. “First, someone has to keep an eye on that, pardon my french, cussing creep in prison.” Sally snorted. Sasha hunched her shoulders. “And the other is to watch out for our mother.”

Boris blinked. “Mother?” He frowned in concern. ”Is...she not doing well?” Bendy raised a brow at the wolf. Boris hunched his shoulders, looking guilty. Ha! Hypocrite!

Sasha groaned.

“Oh shush, you!” Sally chuckled and swatted at Sasha’s shoulder. The other stuck her tongue out at Sally. Bendy watched with raised brows. Boris had a look of surprise in his dark eyes. Someone shushed...Sasha? And she...blew a raspberry...Was he dreaming?

“Oh,” Bendy muttered.

Sasha’s head snapped toward them, and her face darkened. “Oh, um, please ignore that.”

Sally snorted a laugh. “Sis and mama had a fallin’ out. They don’t talk much now.”
Sasha bristled. “Well, maybe if she would stop thinking that starfallen, sun blistered, cuss scumbag was such a cussing swell guy!”

“Sis!” Sally gasped. “Language.”

“Language my-”

“Besides! It’s your fault for not wanting to tell her anything.” Sally frowned.

“Oh yeah, that’s such a great idea! He’s in prison for murder! You would think she would get the hint!” Sasha threw her hands in up with an exasperated huff.

“She still thinks he was framed,” Sally said pointedly.

“Ha! It’s obvious he isn’t! Why can’t she--Ugh!” Sasha put her hand to her temple. “Crazy old brat.”

“Rude, sis.” Sally pointed a finger up in the air. Bendy and Boris watched the conversation like a tennis match. The demon didn’t really know where to cut in.

Sasha snorted. “You’ve called your boss so much worse.”

Sally chuckled. “Well, to be fair sis, your friends here were just cleared of murder charges themselves. It’s hard to tell who’s clear and who’s a creep around you.”

Sasha snorted. “Touche.”

Boris raised a hand. “Sorry, you--ah--lost me.”

“Same,” Bendy said. “Is this the creep that smiley was harassing you about?”

Sasha sighed. “Yes. I’m sorry I never told you boys. I just didn’t want anyone else to end up in danger because of me.”

Bendy frowned. Sasha pointed a finger at him. “Don’t give me that look, Bendy! You were a kid when the worst of it was going down. ‘Sides, I didn’t find out you were homeless until after the fact, either!” She paused and puckered her lips. “And neither of you said anything about this mess, either.”


“But what’s going on?” Boris suddenly looked up with big, sad eyes. “Were you really married to a mobster? Did he really threaten you? Have you been in danger all this time?”

Sasha sighed and then chuckled. Sally frowned and looked down at her glass of lemonade. “Yes, Boris. It’s all true. Technically, I’m still married because the stupid system is dragging its feet.”

Bendy clenched the hand he had resting on his knee.

“Look, I was young, foolish, and oh-so-easily charmed.” Sasha shook her head. “It was years ago, boys. I’m okay now. Back then was scary, sure, but I’m fine now.”

Sally snorted. Sasha frowned and raised a neat brow at her. Sally crossed her arms. “Schmuck should be taking a nap in a ditch in my opinion.”

Sasha patted her hand. “Yes, I know. I love you too.” She turned back to the boys. “The man I married, Chad Skirt, was very handsome, charming, and ambitious. The first three months were amazing. I was head over heels. Then, he came home angry. I learned he had a temper.”
There was a heavy beat of silence. Bendy didn’t like the little frown on her lips. “He didn’t--”

“Oh, he did,” Sally snapped.

“Sal.” Sasha sighed.

“Oh no! When I saw it for the first time because you ran out of cover up--Oh!--I saw red, I tell you!” Sally said. “I will never forget it!” She turned to the boys. “At first, it was hard to tell anything was up. It was just little things. Forced smiles, a twitch here, a flinch there.” Sally shook her head. “Then, one of his drinking friends ended up in the paper for mob business! I was scandalized!”

Sasha sighed. She pinched the bridge of her nose. “Sal.”

“And then Sasha starts making excuses. ‘Sorry, can’t make it,’ and ‘Oh no, I’m busy that day,’ and my favorite!—’Not today, sis, I have too much to do’. Ooooh!” Sally ranted. Bendy grit his teeth. “Little by little, she pulled back. But I knew my sister! She loved people. She loved being around people! I knew something was going on. I wasn’t gonna let her just disappear! Then, that man started making comments to me. Oh, I should have smacked him!”

“I’m glad you didn’t!” Sasha said. “You would have--It would have--Oh! Sally, you dear fool. I was handling it!”

“You were terrified!” Sally snapped.

“Well…” Sasha shifted. “At the time, I had started to figure out what he did to make his ‘overtime cash’ and…” Sasha paled, and she shook her head.

“I’m just glad you got out.” Sally put a hand on her shoulder.

“And I’m glad you’re okay,” Sasha said. The two hugged. Bendy raised a brow. He had a feeling this had been happening a lot with these two.

They pulled back and seemed to remember the boys. Sasha blushed deeply. “Oh dear. Sorry, boys.” Boris quickly shook his head. “Sasha, you’re really brave. I had no idea.” Sasha face darkened even more.

She laughed nervously, waving her hand. “Oh no, no, no. I’m not a--”

“Oh yes you are, Sash!” Bendy cut her off. “You came into town and planted yourself like you had always been there. You are a fair boss, a good person, and stubborn as all get out.”

“I was only your boss for a day, and you never even showed up for your shift,” she murmured. Sasha hid her burning face behind a hand. Sally burst into laughter.

“And you are the nicest boss I’ve had anyway.” Bendy grinned.

“This has to be good! Sash! I have to hear--”

There were a knock at the door. Everyone glanced up.

Sally raised a brow. Bendy shrugged and went to the door.

When he opened the door, Bendy saw Holly, her hands resting on her cross-body bag. She smiled brightly. “Bendy!”
“Holly!” Bendy choked. Not what he was expecting.

“Oh! Holly!” Boris called out from behind him. “Hi!”

She grinned and waved at Boris. “I know it’s a little late,” she looked back at Bendy, “but congratulations on getting cleared. May I come in?”

“Thanks,” he muttered. Bendy stepped aside and glanced behind her. Didn’t seem like anyone was around. Boy. He was getting more paranoid. With good reason. If he got as jumpy as that bird...Bendy shut the door. And locked it. Dang it.

Holly stowed a bracelet she’d been holding inside her bag. Then, she started to rummage through it, looking. “I have to...give you something.” A small, white thing suddenly jumped out of the bag and scurried up her arm.

Bendy blinked. “Uh.”

The white floof settled on her shoulder. It turned and studied him with a suspicious, “hmeeep...”

Was it...glaring at him? What even--What was that thing! Bendy narrowed his eyes. A fluffy rodent?

Holly smiled, not noticing. “Ah, found it.” She took out a small book and opened it. Pulling out the map, she held it out toward him.

Bendy’s eyes widened. “How did you--!” Why did Holly have the--Oh wait! Right, Holly had been with Alice when he’d told her the detectives had it. But then...“But then, where’s Alice?” He sounded a bit more alarmed then he meant to.

Holly opened her mouth and frowned. “Um.”

The small white rodent’s glare intensified. “Meeeeeep,” it said in a low tone.

Holly glanced down. “Oh, Snowball!” She picked up the offended dust bunny.

“She had to leave,” Holly explained quickly as she slid the animal down her pocket. But not before it let out one last cry of protest.

It was weird she wasn’t here with Holly. The woman had lied to be able to see him in prison, just to let him know everything was fine! Why wasn’t she here? He’d thought he would see the dark haired woman after their ordeal. Then again, it had been nuts since they got out.

“She left the night before the trial.” Holly opened her book to another page and removed a letter. “She left this for you.”

Bendy took the note and the map with wide eyes. Uh?

“Bro?” Boris called back.

“C-coming!” Bendy called back and cursed his stutter. Left the night before...Why? Bendy gestured for Holly to follow as he returned to the front. And why a letter?

“Sasha, Sally, this is our friend, Holly. She’s helping out with the Ink Illness,” Boris explained. “And Holly, this is our good friend from Sillyvision, Sasha, and her sister, Sally.”

“It’s a pleasure.” Sasha nodded with a smile.
Sally was grinning. “Ah! You’re the young lady that took on that sleaze! Oh! I was practically cheering at the television. It was a good thing I wasn’t in the courtroom. You were stunning in there, dear!”

Holly blinked. “Oh thanks. I just was tired of that man walking all over common decency.” She blushed. Turning to Sasha she said, “You were the brave one, though. I don’t know how I would have reacted if someone had brought up something so personal. I applaud your strength. “Holly’s smile widened.

Sasha sighed. “Sadly, I’m very used to pigs. I just didn’t expect that. I thought he was going to go after me for trying to hire Bendy or letting homeless orphans eat at my bar or even chip in a few bucks when Boris played for the band...I don’t know! Something with the boys! Not my...Well, either way. It all turned out well in the end.” She smiled.

Bendy snorted and crossed his arms. “It ain’t over til that schmuck apologizes to you, Sash.”

“Now Bendy--”

“Here! Here!” Sally cheered.

“Sally no--”

“I think he owes an apology to all our friends, honestly,” Boris muttered.

“Not you too, Boris.” Sasha frowned. “With those types, it’s no use! Let it die and move one. They only bring trouble.”

“Funny, I thought you said we brought trouble,” Bendy said.

Holly chuckled. “Yes, but you two don’t mean to. I’m with Sasha. Life is much happier if you just forget about the schmucks.”

Bendy raised a brow but shrugged. He plopped down next to Boris and opened the letter.

“What’s that, bro?” Boris asked.

“A letter from Alice.” Bendy also passed the map to the wolf. His ears perked, and he unfolded it eagerly to look it over. Bendy, on the other hand, opened the letter.

“Oh, quick to receive mail, but slow to send it I see,” Sasha said. Bendy ignored her for the contents the letter held.

Dear Bendy and Boris,

I’m sorry this letter had to be sent. I hope Holly was able to get it to you in a timely manner. I knew I could trust her with the map, and I’m certain she was able to return it to you as well. I wasn’t able to make it to your trial, but I’m sure that justice has prevailed and that you two are back on the streets. If not, I will find a way to show your innocence! I am sorry for my absence. It was very poor timing.

There is a matter at my place of previous employment that I had to attend to. Do not worry. I should have the problem sorted out and return to the inner city to aid in the Illness as best as I can. On that note, I hope everything is okay with everyone else. The people that are after us didn’t seem aware of my former job, so again, don’t worry about me. Even if someone comes, I’m sure my boss will
stamp them out the door. He doesn’t care for the destruction of his property. You remember.

Anyway, I hope to have good news delivered to me soon. I only need to address this problem, then I’ll be back.

Take care,

Alice

Bendy frowned. Her former work? With that demon, Black Hat? Bendy’s brows knit together. He wasn’t sure he was okay with that. The guy was...well, the word intimidating was a little weak to describe him. And what problem? What could have happened that made her good back there so suddenly?

“What’d she say?” Boris asked. Bendy passed him the note. No, the more he thought about it, the less he liked it. Something was up.

Boris had laid out the map on the table. Bendy gave it a quick glance over. Yep. Same fields, valley, and creeks. Sally and Sasha were staring at it. Their eyes wandered the page without any real focus.

“This here is our map to the cure,” Bendy said with a smirk.

Sasha looked up to him and deadpanned. “Oh really.”

“Yes,” Bendy grinned.

“Well, I worried the day would come you finally lost your mind Bendy. I had been sure it would be with the murde--I mean, accidental death of Pete but--”

Bendy snorted, and the two burst into laughter.

When it had died down a little, Holly spoke up. "If you don't mind sharing, where did Alice run off to?"

Bendy snorted. "Probably back to that pit the Black Hat Casino. She makes it sound like it won't take long for her to get back."

Her eyebrow quirked. "That's funny. Among other things, Alice gave me her job when she up and left."

The boys both perked up at that. “Gave you her job?” they said together.

“With Miss Boop?” Boris added.

“Yes.” Holly frowned. "But she also put me on the lease for her apartment." She shrugged helplessly. "She knew I didn’t have a job or anywhere to go, so maybe she was just trying to help out. She did say in her letter to me that she'd find a different job when she got back."

Bendy frowned. That sounded odd. Alice did seem like the type to enjoy helping people, but giving her apartment and job out like that? Bendy looked back at Boris. His brother’s eyes were big and swimming with confusion. His mouth turned into a little frown and brows knit together in concern. Her letter made it sound like she would be right back...Why would she give away her job then? Boris looked back down at the letter. Maybe they would be able to check up on her later. Right now they had business with Holly.
Bendy rested a hand on Boris' shoulder. "She's fine bro."

"I know your worried, but it seems to me that right now might be the best time for me to alter the map?" Holly interrupted.

"Yeah, we better get that taken care of," Bendy agreed. Sasha and Sally both seemed taken aback that Bendy sounded serious. Their eyes widening. The twins shared a glance.

Holly sat down. "Well, let’s get started then.” She glanced at Bendy and pulled out a piece of paper. She unfolded it so it showed a line of runes. “So, you’lI have to show me where the line ends, then I can write the rest down.”

She was just about to touch the map when, fast as lightning, the fuzzball reappeared, leaping straight from her pocket to slam into Holly’s hand and push it away. Dandelion seeds flew everywhere, and it landed on the table. “Meep,” it said with certainty. “Meep meep meep.”

“Huh?” Holly blinked, her hand hovering.

It grabbed her sleeve and dragged it away. “Meeeeeep,” it said with effort.

Bendy stared. What in the world was it doing?

“What in the world is that?” Sally gasped.

"Is that a...hedgehog?” Sasha asked.

Bendy blinked. It...did look like one...but...He picked up a dandelion seed. “What is that Holly, and why is it panicking?”

“Uh? Ah?” Holly sighed with resignation. She gently picked up the upset creature and put it on her lap, where it sat glaring at Bendy. “I made it. On accident. When I was doing some tests to figure out the runes. It’s half hedgehog...half dandelion? A dandehog?”

“Made it?” Boris suddenly popped up on Holly’s other side. “Wow.” He lifted a hand and offered it to the little creature slowly. “Does it bite?”

Holly tapped her arm. “I’m not sure. I’ve had it...” She silently counted on her hands, “Two and a half days?” The dandehog sniffed Boris' finger carefully. It nibbled curiously at his gloves and then jumped. Floating into the air, it landed on Boris' shirt, where it continued to sniff and inspect.

“A...flying plant pet?” Sally blinked in amazement. Boris’ shoulder shook with suppressed laughter. Ticklish, tiny paws.

“Wow, Holly. I didn’t know runes could do something like that,” Bendy said with a raised brow.

She put her elbow up on the armrest, her head on her hand. “Neither did I,” she muttered.

He snickered. “Nice job.” He patted her shoulder. Time to get back to the map. Boris moved to get back to his seat on Bendy’s other side. “So, where do you need to put your symbols?”

Holly pointed at her paper. “Here,” she indicated. “Here and here.” There were three runes that she wanted to add.

“And you want to add them at the end of the ones that are already there?” Bendy asked, turning from
her paper to the map. Holly nodded.

Holly reached down to touch the map again. The small flower animal immediately jumped from Boris’ shoulder, launching itself at her with a loud, “Meeeeeeeeeep!” However, there was a soft breeze from the window at that moment, and instead of landing on her, it was blown sideways into Bendy’s face.

“Hey!” Bendy barked with a frown. “Fluffball. You’re making a nuisance of yourself!” Bendy lifted a hand to get it out off his face. It’s... dandelion... fur... was really ticklish. Don’t sneeze Bendy, don’t sneeze!

“I’m so sorry!” Holly reached out to try and grab it too, but it evaded both of their hands and hid between Bendy’s two horns.

“Meeep,” it said warningly from its hiding spot.

Bendy looked up in annoyance. “You can stay up there if you stop interfering with our work.”

Holly sighed. “I think maybe she has some trauma from the tests? I don’t know.”

The little animal didn’t reply, but as it rested on his head, Bendy detected a faint shaking. Holly looked at it and slowly reached down to touch the map. Snowball didn’t move.

Bendy gingerly reached up and... brushed it gently. He hoped the little thing took it as comfort more than... He wasn’t used to animals liking him much. Most kept a wide berth... or growled at him. He wasn’t hurting it right? The small thing shivered a little more and then seemed to calm.

Holly stared at him with an intense curiosity in her eyes. “That’s a bit odd. I wonder why she likes it up there so much.”

“Aww.” Bendy looked across the room. Sally had her hands clasped and a little smile on her face. “How cute.”

Bendy nearly flinched at the smile on Sasha’s. “Yes, cute.” She smirked. Bendy narrowed his eyes. He. Wasn’t. Cute.

“So, if we have a moment, do you mind if I ask you a question?” Holly interjected.

“Uh-huh,” Bendy said distractedly, still concentrated on the small animal on his head.

“How often do you use your shadows?”

Both he and Boris froze at the unexpected question. Bendy slowly lowered his arm and wide eyes on her. “Not... much. Why?”

She pushed back some of her hair, still smiling. “I was just curious. When you did the demonstration in court, it looked like you struggled. I think you could do a lot of really detailed work with them though.”

Bendy blinked. Detailed work? “Uh?” Oh, good one Bendy. She’ll be real impressed with that.

“Think about it. You can make your shadows as small as you need. You can reach things that a regular person never could because you can stretch them. I know that you probably wouldn’t do this, but if someone had a problem on the inside, you could go in and fix things with as little invasion as possible. It would work with mechanical things too.” She paused, seeming to come to herself.
“Sorry, I got carried away. You probably don’t want someone talking about something that personal.”

Bendy gulped. Reach into...a person? A shiver slunk down his spine. As little invasion? Awww, no. That sounded very invasive. Bendy tried to imagine those...excited, withering... bloodthirsty tendrils of darkness reach for a person’s heart. His throat went dry.

But!

She was on to something with that reach...but he had no control! If he didn’t have complete focus, they went off and did whatever they wanted!...Usually, it meant breaking something. Too bad too, imagine how quick he could fix an engine if he could use his shadows.

He realized he had just been sitting there with a dazed look on his face.

Holly was studying him. “So, why don’t you use them?”

“Ah! Oh!...Uh, well, ya see.” Bendy chuckled nervously. “I never had...good control over them.”

He cleared his throat. “And besides, they usually scare people away. Good for self defense, scaring away a mook or two, but not much else. I didn’t want the town to, uh, dislike me more than they already did.” Boris put a hand on his shoulder. Ah. Apparently that still bothered his little brother.

She nodded slowly. “If you could, would you want to learn how get more control?”


She waved a hand. “I know you have important things to do, but I was thinking I could do research while your gone. Maybe with both our heads we--you could understand them more?”

It did sound...appealing. If Bendy could figure them out, then something like the warehouse incident wouldn’t happen again. He could also figure out what the cuss happened with that Cup guy and those...creepy...shadow reactions.

“Bendy, you can’t,” Boris spoke up. His ears were down. “Remember what Dr. Oddswell said? You’re not supposed to use them!”

Bendy frowned. He...may have forgotten that. “Tch, it can’t hurt to learn.”

Holly glanced at Boris. “Oddswell said he can’t use them...Why?”

Boris looked over to the woman. “It makes the attacks worse or something like that.”

Holly’s eyes widened. Bendy crossed his arms. “I don’t know if I really believe that. The doc said he was comparing me to some other Joe with a talent like mine. Doubt that guy was a demon, bro. I think it’s different.”

“Well.” Boris frowned. “I’m not willing to risk it.”

Holly looked disappointed. “I agree. If it worsens the illness for you...That stuff is bad enough as it is.”

“But does it?” Bendy argued. He looked at the wolf. “When has it been really bad?”

“That time on the train.” Boris frowned.
“That doll might have been doing that!” Bendy said. Boris shook his head.

Holly’s eyes swiveled back and forth between them as they each talked. She looked torn.

“And you used it in the courtroom too! I bet you’re in for a rough time soon, bro. You gotta be more careful!” Boris growled.

“I had to! We weren’t gonna get any parts from prison!” Bendy bristled. “And if it saves our lives, I’ll do it again! I might as well have an idea about what I’m doing.”

“Okay.” Holly made a placating gesture. “How about this. Boris, you watch Bendy, see if his activities make a difference. Bendy, how much actual effort would you say you put into using them yesterday?”

Bendy looked at her from the corner of his eyes. “When I did the pen thing, it took some...focus. I could probably keep it up for a few minutes, though.”

Holly tapped her mouth. “How tired did it make you?”

Bendy quirked his mouth. “Not...very. I was kinda distracted, though.”

She nodded thoughtfully. “I think if you do try practicing, maybe we should stick to small things like that then, things that don’t take much of your energy.”

Bendy nodded. Boris looked at the ground and crossed his arms.

She looked at Boris and smiled nervously. “But, well, as of yet my knowledge on demonology isn’t extensive enough anyways. I’ve only read two or three books, which hardly suffices.”

Bendy snorted. “Prolly a bunch of starfallen stories anyway.”

She nodded. “I have to agree with you there. Most of it feels like gossip or hearsay, but many times within each legend there is a sliver of truth. That’s what I try and look for.”

Bendy grimaced. “Hope it’s small slivers. I’ve never gotten much good outta those things.”

Boris huffed in supposed agreement. “Those things always make demons the bad guys, even when they don’t really do anything. They’re not you, bro.” He put a hand on Bendy’s shoulder.

“Course not.” Bendy agreed.

“’Cause you’d throw yourself into trouble, full throttle.” Boris smirked.


Boris grinned at Bendy before focusing on the map.

“Well, I think Sal and I will get out of your way.” Sasha looked amused. "Although, its been interesting catching up with you boys." She gestured for her sister to get up. “I’m staying in town for an extended period of time to visit my family.” She pulled out a card and handed it to Boris. “Don’t be strangers. Bendy glanced over to see a number and address in loopy handwriting.

“Of course not, Sash.” Bendy smiled.

“We’ll come by to visit,” Boris promised.
Sasha nodded, then narrowed her eyes. “You better.” Gee, that sounded threatening. She hugged the boys and with a wave from Sally, the two beautiful ladies were gone.

Holly looked at them go with a thoughtful expression. “You two have got good friends,” she commented.

“Yeah,” Boris grinned.

“They deserve better than what they get,” Bendy muttered and turned his gaze back to the old parchment. Boris snorted in agreement. Bendy suddenly startled. “Hey! Wait a second! Speaking of deserving better, you went homeless!” His head swiveled to point at Holly and the fluff ball flew up as the motion jerked her into the air. The plant-animal bounced against the ceiling and projected itself toward Boris. Landing on his shoulder, it buried itself in his bandana. It’s head popped out, and it glared at Bendy, making a disgruntled noise. “Sorry,” the demon apologized to the...Wait, why was he apologizing to a fluff ball? Either way, he turned back to Holly.

She was in the middle of laughing. When he looked at her, she stopped abruptly and covered her face. “Ah, um. You don’t have to worry about it. It was by choice.”

This time both Bendy and Boris frowned. “Choice or not...” Boris said.

“We know what it’s like out there,” Bendy said. “Why didn’t you say anything?”

She shrugged. “Honestly, I didn’t have the thought to. My mind was preoccupied with the runes, and...I was excited to help. Then, Alice offered to let me stay at her apartment, so it wasn’t a problem anymore.”

Bendy blinked a couple of times. “Preoccupied...with...Stars! Are we gonna have to worry about you? What kinda priorities are those! Excited! Didn’t think! Didn’t think to have a roof over your head and a lock on a door!” Bendy threw his hands up.

Holly looked flustered. “Well...”

Boris snorted.

“That’s not funny, Boris!” Bendy said and dropped his head in his hands.

“Dunno, bro. Kinda reminds me of the first time you tinkered with a car.” Boris snickered.

“That was completely different!”

“You stood out in the rain and didn’t even notice!” Boris laughed.

“Forget it! Let’s get back to the map!” Bendy snapped...but his lips were curled in a smirk...No! Stop that! It’s not funny!...Okay, it’s a little funny. He remembered that day when he peeked under the hood of a dead car in the junkyard and had just seen...a puzzle. A puzzle he could fix. He had no idea what he was doing, but step by step he had figured it out. With junkie tool after junkie tool, he’d figured out how to take the engine apart, and evidently, how to put it together. Sure, there had been a lot of mistakes and he’d gotten some training from those two old grumps to get one running...Wonder how those fellas were holding up now...

Bendy cleared his throat and pulled the map toward him. He tapped the bottom line of runes. “So, this right here is the bottom line of runes.” Bendy tapped it. “How do we add them?”

Holly relaxed a little. “Well, just show me where there’s an empty spot, and I’ll write them.” She
looked around, seeming to have a realization. “But...how about we go outside first.”

She seemed...nervous. Her shoulders were tense and she fidgeted with her fingers. Oh wait, she had said something about ‘trauma’ with these things, right? Was this...really dangerous? “Uh, yeah...Okay.” Bendy grabbed the map and stood. They followed Holly to the backyard. Bendy scanned the area with quick glances before focusing on Holly again.

She moved to a little table Granny had brought out. “Okay. Show me where the runes end.” She stepped aside.

Bendy and Boris shared a...concerned look. Was this safe? Bendy put down the map and pointed to the corner the symbols sat on. Holly pressed her finger in the spot he indicated. She drew a short line after the last rune and slowly, carefully started to write. She formed each new symbol very carefully. And after finishing each one, she stopped and inspected it. When she finished the third addition, she erased the line she’d drawn. “Now, the hard part,” she murmured.

She turned to them. “Since I’ve been practicing on a regular map, I’m not sure how much energy this will take.”

“Can either of us help?” Boris asked with wide eyes and perked ears. There was a soft meep of agreement from inside Boris’ bandana.

She shook her head slowly. “No. All I’m saying is that with all runes, you should have a degree of respect. Many things could happen. I could pass out. I tested this, but if there is something different about this older map, the runes could affect it differently. Just...be prepared.”

“Holly,” Bendy asked hesitantly. “Exactly how dangerous...is this?”

“Oops, I already activated it.”

“Holly!” Bendy frowned and jumped back.

The map started to glow, and Holly turned to concentrate on it. Small, blue tendrils of electricity zapped from it, lighting up the area. Holly kept a safe distance, still holding her pencil. She breathed hard, eyes locked on the glow. Slowly, the electricity started to die down and the map returned to normal.

Holly let out a long breath and leaned against the desk. “Whoa. Well. Done.” She smiled at them. “Sorry about that. Didn’t mean to surprise you.”

Bendy narrowed his eyes. “Warning next time, Hol. A warning. Please.”

Boris snickered. “But she did, bro.”

“More detailed than that!” Bendy shot back at the wolf.

“Did it work?” Boris asked eagerly. The boys approached the map and looked down. The new symbols glowed brightly. They seemed darker than the others.

“Woah,” Boris breathed. There before them, was the whole of Toon Town laid out in a depth of detail that neither brother had ever seen before. The picture seemed to almost...breathe with life. Streets and buildings were labeled and way too detailed for the size of the map. Yet...they still looked inked on. Inked...but with the detail of a photograph. Was it him or...did the water in the bay look like it was almost...moving? “This is perfect! Holly, you’re amazing!” Boris cheered and picked up the map, tail wagging a mile a minute.
Holly grinned, looking proud. 

Bendy let out a whistle. “Yeah. Not bad, Hol. Not bad.” He smiled and stuck his hand in his pockets. They could finally actually *use* the cussing thing.

“Bendy! Bendy! Oh heavens! *Bendy!*” Boris was suddenly hopping around, his eyes the size of dinner plates.


“LOOK!” Boris shoved the map in his face. “Right there, bro!” Bendy blinked and pushed his overexcited brother back a step, so he could see what the hubbub was about. Bendy’s brow shot up to his goggles. There...in the mountains...a dark, very noticeable, X. “It’s a new piece, bro! A new one, and it’s so close!”

“Holy stars above,” Bendy muttered.

“We gotta pack!” Boris said.

Chapter End Notes

For any of you who are curious, Snowball, the dandehog, was inspired by a Pinterest post that Tap found. Here's the picture.

[Found here.]
Mugs gave Cup another quick glance. The night air was crisp and cold. Mugs could see his breath waft out of his scarf. Fall was ending quickly. They’d needed to get some winter wear soon. The station had a few people milling about. Not many traveled on the night trains. The Cupbros were waiting out for that snobby-looking mayor guy to show up. Mugs hadn’t been very impressed when his bro showed him a picture of the fella. The mostly empty station had dim lights. The night breeze slipped by the open platform. Mugs looked out on the city streets. It was starting to get late. The night life was much slower at the edge of the city. Most seemed to be turning in for the evening. The wide city street sat quietly. The building and street lights made the city glimmer in the silence. Mugs couldn’t decide if it was peaceful...or creepy. The shops were closed, the apartment lights were going out one by one. The gloom clung to the walls and corners like a leering predator. The city blocked out any hope of seeing stars, leaving the night sky barren and dull.

Mugs turned away from the view. His hand twitched to itch his bandaged chest. The stitches were itching like crazy! But he had seen that look on Cups face when he caught Mugs messing with his shirt. Something like...hurt? He didn’t like that look on his old brother so...Mugs just wouldn’t fiddle in front of him.

His arm bugged him too, but just brushing it against anything brought a sharp twinge of pain. There would be no itching that.

Burns were...the worst.

Nope! Think positive. Glass half full and all that. At least those pain meds did their job without making Mugs sleepy! Sleepy on the job was dangerous after all. And he was with Cup again…

He slid another glance to Cups before quickly looking at the floor. His brother...was acting different.
Mugs...didn’t know how to take it.

He wasn’t upset! Not at all! This...change was...good? Different...Weird...Yeah, weird. It was...He suddenly had...his brother back?

No. That didn’t make sense.

It was like he had his brother from childhood back...at least...somewhat.

The concern, the attention, the open affection. It was all a little overwhelming...this change. The wall Cup always had up was suddenly...gone, at least, when it was just them. He wasn’t...moody?...angsty. Yeah, angsty was the right word for it. He had seen his bro smile a real smile today more times than in...well, years.

Mugs wondered if he was dreaming. Like, Elder Kettle would just come walking around a pillar at any moment and scold them for staying out so late. Again.

Cup hadn’t said much of what happened during those days he'd left Mugs at the hospital, just that they were the worst days he’d ever been through. And...comparing that to some... other days they’d had...that was pretty...really bad.

At first Mugs thought he’d been joking. Mugs had tried to kid too, but...he wasn’t. That...confused Mugs. On one hand, he now had no doubt at all. His brother loved him. Cool, distant Cup absolutely loved his little bro, and that was a wonderful feeling. On the other...What had happened while Mugs was away?

Mugs shot him another look. Cup was scanning the crowd, smoking one of his cigs. When Mugman had woken up, he had been so confused. He...panicked when he didn’t see Cuphead. He thought something horrible had happened. The drugs made it hard to move, but Mugs hadn’t wanted to stay. It took three nurses to hold him down. That mean bunny nurse had snapped that Cups had left him there.

Just...left.

Mugs hadn’t understood, not with all the pain meds and the stuff they used to knock him out going through his system. He thought it’d make sense when his head was clear...It hadn’t. Cups had just...left him. Mugs had waited for him to come back and explain. He had laid there for hours trying to figure it out.

Was it those Bbros? Did they do something? They didn’t seem like the sneaky, lying types to Mugs. But then, bro said he was too trusting. Was it the boss? Had Cup been called away? What happened to him? Or was it because…

Mugs was a burden.

Had he...finally abandoned...his idiot brother? Mugs had argued back and forth with himself on that. He denied and denied. Cup would never do that! No matter how...inconvenient...or useless...he could be. Still...as the minutes ticked by, the dread had slowly crept in.

Mugs knew that it was all his fault. If he had just...stayed back. If he had just...But then...Cup would have…and they had helped Mugs save Cup from the crazy woman.

A twinge of pain in his chest made Mugs wince. Woops. Took a deep breath. Couldn’t do that until...the ribs mended.
“You okay?” Cuphead asked.

Mugs looked up. His large eyes were soft with concern, his frown gentle.

“Ya need to sit, bro?” Cup asked.

Mugs grinned. “Nah, I’m good.” He waved his hand dismissively. Cup watched him a moment longer before nodding and looking back out over the platform.

He had been so surprised when the bunny had dragged his bro in. Cup had looked like a mess and so confused...but okay. At first he was relieved, but then the anger and betrayal rushed in. He had been angry.

Abandoned.

So, the shock...the way his brother had just...looked at him. Like he was a ghost. Like he was...terrified.

Mugs hadn’t seen that expression since...and then he had burst into tears.

Mugs’ head was still spinning with the memory. Cuphead had thought he had...

“So, you think he’ll show up?” Mugs asked.

“Dunno,” Cup muttered. “The schmuck looks like a coward ta me, so I wouldn’t be surprised.”

Mugs nodded and turned his gaze to the floor. It was made of simple tiles set in triangles, squares and a number of other patterns. “And he isn’t...a debtor?”

“...No,” Cup answered grimly. Mugs bit the inside of his cheek. That should make him feel a bit better...It didn't. This was still...He hated this.

“Think we could...get away with bringing him in to the Sykes?” Mugs asked slowly. “He is...one of theirs...after all.”

He could feel his brother’s eyes on him. “They’ll be a lot crueler than us, bro,” Cup said softly.

Mugs fist ed his hands. Cripes. He...really hated these jobs. Mugs felt a hand on his shoulder. “Sorry, bro,” Cuphead said. Mugs loosened his grip and relaxed his shoulders. Cup was always good at being quick. He...was considerate that way.

“Not your fault,” Mugs muttered. The hand gave his shoulder a gentle squeeze before releasing it. Mugs really hoped the fella wouldn’t show. The second to last train was leaving. The whistle sounded, piercing in the cool night. The guy just had to...stay away. They had one more train. Once it left and the fella was a no show, they could go back to the hotel and relax. Mugs could take a bath, change the bandages, sleep in a nice bed, and look forward to breakfast in the morning.

Non-hospital breakfast. Heaven.

The fella just...had to not show up. They just had to wait on that last train. Mugs’ eyes wandered to the clock. Was that minute hand moving at all?

“Hey bro…” Mugs found himself speaking. Cup hummed. “What...happened?”

Mugs looked up at him. Cup’s eyes snapped to Mugs’. Mugs bit his cheek again. Cup had a...tough poker face when he wanted to. Mugs couldn’t tell if his question had upset the older cupman or not.
Cup looked down, his frown deepened. He blew out a puff of smoke.

“Well, I went after the Bs,” Cup muttered. Mugs nodded. He had seemed...annoyed that the weasel had attacked them. Though, Mugs wasn’t so much bothered by it. The weasel ended up on the news, wanted with a reward and everything. There were plenty of pictures and such. If that had been Cups...Well, Cups wouldn’t have missed...and then in the middle of a crowd...It had seemed like an...oddly reckless thing for him to do. When he was younger, sure Cups had almost always been reckless...but that had changed through the years. He had learned to be cautious. Nearly paranoid. Stars, they both had become careful.

Still, Mugs was secretly glad it hadn’t happened. “And that weasel got in the way,” Mug said for him. Cup quirked his mouth. The muscles around his eyes tightened.

“Yeah…” Cup stared at the floor. “But I caught up to them later.”

Uh?

Mugs leaned forward and tried to catch his eye. Cup pointedly refused. “I...Mugs, I had them cornered.” Mugs eyes widened. He hadn’t expected this. Why...why wasn’t bro looking at him? Why was he acting like this? The silence was heavy. Mugs’ throat felt tight. The younger’s mind raced. Cup knew that Mugs had...mixed feelings about the Bbros, that this job...bothered him. Had he...had he! Was that why he wasn’t looking at Mugs? He would think the news--No, no! Calm down. Dice hadn’t--Cup hadn’t reported he’d...They were still after them. They were still alive! Mugs gulped. Then, why was bro acting like this?

“What happened?” Mugs choked out.

Cup twitched. He seemed to snap out of his thoughts. He glanced at Mugs before turning back to the floor. “Well...I had them. It...I could have...I didn’t, though. I...didn’t see a point.” Cup looked over at him, his eyes tight, his teeth clenched. “I didn’t see a point without...you there, bro. I...I couldn’t do it. I gave up. I just...gave up.”

Mugs brows flew up so high he thought he may have lost them. Gave up? Gave up! He was Cuphead! He didn’t just give up! He could be beaten black and blue and still get up with a snappy one liner! He had faced beings the mind couldn’t wrap themselves around and laughed! He had...faced the Devil...and was still kicking it up here instead of down there. Sure, they didn’t win every fight. But...Cup never... never ...gave up. It was how they got to this point today. Cup’s legendary determination...his maddening stubbornness...his confidence.

He had just...given up?

“You can close your mouth.” Cup frowned. Mugs’ mouth snapped shut with a sharp--clink!

“B-bro, you--”

“Yeah, I just...I didn’t have a reason to keep going, alright? I was...It didn’t matter! I mean, what was the point after...I would have just been alone...so…” Cup’s face was burning with a blush. He pulled at his hair and let out another puff of smoke. Mugs was still struggling to accept his words.

“So...what happened?” Mugs asked slowly.

Cup flinched and looked away. “That pipsqueak…” Mugs blinked. “He...I thought he would...but then, he just…” Cup shook his head and chuckled. Mugs raised a brow.

“Uh...bro?” Mugs asked. Cup looked back over at him.
“I kinda owe the shorty. If it hadn’t been for him, then...I wouldn’t have found out about you,” Cup said. Mugs blinked. Bendy…? What had Bendy done? Something good, of course. At first he seemed a lot like bro...but there was something...different. Mugs couldn’t quite put his finger on it. He did seem to have a lot in common with bro, though.

If Cup owed him...and he had helped them reunite, then Mugs owed him too. Mugs wondered if maybe they could find a way to...spare Bendy and Boris. Could they? Did he dare ask? If Cup owed him, then maybe bro could come up with something!

“Hey Cup, I was wondering if--”

Cuphead stiffened. Mugs thought he saw Cup grimace before his features smoothed out into a determined stare. He straightened up and dropped his cigarette. “Seven o’clock,” Cup muttered, his eyes glued to something behind Mugs. Mugman stiffened in response. Cup rubbed out his cig with the heel of his boot. Mugs glanced behind him. His heart dropped to his feet.

Oh...no.

There was the mayor, dressed in a smart looking suit that had no reason to be on the streets in this area. He carried two cases of luggage and a briefcase with him. He was looking around nervously as he pocketed the tickets. He glanced behind at to the city streets. A woman with another case walked quickly with him. She was in an equally smart blouse and skirt. Her face was tight with frustration. Her hair and skirt swished with her quick steps. In her hand the woman clasped the tiny mit of a little girl. The girl's floral dress seemed a touch too thin for the night. She had a thick coat pulled over it and left open. The child was looking around with heavy eyes. She clutched a stuffed alligator in the crook of her other arm.

“Oh...no.

Cussing stars,” Cup muttered. Mugs swallowed. Oh. He did not want to do this.

Why’d he have to bring a kid? Mugs turned wide eyes on Cup. Cup raised a brow, but otherwise remained impassive. “C’mon.” He stuck his hands in his pockets and started walking toward the family.

With so few people on the platform now, it wasn’t hard for the man to spot them. The moment his eyes locked onto Cup and Mugs, he froze. Mugs watched the man pale. The woman stopped next to him. She looked confused, seeing the mayor’s gaze, she turned to them. She asked something Mugs didn’t catch and lifted a hand to touch his shoulder.

Over the years, Mugs had seen a lot of reactions from the targets they were sent after. At first, it was disbelief and mockery. They had been children after all. Then, as their infamy grew, the reactions had changed a bit. People became more desperate, creative, and...ruthless. Still, most things came down to two root reactions.

Fight or flight.

Mugs had seen a number of variations of the two, but at the end of the day, it was always one or the other. He had also learned that running didn’t make ‘em a coward or fighting back make ‘em brave. So, with that in mind, Mugs warily watched the man as they continued in their steady, unhurried pace. What would he do?

The woman was growing in alarm. She gave them a frightened glance. The kid was picking up that something was up too. She rubbed her eyes and looked at her parents with large eyes. The man blinked. The woman said something. It was shrill, but again, Mugs missed it. The mayor tensed.
This was it. The deer-in-the-headlights moment was over. Would he grab his wife, pick up his
daughter and run? Would he stand in front of them and prepare to defend them? He might have a
weapon, after all. Would he...surrender and ask them to spare his family? That had happened twice
to Mugman...Those were some of his least favorite moments in life.

With a gasp, the man dropped his luggage. One them burst open and clothes scattered everywhere.
The woman startled at the sudden move. The fella then clutched his briefcase for dear life, turned on
his heel and booked it for the exit. Cup huffed.

They had a runner. Instead of breaking out in a sprint, though, Cup finishing walking to the woman
and child. Mugs raised a brow. The woman was looking from the exit and the disappearing
silhouette of her fleeing husband, to the mess of personal items at her feet, to the two of them. She
paled. Her hand shaking, she pulled the girl closer to her. The kid was wide awake now.

“Mommy? Why is Daddy running? Why did he say ‘buy time’, Mommy? What does that mean?”
she asked as she stared out in the night. She turned to them. “Who are they, Mommy? Are they
friends of Daddy’s?”

Mugs gulped. Cripes.

Cup nodded to the woman. “Evenin’. You have any idea why you’re out here, tonight?”

The woman seemed startled that bro was talking to her. She lifted her...rather sharp chin in the air.
“I’m going on a family retreat with my husband and daughter.” Mugs blinked.

Cup nodded. “Uh-huh, any reason he just ran like he saw death?” Cup indicated the shadow of
Mayor Medusa. He had reached a corner and dove behind it.

The woman grit her teeth, her hands still shaking. “N-Not really. But if you are planning to do
anything my family--”

“He did just leave you behind to face two possible thugs, alone,” Cup cut her off. The woman paled.

“He-He just...He just,” she stammered. Her breathing was growing fast and shallow.

“Mommy, where did Daddy go? Did he forget something?” the kid asked. Her mother’s eyes
widened, and she looked down to her kid.

“Pl-please, sir, don’t hurt my daughter! I-I-I don’t know what my husband did or what he owes you,
but please not her!” Her clenched fist raised to her chest. She stepped in front of her kid.

Cup tilted his head and let out a huff of air. “You have somewhere you can go? Your mother’s
perhaps?” The woman’s back straightened. She stopped begging, her brows knit together in
confusion. “Look, Mrs. Medusa, I’ll be straight with you. That guy is involved in some pretty damn
dirty stuff. I don’t know if you are too or not. I do know that he just bolted and left ya. In his mind,
he probably left you to die and buy him time.” She blanched and staggered a step back. “Now, my
brother and I ain’t gonna touch you, but I highly recommend you head on outta here and find
yourself some family or friends that wouldn’t just leave ya high and dry.”

“Y-You,” she stammered.

“Go and take care of your daughter, Mrs. Medusa,” Cuphead said and began walking around her.
“Have a good evening.”

Mugs followed. The kid was staring at them with wide eyes. She must of picked up on her mother’s
fear, because the girl was clinging to her mother’s skirts, shaking. Mugs grit his teeth and turned away.

As soon as Cup and Mugs walked to the entrance of the train station, they started running. “Was that smart, Cup? The curtain doesn’t work very well when we talk to people,” Mugs said.

“He brought them in without telling them anything, and then ditched them to save his own skin,” Cup said. “I thought she should at least know he was scum.”

Mugs frowned. “Yeah…but…”

“And yeah, they could report us to the cops but,” Cup rolled his eyes, “Like those idiots could ever catch us.”

Mugs snorted. That was true. He just didn’t want word to get back to the boss if he was in a bad mood. If Dice’s blackeye was any indication, the boss was in a very bad mood right now.

“Which way?” Cup asked.

“That left,” Mugs answered. His side was already screaming from the running and breathing. Ugh. Broken ribs...not fun. The two ran into the alley. Several cans had been knocked over and a few crates were pulled off a stack. The poor fella probably hoped to slow them down with this mess, but it was just a trail that led straight to him.

Cup and Mugs went through the mess with practiced ease, jumping, ducking and so on. Mugs found that he couldn’t move nearly as well as he usually could. He winced. He wanted to suck in a deep breath, but he couldn’t. He started using his flash move instead. Disappearing and reappearing in a puff of smoke on the other sides of obstacles was easier. It was also a...little dangerous since he couldn’t see the other side completely, thus he didn’t know if he was going to trip on something, but it beat hobbling along like an old coot.

He caught Cup giving him a weird look, a raised brow and a quirk of his mouth. Mugs decided to ignore it. They reached the end of one alley and found another. This guy wasn’t graceful at all. After chasing the Bbros a number of times now, Mugs could appreciate their skills. The two were very apt at street smarts. Compared to them, this guy was cake.

It only took the Cupbros five minutes to catch up to the sweating and still panicking mayor. He was trying to confuse them. He would turn one way, then go another. They stayed far enough back that he didn’t see them. The dark streets were mostly empty. Once in a while they would see a person. Or a single car. Fortunately, they were far enough out of the city that they didn’t have to worry about him waving down a cab.

Then, he went down another alley, wider than the others. It would lead him into an industrial area. Cup raised his hand and signaled. Time to close in. Mugs flashed ahead and circled around him. Cup kicked over a can. The mayor’s eyes widened as he pushed himself to go faster. Mugs grabbed and tossed a bottle ahead. The shattering of glass made the mayor skitter to a stop. He looked around wildly. Cup and Mugs hid themselves against the walls. The mayor turned a corner and darted down it. Mugs looked at Cuphead. Cup nodded and put his hands in his pockets. The turn led to a truck drop off zone.

A dead end.

Cup walked patiently down the cement path. The brick walls lined either side. Mugs walked next to him. His breathing was a bit shallow and harsh, but he couldn’t do much about that.
“If ya need your pain meds, you can take them,” Cup’s muttered.

Mugs grinned. “I...I’m fine...just ne...need ta...catch...my breath.”

Cup narrowed his eyes. He kept his slim gaze on Mugs until the target could be heard panting and cursing. He was pulling and banging on the metal door. The ramps were empty, the factory long closed for the night. The windows were too high to reach for someone that didn’t know how to climb a wall. A single street lamp illuminated the area, casting long, dark shadows across the ramps. The fella was cornered.

He looked over his shoulder, his wide eyes flashing this way and that. He squeaked when he spotted them. His banging on the door became hysterical. Cup rolled his eyes. “Give in, Medusa! It’s over. Now, this can either be quick and painless or not. It’s up to you.”

Mugs watched the man whirl around. He was completely pressed back against the door. He held up the briefcase like a shield and ducked behind it. His fancy suit was now filthy from his run through alley muck. His tie hung crooked. “W-w-wait! Y-y-y-your the Cup Brothers, r-r-r-right? Listen, fe-felllas!...It ain’t wh-what it seems! There...There’s no reason...for you to come after me!” He was shaking so bad it was hard to understand him.

“Oh? Then, you weren’t making a run for it?” Cup asked calmly. His hands were still in his pockets. Mugs went to cross his arms, but flinched.

Ah. Burn. Right. Nice to feel ya again burn. Sorry, I forgot about you. Please stop sending the reminder.

“Nn-n-n-n--nnno!” Medusa stammered.

“Then, what’s in the briefcase?” Cup asked. The mayor froze.

“Wouldn’t be cash so you can start over somewhere, would it?” Cup asked. The shaking started again. The guy ducked behind the case. Cup sighed. “You lying to me now, Medusa? That’s not very nice.”

There was a sob. “Pl-please. Pl-please. I-I-I have a w-w-wife and a li-li-little girl! I...can’t le-leave them! Yo-you wouldn’t leave a li-li-little girl fa-fatherless!”

Mugs grit his teeth. He really hated this job.

“Don’t give me that load of cussing stardust, man,” Cup hissed. “You left them back there. For all you know, they’re dead.”

The man sunk to his rear. The case lowered as he stared at them. His jaw hung open. He was pale and pouring buckets of sweat. The dim light cast the other half of his face in shadow. “Y...you wouldn’t’! You wouldn’t’ ki...ki...” He choked on a sob.

“What? Kill a kid?” Cup asked. He shrugged. “What makes you so sure I wouldn’t? You know our rep well enough to run.” Cup narrowed his eyes. “Run like a coward and ditch ’em to whatever was coming.”

Mugs hated that they had to see people like this.

The man shook his head back and forth. His wide eyes fell to the cement in front of him. He stared in a daze. “N-no way,” he muttered. “Yo-you...you...” Cup took a step forward. Mugs almost followed, but the elder put out a hand. He signaled for Mugs to stay back. The man looked at them
again. “I-I’ll pay you! Le-let me le-leave! You can have the case and everything in it! There’s st- stuff at my house--It’s yours!” he shouted.

Cup whistled. “C’mon Medusa. You know who I work for. That ain’t gonna work on me.”

Mugs hated that they had to do this.

“Please, no! There has to be something you want!” Medusa threw his hands up in a desperate plea.

They had no choice.

“Yeah, there is,” Cup said. The man stopped. His brows rose in surprise.

“Re-really?” he whispered.

No choice.

“Of course. I want you,” Cup lifted his finger, “to hold still.”

No choice at all.

Bendy looked around the the little lobby of the hotel. It was on the edge of town and the perfect spot for them to stop before they left civilization again. They would start in the woods and work their way up into the mountains. They figured it was a day’s walk to the X, and then who knew after that. If it was a temple like the one in the New Orleans swamps, then it could take them days to find their way through it all.

As long as they came back with a part, that’s all that Bendy cared about...Well...that and Boris...and keeping the stupid map safe...and getting out alive...and--

Oh whatever.

Point being, they were on the move again. Thank the stars above.

Boris rang the bell and waited. He rang it again. Paws suddenly appeared on top the edge of the desk. Boris’ ears perked. He leaned forward a bit to look over the counter. “Oh! There you are! We’d like the book a room with double beds please.”

“Sure thing, lil’ man,” the absolutely minuscule cat woman beamed from the other side of the desk. Bendy’s brow knit together. The line of his mouth tugged down. Poor thing wasn’t even eye level with the counter. Bendy could at least rest his chin on the counter top. Second person he had ever seen that was so small.

Bendy heard her rifle through a few things. A clipboard snapped onto the counter. Two keys were tossed over as well. Boris signed the papers and pushed to clipboard to the veeeery edge of counter. Bendy watched tiny paws pat around and snatch it before pulling it over the edge.

Boris grabbed the keys and headed to the hall.

Bendy stayed where he was. The little cat stepped around the counter with a tiny smile. Bendy felt his heart twist.

“Thanks, miss. You have a good evening!” Boris said over his shoulder. “C’mon, Bendy.”

Nope, Bendy had to say something. He knew what it was like, dangit! He hooked his hands underneath her arms. He hoisted the cat up in the air. She let out a squeak of surprise. Her mouth dropped open, and her eyes widened.
“It’s okay! I know what it’s like!” Bendy said. “You can’t reach anything, when someone says ‘oh look!’ you can’t see whatever it is they’re pointing at, and it’s so easy to get lost or swept away in big crowds! But that’s all fine because there are some perks to it! You rarely trip on anything because you are so close to the ground!”

“Bendy?” Boris asked puzzled.

Bendy ignored him. He focused on the cat. She blinked, her mouth still hanging open. “And never forget! Always keep looking up! Think of all the tiny places you can fit it! You’ll always be in the front line in concerts, and you’ll always get a good laugh when you see the shocked reactions of those who thought you were just a kid!” Bendy said brightly.

She tilted her head, “Uh?”

Boris came up beside him and put a hand on his shoulder. His half lidded gaze and drooping ears joined the frown on his face. “Bro, you’re scaring her.” Boris sighed. “Put the poor woman down.”

Bendy did. “Don’t worry! You can have fun in life, even if you are vertically challenged!”

“Wha?”

Boris steered the demon away and toward the hall. “Don’t mind him, ma’am. He’s just had a long day is all.”

“Oh...okay?” the cat woman put a tiny paw up to her mouth.

They started walking down the long hallway of door. “What was that?” Boris asked.

“What? Didn’t you see what she has to deal with? I bet she loses stuff on that counter because she can’t see the top of it.” Bendy threw his hands up.

“Yeah, but if anyone had said something like that to you, you would have ripped their head off,” Boris said pointedly, the frown deepening.

“Not someone that’s on the same level as me. They would get me, and I would them,” Bendy claimed. “It’s our own community.”

Boris rolled his eyes. “Oh brother.”

“That’s me.” Bendy grinned. Boris snorted. They reached their room and dropped their bags.

Twing.

“Oh, one second I gotta grab something. Be right back.” Bendy threw a hand over his shoulder.

“Sure thing.” Boris dug through their bag for the clothes that needed washing. They hadn’t gotten it done earlier due to their rush to get out.

Bendy turned on his heels and quickly walked down the hall. His chest tightened.

Twing.

He did his best to take deep, slow breaths. He clutched his sachet close. He passed the cat woman who had pulled up a tall chair to the desk so her head was visible over the counter. Bendy coughed and grimaced. Cuss. “I-I’ll be back soon,” he said quietly and rushed to the door.
The cat tilted her head. “O...kay?”

The cold night air swept past Bendy’s face as he broke out into a run. His chest was burning and constricting with each breath.

*Don’t have long. I have to get away.*

He was gasping as he turned one corner and then another. The burning intensified. Bendy’s breathing hitched as he groaned in pain. He stumbled and slowed. Cussing stars. It was getting hot. Way too hot. Bendy choked and cough. A small splatter of ink hit the sidewalk. Cuss. He had to...had to…

The demon stumbled into an alley entrance. Sweat ran down his face. He brushed his hand across his brow. His glove stained black. Damnit. He gasped for air around the lump in his throat. He tried to swallow, only to gag and cough again. His legs were shaking. The burning became intolerable. He pulled at his shirt, trying to breath, trying to cool down. Bendy fell to his knees as tears blurred his vision. Cuss! It hurt!

At least Boris didn’t have to see it this time…

He...he didn’t need to suffer with Bendy every time. To feel that helpless worry and despair as Bendy burned up from the inside out. Like...Like back at the courtroom with Wakko. Bendy gasped and coughed up a mouthful of acidic tasting thick liquid. “Ugh,” he groaned. It wasn’t fair to do that to Boris. To make him...just watch. No, Bendy would just have to suck it up and fight on his own. He could do it. He...had done it...back at the prison...He could--He coughed again and gagged as more ink came up. He couldn’t hold himself up anymore. Bendy collapsed on his back.

The fire increased. It...it hurt. His gut, his lungs—hell, even his racing heart. Every beat stung. He withered on the cold ground, still far too hot. No, he could do this. Boris...Boris didn’t have to deal with this every couple of days. The wolf was still a kid! Cussing, damnit! He shouldn’t have to face this load of stardust! Bendy groaned and choked on a sob. Tears mixed with the ink that ran down his face.

Damnit. It hurt! His stomach and lungs were in a vice. They felt like they were going to burst. The fire was racing in his veins. Stars, it hurt. Bendy wrapped his arms around his torso and squeezed his eyes shut. He shuddered. Just...hold together. He just h-had to--his pills! He could do something about the pain!

He reached a shaky hand to the side bag. Half blind with tears and pain, he dug around for the little bottle. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, his hand closed around it. He pulled it out and--no...No! Nononononono! It was empty! He hadn’t gotten a refill from Granny’s! He’d meant to after the trial, but then the weasel and that damn Cup!

Bendy groaned and dropped it. His arms clutched to his sides. “B-Bo-Boris,” he whimpered. He was so pathetic. He turned his head to cough up more ink. Stars. This inferno didn’t seem to be ending. Why wasn’t it stopping? He didn’t...think he could last much longer. His stomach clenched, and he felt his throat close up for a second.

“D-Damnit,” he croaked. Not...strong enough. He wasn’t...He couldn’t.

He thought he was strong enough. He was trembling...or was the world shaking? He thought he could do it alone...but “Boris, I’m sorry,” he gasped. Bendy needed him. He couldn’t! He wasn’t going to get through this! He coughed again. It was too much! The pain suddenly jumped. The fire racing through him slicing like a molten hot knife.
He was dying! “BORIS!” he shrieked. He...couldn’t feel the ground underneath him. It was all just pain. Pain! PAIN!

Bendy couldn’t move. It was too much. He thought he heard footsteps, but he couldn’t bring himself to open his eyes. “Ah, crud,” he heard someone mutter. The person shifted. Arms gingerly came around him and picked him up.

Bendy groaned and grit his teeth. The pain was receding. It was finally...ending. Bendy was completely exhausted. “Uuugh, uh...B-Boris?” Bendy’s voice sounded terrible. Like someone had scrubbed his throat with steel wool. The arms shifted him a bit. Bendy forced his watery eyes to open just a crack. Just to see what expressio-- That wasn’t Boris.

Bendy’s eyes flew open in horror, and his fangs grit together. None other than that nutcase, Cuphead, was looking down on Bendy with a neutral gaze. Cussing cripes. Him? Now! Bendy’s sore body tensed, but Bendy didn’t have energy to struggle. The schmuck’s grip tightened around Bendy marginally.

“Where’s your brother?” Cup asked in his gruff voice. Bendy scowled. He lifted his shaking hand and weakly grabbed the hand that was wrapped around his back and side. He couldn’t do much beyond that. Starfallen cuss! Cuss! Cuss! Cussing cuss! He was trapped like a toddler in an adult’s grasp! CUSS!

This schmuck had him. And now he was out for Boris! Cuss! He shouldn’t have helped him! Bendy helped him twice, and now he was going to die because of it! He was so stupid! He couldn’t let this guy find Boris! No way! Bendy would die first!

The demon narrowed his eyes into a sharp glare. “Wh-what?” Bendy was able to croak. “Lik-like I'm gonna--”

“Oh brother.” Cuphead rolled his eyes. “Look, I have no intentions of killing him or you right now, alright? You fellas need each other.”

“Oh, Wha--”

“It’s how I earned your respect, ain’t it?” Cup smirked. Bendy startled and twitched...which sent a twinge of pain through his chest and caused him to wince. Cussing, Ink Attack.

“My respect?” Bendy groaned. If the pain would just disappear completely, Bendy could give the ceramic crook a little fight.

“Back at the hospital. Just before you left.” Cuphead raised a brow.

You really did love your brother. Guess you aren’t just an idiot after all...Well...you’ve earned my respect, whatever that amounts to. Just...be strong...I’m sure Mugs would of wanted the best for you.

Bendy blanched. “Oh, stars! You heard that?” He was supposed to be out cold! He wasn’t supposed to--to--! Stars and moon!

Cuphead smirked. “Mmhmm.” Half lidded eyes shined with amusement as he raised his brows. He looked so...starfallen smug! Cussing ceramic crook. Was there a rock Bendy could crawl under?

“Heh. Now, tell me where he is so we can be even.”

Bendy shifted and looked away. He had to be kidding. This...was the worst. Him getting carried in like some kinda starfallen damsel in distress position. And by this schmuck of all people! He crossed his arms, his face felt warm. “This is so cussing embarrassing.”
Cup huffed in amusement. Bendy half expected the guy to harass him to no end. He seemed like the type to do that, just milk this moment for all that it was worth. Instead, he simply waited patiently with that annoyingly amused...if not slightly gentle, smile.

Hard to believe that this was the same guy that…

“So hey, wait a second.” Bendy felt his mouth curl up into a hopeful smile. “Does that mean you’re good now? No more trying to hunt us down or trying to get rid of us anymore?” It would be so very nice not to run for his life every couple of weeks. Now, with the cops leavin’ him alone, if this guy pulled the white flag...Well, Bendy would be in a right good mood then.

Cup’s eyes widened in surprise. His smile slipped away. He looked like Bendy had startled him. The fella looked away quickly, his brow knit together. “I wish I could...but…” Cup muttered.

Bendy felt his own smile fall. That’s right. Mugs had said that someone had been forcing them to do this or something. That only brought up a string of questions for the demon. Still...the guilt this fella was carrying was like a cap on his head. Maybe Bendy could--

“BENDY!” A shout echoed down to them.

“Boris!” Bendy startled and looked to the entrance of the alley. Cup shifted him into one arm. Bendy grabbed his shoulder to help him stay upright and balanced. He would say to put him down...but...the pain was still there...bearable...but he doubted he could walk right now.

Again. Stupid, cussing Ink Attacks. Cup went to the corner of the alley and leaned around the edge. Bendy grabbed the edge to lean around too. A relieved smile split across Bendy’s face. It didn’t last long.

Cup gasped. Bendy’s heart jumped into his throat. Boris stood with his back pressed into wall. He was trembling as the blade was pressed against his bare throat. He looked like he had been ready for bed. He must have rushed out to come looking for Bendy. Cuss.

The thug looked to be kid about Boris’ age. He couldn’t be much older! A raccoon with sharp smirk and a sharper knife. The hat he wore with the bandana did a half job hiding his face. “Stop with the yelling and give me all ya got, boy!”

Boris’ eyes widened further. “I-I don’t have anything on me now, s-sir,” Boris gulped. That was never a good thing to tell a mugger...but he couldn’t exactly lie! Boris knew that. “Pl-please let me go. My brother needs me.”

Bendy grit his teeth. What was he supposed to do? He couldn’t jump in like this. He had nothing to chuck at the schmuck. And if he got the fella’s attention, then he would probably just turn Boris into a hostage!

*Cussing INK ATTACKS!*

Suddenly, a blue light nearly blinded Bendy. He looked over to see Cup raise a pointed finger. Before the demon could even think to worry, Cup spoke up. “Hands off the kid, now,” he growled.

Bendy watched with wide eyes as the two noticed him and Cup. He opened his mouth to snap at the raccoon when he suddenly choked. Instead of words, a mouth full of ink rushed up his throat. He cough and gagged into his hands. Starfallen--Wasn’t this thing over yet! The glow dimmed as Cup looked over to him.

“Bendy!” Boris gasped. Bendy looked back up in time to see Boris duck around the distracted thug.
“I’m coming, Bendy!” The wolf bolted for them.

“Hey! Come back here!” the mugger lunged for Boris. Bendy tensed.

The thug was suddenly jerked to a stop. Someone...had grabbed him. Bendy narrowed his eyes before they widened. It was Mugman! He had the thug’s hand in a crushing grip. He looked...angry. Mugs glared at the raccoon. “Let go ya--OW! OW! LET GO!” Mugs crushed the thug’s hand. The sound of small cracks and crunches reached Bendy’s ears. He cringed.

Mugs let him go. The schmuck cradled his busted hand to his chest. “Ow! You’ll pay for this!”

“They never come up with anything original anymore,” Cup muttered. Bendy gave him a confused glance. The cupman was rolling his eyes.

“Bend--”

“Boris!” Bendy practically threw himself out of Cup’s arms and into his brother’s. “Thank heavens you’re okay!”

“Me! What about you?” Boris returned the hug just as fiercely. “What is with your priorities?”

“O-okay then.” Cup blinked.

Boris startled and looked over Bendy’s shoulder to Cup. “Did...you really just help us?” Boris asked in a awed tone. Bendy cringed as he felt his stomach lurch...Luckily nothing came up. Stars. This wasn’t ending quickly. What was with this attack? Was it because he didn’t have his pills? They were supposed to just be pain meds...He was so tired.

Boris shifted Bendy. The demon was so exhausted, he didn’t even feel annoyed or embarrassed at being held like a child by his little bro. Bendy heard someone approach. Boris gasped, “Wait! Is...that--”

“Hi!” Mugs popped up beside Cup. He was grinning and gave them a small wave. Cup grumbled and crossed his arms. The cupman shifted uncomfortably, looking away from all three...Was he flushing?

Boris gaped for a few seconds. He finally seemed to regain some control over himself. “Th...thanks?” Boris said hesitantly.

Cup twitched. “Yeah, whatever,” he said quickly and looked back at Boris. “No time for this load of stardust.” Cup started to usher Mugs away. “Your bro needs rest.” He muttered the last part. His face was definitely glowing with a blush. Was he being...bashful? For what? Saving them? Why?

The two cups headed down the alley Bendy had been in and away from the brothers. Boris watched them in complete confusion. Bendy heard Mugs chuckle. “Cuphead? More like tomato head, bro.”

Cup let out a heavy sigh and hunched his shoulders. “I knew helping others was not my thing,” he muttered.

“Aw, don’t be like that Cuppy!” Mugs threw an arm over his shoulder. Cup let out another sigh before they disappeared from view completely.

He gave Boris a weary glance. Boris just shook his head before looking down at Bendy. “Let’s get you to a bed, bro. You look wiped out.”
Bendy didn’t have the energy to argue.
**A Tentative Night**

Chapter by [ThisAnimatedPhantom](#)

**Chapter Summary**

Mic adjusted his collar. "Really?" he asked, a bit surprised. "Well, okay. I don't think they'll be too keen on it, though. You just got to a lot of the--" He was interrupted. "You're the boss, I guess." Mic shrugged. "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to another exciting chapter! Seems the Cupbros are up to something!" Mic said. A voice cleared itself off stage. Mic sighed. "And I have a little announcement from the author. Due to the wedding, the story will go on temporary hiatus. The Phantom is estimating about three weeks, but it may be longer. We are very sorry for the inconvenience. Please enjoy the chapter!" Mic waved an arm in showman fashion before the lights dimmed.

**Chapter Notes**

Hello, Hello!

Just as Mic said, I am disappearing from the internet for a time. Boo and I have a wonderful honeymoon planned, so good bye for now! See you when I get back! Until then, I leave anything I left behind to Mercowe. She's in charge until I return. Have a good few weeks readers! And thanks for joining me so far.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#).

Boris sighed as he entered the hotel. The very petite cat woman nearly had a heart attack at the sight of Bendy. His big bro had passed out on the way back. He hadn’t said anything about Boris carrying him, so the younger brother knew he was completely spent. Bendy hated feeling small…

The cat fretted and followed Boris back to their room. Boris tried to reassure her that Bendy would be okay. The wolf couldn’t really focus on her, though. His mind kept playing the scene again and again. Bendy in the grasp of Cuphead, covered in ink, coughing. He had been so worried. Boris had been running around looking for Bendy for a good fifteen minutes.

What had Bendy been thinking? Had he seen Cup and decided to confront him or something? Boris didn’t get it.

And then there was Mugman!

Boris was so happy he was alive! But how! And why had Cup been so mad at them if Mugs was okay? He had so many questions. Would they still chase them now? Why were those two after them in the first place? Why did they save them? Was it payback? Aaaaah, so confusing!

What did they even want?

Again, Boris was glad that Mugs was alive but...Well, he just didn’t know what to feel right now.
He got to Bendy’s bed and set him down. The little cat was near tears in hysterics now. Oops, Boris had kinda forgotten about her. He looked over his bro. He was out. He seemed a little pale, but most of the ink was actually...gone. Boris raised a brow. He knew that Bendy seemed to...reabsorb some of it, but Boris had always wiped away most of it. Apparently, if Boris left him alone long enough, it would take care of itself mostly. Uh...Boris would still be wiping it off, though. He felt better doing that for Bendy.

There were a few stains on his clothes and goggles. He still had a little on his face. Boris would need to wash Bendy’s clothes tonight.

“Is there a doctor in the house!” the cat suddenly shrieked. Boris flinched at the exclamation. She was gonna wake Bendy.

“No need, ma’am. He’s fine,” Boris said again. Not much could be done anyway. At least, for now. Boris was able to calm her down after a few more reassurances. Even with Boris sitting, the cat only came up to his shoulder. He guessed he could see where Bendy was coming from...Maybe. Bendy was weird about height.

“If you say so. Just take care of your little brother, okay?” the cat asked with wide eyes.

Boris’ eyes widened before he bit his lip. Had she just? She did! Oh stars! Boris couldn’t laugh! He. Must. Not. Laugh. But she was expecting an answer! Oh no!

“Pfft.” Boris’ shoulders were shaking. He choked his laughter down to chuckles. “O-okay. Hehehe.”

Didn’t seem to matter. Bendy had heard it...somehow. Big bro suddenly sat up, his eyes wide with anger as he barked, “LITTLE BROTHER!” Even his spiked tail stuck straight up in indignation.

“Eeep!” the cat squeaked.

And there went Boris’ self control. He burst into a fit of laughter. He tried to cover his grin with a hand, but it was no good. He was wheezing. Holy heavens, Bendy’s face! He was so mad! But didn’t Bendy say it was fine since she was so small too? Oh man, tears of mirth stung his eyes.

Cup scratched the back of his head bashfully. “Yeah okay, I thought it was dumb for me to help but,” he trailed off and smiled. “It does feel kinda nice,” he muttered.

Mugs grinned at him. He had finished with a bath, cleaned up and changed his bandages. He needed help wrapping his arm, though. Cup could see the one around his chest peek out from under his night shirt’s collar.

Mugs plopped on the bed next to Cup and handed him the roll. “So, we can be friends now, right?” Mugs asked excitedly. The little chip he had on his cheek was nearly gone now. Cup could hardly see it. That was a relief. Mugs’ hands were up to his chin as he bounced excitedly. Good grief. He was like a kid on Christmas. “I really like Boris! He seems like a swell kid! The bees knees, in fact! C’mon, Cup! They’ve saved us a couple of times now!”

Cup looked at the ground with a frown. Mugs had a point. They were good guys. Bendy stopped him, listened to him, even carried him to the hospital. Cup remembered that big hopeful smile when the pipsqueak asked if he and Mugs were giving up the chase. This was all a starfallen mess. Cup felt a weight drop in his stomach. But…

“Cups?” Mugman asked gently. The excitement gone, his little bro lifted up his legs and crossed them.
Cup took a deep breath. He tugged at the bandage roll and got to work on Mugs’ arm. “If we don’t get rid of them, we’re the ones that will end up dead or worse, remember?” Cup murmured. He didn’t want to burst Mugs’ bubble, but there wasn’t much they could change. They had a job to do.

“Well, the boss doesn’t want them to find those machine bits or whatever, right? Why can’t we just get them first? That way, we don’t have to kill them!” Mugs suggested.

Cup raised his brows. Mugs sighed. “I hate killin’.”

Cup pursed his lips. Yeah, he wasn’t a big fan of it, either. After they got promoted, a few things had changed. They got orders to kill, and they got to see what happened to some of the debtors after their contracts were collected.

Not. Pleasant.

Cup swallowed lump in his throat. “Nice idea, bro, but we don’t have a map or any way of finding them.”

“Oh.” Mugs pulled his ‘drupy face’, which was like going crossed eyed, but in reverse. His brother’s eyes went in opposite directions, succeeding in making him look absolutely ridiculous. Cup snorted. Mugs used to do that face every time he got a question wrong back in his studies. They thought it was funny. They’d laugh their heads off until the toothpick of a mad scientist would snap and give up. It was only when Hat got involved that they stopped.

He finished with Mugs' arm. The burns were healing quickly. That was good. It didn’t seem like they would leave any scars. Thank the stars. He glanced at the bandages under the collar again. Mugs hadn’t shown him those. He was probably trying to protect Cup from seeing them. Idiot.

There was a knock on their door. Cup got up and answered. “Here are those extra towels you asked for!” a cheery voice came from behind a stack of the mentioned towels.

“Thanks.” Cup took them and revealed the minuscule cat behind them. She smiled warmly at him.

“No problem! Let me know if you boys need anything else!” she said with a wave.

“Yes thing.” Cup said and shut the door. The little cat woman was smaller than Bendy. Who knew such a thing was possible! It was ridiculous! Cup dropped the towels on the counter in the bathroom and grabbed his packet of cigs. “I’m gonna have a smoke,” he told Mugs. His younger brother was staring at the floor, thoughtfully. He snapped out of it when Cup spoke.


Mugs was probably still trying to figure out a way to save those two from their list. Cup looked away. He opened the balcony door and stepped out. The light from their room spilled out into the night, the dark consuming it quickly. The glitter of city lights in the distance made it appear that the very heavens had fallen. Cup walked to the railing and rested a hand on it. The city lights killed any hope of seeing real stars. Killed, bad word choice. That low down scum, throwing his wife and kid practically at their feet to save himself. He was now a smear in--

Don’t think about it.

A cold breeze brushed his face. It smelled a bit like damp stone and mud. It was quiet. The only noises were the distant sounds of a vehicle passing by and the hushed whisper of the wind. It was so calm. It was like the night had covered all the action, all the noise, all the screams and muffled it into this still silence.
How could the night be this calm after everything they did? What was Cup supposed to do here? He had a job. It was a horrible, despicable job, but he had to do it. He couldn’t spare them. Even though they’d saved him twice now... And his little bro was getting attached. If Mugs got too close, he would hurt when they had to do the deed. He might already be too close. This was a load of stardust. Mugs shouldn’t have to--

There was some movement out of the corner of Cup’s eyes. He glanced over, then did a quick double take. His eyes widened. You had to be kidding. That wasn’t possible. The universe was obviously laughing at him.

On the next balcony over stood a familiar, shirtless, little demon. He was frozen, mid-motion, adjusting his shirt on a line to dry. He stared at Cup with a deer-in-the-headlights gaze. Alright, running into the fella on the way to their hotel was one thing, but this? This was ridiculous.

Cup chuckled and crossed his arms. “You’re everywhere, aren’t you?” Cuphead raised a mocking brow.

The pipsqueak unfroze and went back to fiddling with his shirt. His light eyes didn’t leave Cup for a second, though. “I could say the same for you,” he murmured with uncertainty. His brow raised with true confusion.

Cup could almost laugh. The pipsqueak was trying to play it cool, but the guy was so obviously on edge. Cup had to do something with this. The opportunity was too rich not to!

Cup smirked. “You’re awfully calm about seeing me because you know, I can pounce at any moment!” Cup lunged toward him with his arms raised like a classic movie monster would.

“Guuu!” Bendy jumped back, his back hitting the railing. His tail stood straight up like a frightened cat. And his face! Eyes the size of platters!

Cup roared with laughter. One hand went around his gut and the other up to the rim of his head as he lost it. “Oh stars! You’re such a wuss!” Cup gasped. Bendy stared at him, his fear quickly changing into annoyance. That face! Cup had to keep pushing it. “Bwaak. Bock-bock! Braak!”

Now the frown of annoyance was falling into a scowl. Hehe. One more. Just one more. “What’s wrong scaredy cat? Meeeerrrrroooow!”

“Knock it off!” Bendy barked. Holy hell! Someone so small should not be able to scowl like that! It was hilarious! Cup couldn’t take it seriously. Cup’s ribs hurt from laughing. Bendy, still with that annoyed, heavy scowl turned on his heel to head back inside his room.

“Ok, ok, wait!” Cup wiped a tear from the corner of his eye. Oooh boy. That was good. “Before you go, just one last thing,” he gasped.


Cup lifted his hand in a little wave. “Thank you,” he said with the most genuine smile he could.

It was like seeing a balloon deflate. His little spiky tail fell limp. His eye twitched. “W-what?”

Stars! Must not laugh! No! Bad Cuphead. Serious moment. Serious. Think of Mugs. Right. Drop the smile. This fella saved his life, so he could see his little brother again...Right.

Cup took a deep breath and leaned back against the railing. “Yeah, I know. Very weird of me to say
that,” Cup murmured. “But you know how much I cherish my brother.” It felt strange to say it out loud. He felt like scum for it feeling abnormal. When had he stopped saying stuff like that out loud? Whatever. He wasn’t gonna be dumb enough to stop saying it again. He loved his bro, and he was gonna make sure Mugs knew it. And that was all thanks to this little demon. “And you helped us reunite in a way, so thanks!” Cup felt a small smile climb up his face.

“Your love for your brother is the only thing I liked about you, anyway.” Bendy crossed his arms and smirked. “So, you’re welcome.”

Cup narrowed his eyes and smiled. Why, that cheeky little pipsqueak. “Now, if ya don’t mind, it’s late. If you’re planning on attacking, can it wait until tomorrow? I’m wiped.”

Cup huffed. “Fine, but only ‘cause you asked.”

Bendy snorted a chuckle before disappearing into the room. Cup turned back to the night sky.

He hated it. He really did.

He could see why his brother wanted to spare them. And he hated it. But...he got an idea. It was stupid, risky, and broke a number of personal rules that kept him and his bro safe. But…

It would make Mugs happy, and Cup could relieve this annoying weight in his gut. Yeah, that would be a good idea. Right? Not really, but meh. They’d done crazier things. They could get away with it.

Cup turned on his heel and went back inside. Mugs looked up from the television. “Bro? What’s up?”

“Mugs, let’s make them our friends!” Cup said. Mugs nearly fell off the bed in surprise.

“Wh-what!” Mugs’ eyes were the size of saucers.

“Well, not really, but it would save us from having ta kill ‘em,” Cup muttered and crossed his arms.

“Uh? Wait Cups? You lost me.” Mugs lifted his hands and made a stopping motion.

“Alright, let me explain. You don’t wanna kill the Bbros, right?” Cup asked.

“Right.” Mugs nodded and rested his hands on his knees.

“But we have to get those machine parts, stop them from using those things or whatever, right?” Cup lifted a finger.

Mugs frowned. “Right,” he said slowly. “But you said we didn’t have a way to find them.”

Cup grinned. “They are the way to find them.”

“Uh?” Mugs tilted his head, his straw sliding to the other side of his rim.

“Those fellas have a map to get them, right? So, we just have to go with them,” Cup said.

Mugs wrinkled his nose with a look of confusion. “But don’t we have to get them before Boris and Bendy do?”

“I don’t remember hearing that. Dice just said we have to make sure that machine doesn’t get built. We’ll just nab the parts after we’ve collected them all and before those two can build it.” Cup tapped his nose and winked.
Mugs eyes widened. “Won’t they be mad about that?”

Cup snorted. “They’ll be alive, won’t they? They shouldn’t have a reason to complain.”

“Well, yeah, but isn’t that gonna be betraying their trust?” Mugs frowned. “Friends don’t do that.”

Cup frowned and sat down next to Mugs. He lifted an open hand up. “Look, it’s to save them from being killed. We won’t really be their friends. It’s just so we can get this mission done without murdering no one.”

“We won’t?” Mugs lifted a hand to cover his mouth thoughtfully and stared at the bed cover.

“No. We’ll pretend. This is letting them off easy for the good they did us,” Cup said with a frown. “No, see, the real point is that gettin’ those parts will put us back in good graces with the boss. I’m just bein’ a nice guy about it.”

Mugs fiddled. He reached for his scarf, but let his hand drop when he realized he wasn’t wearing it. “I don’t know if I like pretending, though. Boris is a swell guy. I don’t wanna lie to ‘im like that.”

Cup put a hand on his shoulder. “Your only other choice is to shoot him, Mugs.” Mugman’s shoulders dropped. “I’m sorry, bro. There isn’t anything else I can do.”

“I know,” Mugs mumbled.

“This way, you’ll get to hang out with him a bit,” Cup added. “Just remember to keep your guard up and that we’re doing this to get the parts.”

Mugs bit his lip. He glanced at Cup before looking down again. “So, you want me to--what?”

“Get Boris to think you’re friends,” Cup said. “That way, they’ll let us come with them.”

“What about Bendy?” Mugs asked.

“Don’t worry. I’ll handle the pipsqueak.” Cup smirked.

Mugs looked down again. Cup lost his smile. It wasn’t a perfect answer, and it was really risky, but it was the best Cup could come up with. “Mugs?”

“I see where you’re coming from. It’s not nice, but at least then they can go on with their lives after.” Mugs smiled. That was his little brother, trying to make the most of the situation. Using that smile.

Cup huffed. “Yeah. And the boss is really weird about this one. Maybe this will clear our debt…” That was really optimistic, though. Near ludicrous.

“That would be berries!” Mugs grinned.

Cup smiled. “Yeah, it would.”

Mickey sat on the bed. The lights were out, and it was late. He really should be getting these kids to...bed. The little girl he had on his lap patted his shoulders with large, sad eyes.

“Help him, Papa!” one of the other’s said. Mickey stared at the floor. Even when his brother’s hand gripped his shoulder, Mickey could feel Ozzy staring at him. Mickey sighed and closed his eyes. He knew Ozzy wanted an answer.
“Donald was right,” Mickey admitted. “I can’t just help everyone.” Boris came to mind. “The kid needs help, but he and his bro have their own life, and I...I have a job and a family to take care of. All I can do is just wish him the best of luck.” Even though his brother is sick, and the poor kid will end up alone...

“Here I am again, fussing over simple, unimportant things.” Mickey couldn’t do anything. Ozzy pulled his hand back. “Pathetic, right?” Mickey smiled bitterly. He stared at the floor again.

“You’re too good for this world, bro.”

Mickey’s eyes widened. Did he just hear...

Mickey slowly turned his head. “This is why I used to get so jealous of you!” Ozzy smiled. The shadows didn’t hide the light in his light eyes. How long had it been since Mickey had seen that spark in his brother? It was tired, but it was...It was there.

Ozzy coughed. “S-sorry about my voice.” It was a bit hoarse. Ozzy scratched the back of his head. His face flushed. “It’s been way too long since I said anything.” He chuckled softly. This was...real? Mickey’s mouth fell open. He was sure that the kids' eyes were just as wide. The dam of silence broke, and the kids swarmed their dad.

“PAPA! Say ‘I love you!’”

“No! Say ‘my kids are awesome’!”

“You sound like a deeper version of me!”

“No, he doesn’t.”

“Say ‘poop’!”

Mickey was right behind the kids. He threw himself at the bunny and wrapped him in a tight hug. “Oh, Ozzy!” Mickey couldn’t hold back the tears. “I missed your beautiful voice!” Mickey sobbed. “A-and your sweet smile. I missed ‘em so.”

Ozzy smiled and patted his back. They stayed like that for a time. Several of the kids purred around them.

When Mickey was finally able to calm down, he pulled away. The two sat next to each other, Ozzy with a hand on Mickey’s shoulder.

The rabbit chuckled. “I only talked to make you happy, bro. Why are you still crying?”

“I can’t help it. Sorry.” Mickey sniffed as he grinned. Ozzy was talking! It had been so long. Of course Mickey was crying for joy.

“Wait,” Ozzy said. Mickey looked over. One of his daughters wrapped her arms around her dad’s arm. “Is that the guy’s hat?”

“Yeah, he gave it to me!” She grinned proudly.

Ozzy frowned, his brows furrowed. “He was really nice. I ruined your fun time with him, didn’t I kids?” He sounded apologetic. Mouse raised a brow. Was he talking about the cat fellow the kids had invited to their house?

“No! No!”
Nooo!"

"Whaaaaat? No!"

"Ok, yes."

The little voices cascaded together into a chorus.

Ozzy gave them a little smile. "Maybe we’ll see him again someday." The kids cheered in joy. Mickey, he could only grin. To him, it was a miracle. This was the best he had seen Ozzy since the day they lost Ortensia. Hopefully, this was a step toward better days. Brighter days.

Boris yawned as he walked down the hall. He had a couple more towels in his arms. He was gonna take a nice hot shower before they had to go back into town to get Bendy his pills. Boris couldn’t believe Bendy had forgotten! One would think with the amount of pain he went through, he would--oh Boris didn’t know--be a bit more responsible!

“It’s like when he gets the flu all over again,” Boris muttered to himself. Stupid big brother and his weird priorities! Bendy wasn’t happy that they were going to lose a day because they had to turn around. Maybe, he’d learn his lesson this time! Seriously!

Then again...It had been a crazy last few days. Boris didn’t really think of them either.

Boris huffed. Suddenly, there was movement by his shoulder. "Hey, Boris!" The wolf jumped and clenched the towels tightly. He whipped around to see...Mugman! "You dropped this." Mugs offered a hand towel. Yikes. Where had he come from? The guy was silent! Boris had no idea he had been right there.

The Cup and his brother are right next door. I don’t think they’ll do anything tonight, but be careful in the morning.

Did they follow us?

I don’t think so. He seemed just as surprised seeing me as I did seeing him.

It was one thing to talk about it and another to see it. “Umm, thanks?” Boris said and took the offered cloth. Mugs beamed at him. Now what? Was he gonna attack or something? Ask for advice? His bright eyes seemed to expect something. Was Boris supposed to run? Say something?

“Wanna be friends?” Mugs got right in his face with his cheery smile.

“Wha--” Boris jumped and dropped all the towels. Was he kidding? He had to be kidding! They had tried to kill him and Bendy! That last attempt had been way too close! Even if...they had also helped. This couldn’t be safe. But it was Mugman. Ahhh! This was so frustrating!

Boris pulled his ears down and glared. He had had enough of this wishy-washiness. “Alright, what are you trying to pull here?” he demanded and pointed accusingly. Mugs’ smile disappeared. “Can’t you pick a side? Good? Bad? Just... anything! ” Boris growled with clenched fists. Mugs’ eyes widened, and he took a step back.

With hunched shoulders, Mugs tapped his pointer fingers together nervously. He looked at Boris with wide eyes. “I-I don’t know. I just do whatever my brother tells me to do!” A bead of moisture--was that sweat?--dripped down the side of his head. His large eyes looked glassy. Boris blinked. Had he been too harsh? No! No, he couldn’t put his guard down now! He was dangerous! What would
Bendy do in this situation?

“Then, you want to tell me who is forcing you to chase us? Or even why!” Boris asked flatly. Boris put his hands on his hips. The wolf lowered his eyelids and gazed at the other expectantly. He brought his ears up to listen closely. Mugs clenched one hand and dropped the other.

His head tilted down he muttered, “I can’t.”

Boris snorted. “Sorry, I thought friends don’t keep secrets from each other,” he said dryly. Mugs frowned and looked away. More of that--Seriously, was it sweat? It looked like condensation from a cold glass--dripped down his face. Well...good! He needed to learn that Boris wasn’t a little wolf to mess with! Just cause Bendy was the one that got into more fights, didn’t mean that Boris was unable to defend himself! He wasn’t just some pushover! ‘Sides the fella was obviously some kinda thug, just cause his older brother looked scarier, didn’t mean this guy was harmless.

Were his eyes beginning to water! What in the world!

Boris’ eyes widened, and his ears dropped. Mugman looked like he was verge of weeping. Boris lifted his hands uncertainly. “L-look, you gotta understand! It’s hard to believe you after all, what you two tried to--”

“No, it’s ok.” Mugs looked away with a miserable sigh. “No one but my brother has ever wanted to be my friend anyway.”

Ah! Ah! Ah! No! No tears! What in the world! What was Boris supposed to do? He couldn’t just--But he tried to--but he also---Ah!

“Why not?” Boris found himself saying. “I did want us to be friends, but I thought you didn’t!”

Why was he doing this! The guy was dangerous! But he wanted to believe him. He had wanted to be friends after the New Orleans incident. He was even more sure after their odd card game...But then...

Mugs eyes widened. “Really?”

Oh stars, Bendy wasn’t gonna be happy about this. “Really.”

“I’m sorry you thought that. So, does that mean we can be friends?” Mugs asked hesitantly.

Boris bit his lip. Oooooh, this was such a bad idea. “Sure.”

Next thing Boris knew, he was lifted off the ground in a big hug. “Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! I’ll be a great friend, you’ll see!”

“Agh! Mugs, you’re crushing me,” Boris wheezed.

“Oops! Sorry.” Mugs dropped him instantly. Boris swayed for a second, then chuckled.

“Don’t worry about it.” Boris smiled.

Mugs returned the smile and knelt down. Boris followed, and they picked up the towels together. Boris bit his lips as he stood up again. “So, does this mean that you and your brother aren’t going to come after us anymore?”

“No! Absolutely not!” Mugs shook his head rapidly. His straw swiveled around and around. Boris spared it a curious glance. “Cup was really thankful to Bendy. We won’t try anything! In fact…”
Mugs trailed off and looked away.

Boris tilted his head, one ear up and attentive. “In fact?”

Mugs looked back to Boris. “We’d like to help if possible.”

“Help?”

Mugs nodded. “Yeah. We wanna make it up to you and Bendy.”

“Oh no, you don’t have to--”

“Please? Cup feels awful for what happened.” Mugs’ lip jetted out. His light eyes became huge.

Boris faltered. “Um, I guess I could ask.”

“Thanks, Boris!” Mugs went right back to bright and cheerful.

“Don’t expect too much. I don’t think Bendy will approve,” Boris said.

Mugs blinked. “Ya don’t?”

“Not really.” Boris shrugged.

“Oh, well then...How about letting Cup talk to your bro?” Mugs asked.

“Umm.” Boris' ears fell. “We’re a little busy right now.”

“Really? You’re heading out? Well, give us a chance. Where will you be tomorrow? Maybe bro can talk after you get your business done,” Mugs suggested.

Boris pursed his lips. That didn’t sound like a good idea. But...if they wanted to help?

“We should be back here by tomorrow night,” Boris murmured.

“And tomorrow?”

“Going back into town for something,” Boris said nervously.

“Can we come?” Mugs asked.

“Uh!” Boris barked.

“Pleeesease?” Mugs begged.

Oh. Bendy wasn’t going to like this.

Chapter End Notes

Okay guys! Mercowe here. Tap has been trying to get ahead, but with wedding stress and such, I think she's only been able to stay one chapter ahead. That being the case, during the three weeks or so that she's gone, I'll post that first chapter. The remaining two weeks I'm going to be posting some concept art Tap has done while she's been
writing the story. I also might post a little comic she made about her friends for those who care. It just depends on how much she's able to finish before the wedding next week. I hope you guys enjoyed this week's chapter. Have fun!
A Rabbit, a Cat and a Mouse--Oh My!

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

The curtains draw apart to show a lone sign leaning against a chair on the stage. 
As the author is on leave, Mic has chosen to take a vacation as well.
(After all, what sort of boss expects their employees to keep working while they're gone.)
*Wink*
Mic will return when the author does--in two or three more weeks.
(You can't really tell with these things, it's a honeymoon after all.)
Until then, have fun!!

Chapter Notes

Hey guys, Mercowe here. Like Mic said, Tap is gone on her honeymoon. She only managed to get today's chapter done before she left, unfortunately, so for the next few weeks there won't be any updates. However, I will be posting some of the drawings she's done for the story. Some of these you've seen on Tumblr, but a couple are brand new and pertain to the story's background. :D

Also, sorry for posting today's chapter so late. Tap's wedding was today, so none of us had very much time. And the time we did have didn't involve access to the internet, at least not for me. Haha! Anyways, enough talk. Here's this week's chapter.

The rabbit’s nose twitched. Pancakes, syrup, butter, and yum. Breakfast.

“Good morning, Donald.”

“Yeah, yeah, morning Oswald,” Donald quacked dismissively. Oswald counted down in his head. Three...two...one…”WHA!” There it is. Donald’s head turned so quickly, his neck popped. His eyes looked like they were going to fall out of his head.

Oswald gave him a mock two finger salute. Donald furrowed his brow. Ah, messing with the duck. One of the joys of life.

“What happened to your tail?” Oswald asked casually. He spared the wrapped up tail a look for a second, then stepped up beside the duck and reached for a stack of pancakes.

“I’m the one who should be asking questions here.” Donald frowned. Oh no. Oswald was not up to answering a bunch of questions. Hell, he wasn’t very motivated to keep talking, but he’d try not to be silent again.

“Listen.” He sighed and stuck of bite of pancake in his mouth. “I’m not a big fan of this whole
talking thing, so just go with it.” Please just leave it. Donald lowered his eyelids.

He waited a breath. “Whatever,” Donald finally said. Good duck. The two went about the kitchen in companionable silence for a few moments. “You cleaned up too. At least you look better than your stardusted usual self,” Donald said offhandedly.

Oswald pulled his ears back and ran a hand through the fur of his head. “You jelly?” he asked in his most flamboyant tone possible, face completely straight.

Donald snorted. “Gotta say, I sure missed your sass!” The duck smirked. Oswald raised his brows, but otherwise kept his face blank. The duck knew he was touched.

Mickey walked in, covering a huge yawn. “Mornin’ Donald, sorry for waking up late. Yesterday was crazy.” Ozzy plopped down at the table.

“Hey Mick!” Donald greeted. “You’ll never guess who finally decided to share his voice with us!” Donald finished setting the table. Oswald slumped his upper body over the table’s edge in an easy going, lazy fashion.

Mickey grinned. “I know! That’s why I couldn’t sleep last night. I was so happy!” That was the grin that belonged on his little bro’s face. It was nice to see it this morning.

Oswald noted the twitch of Donald’s mouth that hinted at a smile. Mickey pulled up a chair.

“So, what’s on the list today?” Donald asked.

“Well, we need some herbs and a few cans of soup. A couple of the kiddos are getting a summer cold, and we need to stop it before it becomes an epidemic,” Mickey said. Oswald nodded as he ate another bite of pancakes. Hmmm, fluffy sugar was the best sugar.

“Herbs? Does that mean we’re seeing Minnie today?” Donald asked. Mickey’s face dusted with a blush. “Hey, when are you gonna ask that dame out anyway?”

Mickey sputtered. “M-me! Ask h-h-her out?” He laughed nervously. “No-no-no! I’m sure she’s way too busy to—”

“C’mon bro. She’d have a great time.” Oswald raised a brow. “You can charm the ladies.” Mickey’s face exploded with a deep blush.

“M-me? Charm the ladies? N-n-n no way! I’m good with kids! You’re the one that girls like!” Mickey denied.

Donald and Oswald snickered. They both wiggled their brows at Mickey suggestively. Mickey ducked his head.

Heh. Way to easy.

Felix stretched his spine and scratched the back of his head. He sighed as he began pulling his stuff together for the day. As he did his morning tasks, his mind went back to the events of the last few days.

He was still shocked. How he’d gotten to that handsome bunny’s house was beyond him. He remembered the adorable little rabbits everywhere after he’d apologized to their father.

“Oh man, how did I get roped into this?” Felix asked as the bunny children groomed him. One had
a brush to his fur, another was filing his claws, and another was cleaning his jacket. Felix spotted one kid walking off with his hat. Oh well, that's what spares were for. What an odd situation to be in. How did he get here? One minute he was talking to the bunny father, the next, he was surrounded by kids.

Oh well...Felix glanced at the rabbit father. The lovely children were giving him the same treatment. The brush straightened his fur and made it glossy. His eyes still had shadows, but they weren’t so pronounced. It could be worse.

He still seemed dazed and tired, but he did look better. So handsome. One of his kids snuggled under his chin. Felix felt his chest warm. He was very gentle with his offspring.

Oh dear, he was in trouble!

These children knew how to pamper. Goodness! Felix found himself relaxing bit by bit with their care. One of the children came up to him with a photograph in a simple frame. “This is Mommy! You look like her, Mister!” the little boy said. Felix blinked and took the image. She was in a bright sundress and wore a lovely hat with a flower in it. She was a beautiful cat with a bright, cheerful smile, full lips, large dark eyes, and a cute figure. There was a serene feeling the came from her and the field of flowers she stood in.

“Oh?” Felix asked. “But she’s so beautiful compared to me.” This was his wife? Felix hadn’t seen her around. Was she out? Then again, there were quite a few lovelies running around. It was hard to imagine she was busy.

“Uncle Mickey said she went to a better place or something,” the child explained simply with a tiny shrug.

Felix’ eyes widened as understanding dawned on him. “O-oh my,” he whispered. Well, that was a bit of a shock. How long--

Before Felix could think anything more, Ozzy’s hand gripped Felix’ wrist. Felix looked up in surprise at the glaring eyes of the father. He gasped in surprise.”I-I’m s-sorry. Your son gave it to me.” Felix stammered an apology as Ozzy huffed and took the picture. Felix felt like a kitten caught reaching into the catnip jar.

“Papa?” The little boy looked up with large eyes. Oh dear, he had made a bit of a mess. Obviously, the topic of their mother was a sensitive one. He probably wasn’t meant to see that. No, definitely not. Well...he best be heading off now. He didn’t want to intrude any more than he already had.

“C-can I have my jacket, lovelies? I think I’ve caused enough trouble,” he asked. The little ones acted fast. One brought Felix his coat with sad eyes.

“But, we’re making carrot muffins,” she chirped. Oh, these dear ones knew how to use their cuteness.

The son who had brought Felix the picture in the first place raised a tiny fist in the direction that Ozzy disappeared to. “Bad Papa! Go to your room!” How precious.

Felix stood to leave, but the rabbit father was back with his chalkboard. One child was pushing him from the back, and another sat on his head. Both dear ones were glaring at their father, doing their best to scold him, it seemed.

Ozzy lifted up his board, eyes downcast. Sorry, that picture means a lot to me.
“Oh, it’s fine. I wouldn’t have dared to look at it myself, anyway. I just couldn’t say no to that sweet kid.” Felix shrugged helplessly. He really should go.

Ozzy offered a carrot muffin. Felix felt his face heat up. (It hadn’t completely cooled since he got there.) He lifted a hand to his burning cheek and took the muffin in the other. “T-th-thanks…” he stuttered. The child on Ozzy’s head beamed at Felix.

To his horror, the kids were whispering. But subtle was beyond them because Felix could hear them without a problem. “So, is this, like, our new mom?”

“I call dibs on his hat!” the little girl with his hat said. Felix turned away to hide his face and his dark, dark blush. These children! Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear! He would have to leave! Had to…Oh dear, he was in trouble! As he walked out the door with a chorus of goodbyes from dear little lovelies, Felix couldn’t help think how much fun it was to be in the full house.

Felix dropped the notebook on his foot. “Ee-ouch!” he yelped. He shouldn’t day dream like that! A few pages fell out of the notebook. When Felix was done rubbing his sore foot, he began picking up the papers, but paused as he glanced at the letter in his hand.

Ah. Professor Wiseton. Felix sighed as he finished collecting his notes. Sadly, this one probably wouldn’t make its way into one of his books, despite the buzz around the professor’s death and story. Though, he wanted to share his professor’s story…as a way to honor him and all his work—he knew he couldn’t. The talk of Ink Illness and the politics attached to it would make any of the professor’s work seem like…drivel and propaganda. Felix didn’t want that, and the things he’d found out were…best not to disclose for now. Until something changed, this story would have to stay in the notes.

Besides, it was still an unsolved mystery. With those B-brothers freed—Didn’t they seem familiar somehow?—there were now no leads to what had happened. Hopefully something would come to light with Dr. Oddswell’s trial.

He wondered if the doctor knew anything about the Machine…Felix’s ears fell. Work for another day. He couldn’t get distracted. He put away the notebook and picked up his manuscript. Sheba had dropped by last night, just ‘found’ his tent, and said hello. She really wanted this thing. He really, really needed to finish it. Felix grimaced. It was his fault for putting the work off.

He couldn’t help it! There was something afoot! He could smell it, but he couldn’t get the pieces to fall into place yet. He didn’t have enough facts. It was so distracting! He wanted to work on that over this book. There was some kind of adventure here. He knew it! His fur stood on end just thinking about it. What had Professor Wiseton been on to? Why was there someone trying to stop a cure to Ink Illness?

“Knock, knock! Anyone home?” a deep female voice called. Felix smiled and put the manuscript down.

“Hello, Sheba. I’m just packing up before breakfast,” Felix said.

“Well, pack faster. I’m hungry,” Sheba said. Felix smiled and rolled his eyes. He packed his tent together and slid it into his pack. Sheba put her hands on her hips. “Ya know, the fanny pack look is starting to get old.

Felix snorted and adjusted the pack. He narrowed his eyes at his old friend. “It’s better than the bag I used to carry or the briefcase you thought was so spiffy.”
“What about a shoulder bag?” she asked as they headed to a local diner.

“Too loose. It might fall off while I’m running.” Felix waved off the idea.

“Backpack?” Sheba suggested.

“I wouldn’t be able to reach it quickly. That could mean life or death in the field.” Felix shook his head.

“Ever thought of checking out less dangerous sights?” Sheba twisted one of her earrings. Her tail flicked his side. “Cats only have nine lives, after all, Feel.”

Felix chuckled. “Yeah, I thought about it once. How many lives have you used up?”

“I only lose them when I’m around you. You are a bad influence.” The cat woman pointed at him accusingly. “Remember the board game that turned out to be a lot more than a game?”

“Don’t remind me.” Felix groaned.

“Anyway, what’s on your mind?” she asked nonchalantly.

Felix raised a brow. “What makes you think there’s anything on my mind?”

“Because I know you, and you can’t hide anything from me. Now spill.” Sheba smirked.

Felix frowned. She was annoyingly preceptive. She always had been. He’d have to tell her now. The longer he was taking, the more narrow her eyes were getting. “Well, I heard about this Ink Illness thing--”

“Nah-uh.” Sheba cut him off with a head shake. “That’s not the thing on your mind.”

Dang it, Sheba! Felix stiffed. “Oh c’mon, Feel. You can tell me.”

Felix sighed. He...didn’t really wanna talk about it. But this was Sheba. She wouldn’t let him escape. “Fine. So, I met this handsome...bunny the other day. His children invited me to their house. We spent some time together before I, ah, left.” He got quieter and quieter as he spoke. His face was heating up again.

Sheba’s smile was downright sinful. The expectation in her eyes was scalding. “A handsome bunny dad? You? How scandalous! What did his wife think?”

Felix’s ears fell. His...wife. That picture. Right.

“Feel?”

“She...isn’t in the picture,” Felix explained haltingly. Sheba blinked, and her own ears fell. “A-anyway, doesn’t m-m-matter. I probably won’t see him again for a long time. And besides, in this day and age--”

Sheba sighed. “Yeah, it’d probably ruin your career too. You’re lucky I’m such a good friend.” She elbowed him lightly. “Never knew you swung that way, Feel! Color me surprised!”

Felix scratched the back of his head. “I didn’t either. I think it’s just him...? Maybe? I don’t know. It’s all confusing.”

Sheba shrugged. “You don’t have to worry about me, at least. I’m always in your corner, pal.”
“Sometimes I wish you wouldn’t,” Felix muttered. Sheba grinned.

The friends made their way to the diner and had a pleasant time catching up. Sheba was able to explain what was going on in town with more detail. Felix was itching to pull out his notebook, but he wasn’t about to reveal those notes anytime soon. In turn, Felix talked about his latest expedition. The promise of his manuscript had Sheba’s tail flicking back and forth. The two had a bit of running around to get done, so they decided to go together. It was good to see old friends.

“Are you nuts?” Bendy demanded.

“But he seemed really genuine!” Boris said.

“No way!” Bendy hissed. The boys were walking down the street toward Granny’s. They had taken a bus back into the city. Bendy was still perturbed about it.

Stupid pills. Stupid Illness. This was so pathetic. The whole walk from the bus stop to the house was riddled with shame. On top of that, Boris had started talking crazy. They climbed the steps to the front door. “I’m just saying, bro, they really want to help.”

“That’s enough Boris,” Bendy muttered.

“Mugs did save me last night, and Cup was helping you.”

Bendy scowled. Yeah, but when he’d asked if they would stop Cup seemed…

Bendy knocked on the door. They were greeted by a surprised and concerned Granny Gopher. Boris had to explain, and she was laughing for their entire visit. Bendy refrained from clawing the walls. It only took her a few minutes to get Bendy a full bottle of pills. Bendy refused to acknowledge the the flush of embarrassment he had over his face as they left. Then, they dropped by Betty’s to say a quick hello to Holly and Betty.

Holly was behind the counter, reading a book. Humming from the back of the store revealed Betty’s location. The place was empty of customers at that moment.

“Hello, Holly!” Boris greeted cheerfully.

Holly looked up in surprise. “Hi Boris.” She smiled. “Didn’t you two already leave?”

Bendy frowned and looked away, but Boris had no problem answering her. “Bendy forgot to get more pills, so we had to turn around.”

Her eyes widened. “Oh, that’s not something you want to leave behind!” She looked at Bendy. “Are you okay?”

Bendy’s face burned even hotter with embarrassment. He kept his eyes pointedly away from Boris. “I’m fine!” He could feel his brother’s eyes roll. “It’s just pain meds.”

“You’re impossible.” Boris shook his head.

Holly propped her head up on a hand. “Stubborn as always, huh?” She shook her head. “So, I’m guessing this isn’t a social visit. Anything I can help you with?”

“Non-perishable foods and…Do you have any climbing gear?” Boris asked. “Rope, and such?”

Holly nodded toward a row to the far left. “The canned and dried foods are over there. As for
“Back by the camping and travel things, next to the picnic baskets!” she called back. Boris grinned and headed that way. Bendy watched him go.

“Hey, I’m gonna stay up here for a second,” Bendy said. “To talk to Holly.”

“Don’t embarrass me.” Boris looked to the ceiling in silent exasperation.

“What? Me?” Bendy raised a brow, but the wolf had already disappeared. Bendy clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth. “Brothers,” he muttered before turning to Holly. “Did we thank you for the map? I think we kinda ran off and left you the other day.”

Holly chuckled a little and nodded. “Things got a little crazy yesterday, but yes, you did.”

“Good. I think we forgot something too. Boris and I, that is...Uh.” Bendy shrugged and reached into his pocket. “You really proved yourself with the map and with helping Alice. I’m sure I can trust you with this.” He pulled out the page Wilson had given him and offered it to Holly. “We tried to make heads or tails of it, but you’ll do a much better job than either of us.”

Holly blinked, her mouth making a little ‘O’ shape. A spark of excitement appeared in her eyes. Taking the page carefully, she studied it, leaned over, and brought up a small journal. Carefully sliding the paper inside, she closed the book and returned it to her bag.

She gave him a quirky little smile, with one edge of her lips higher than the other. “I’ll have the translation finished by the time you two get back.”

Bendy grinned. That smile was kinda cute. “Berries. And hey, when we get back you should let me take ya out for lunch or something. You’ve done a lot, and I’d love for us to spend some time together for me to show my appreciation.”

That seemed to surprise her, but then she tilted her head. “Sure.” She nodded thoughtfully. “I would enjoy that.”

Bendy gave her a half smile. “Double berries. Think of somewhere you’d like to eat while we’re away.” He winked.

She raised a brow at him, but grinned. “Okay. I look forward to when you get back.”

“Me too.” Boris appeared around the corner. “We’ll have another Machine piece.” His tail wagged. He had his arms full of rope, hooks, cans and bags. Bendy quickly went to help him.

Holly rang up the items, and they were on their way.
demanded. Her eyes widened, and her brows shot up.

“Ozzy, no!” Mickey’s hand rested on Oswald’s arm. A gentle reminder to hold back. The rabbit grit his teeth. He didn’t let people mess with his kids. Before he could say or do anything more, another voice called out.

“Sheba, please! You’re scaring the little kid!” A familiar male cat dashed around a corner with a group of Oswald’s kids. The rabbit’s eyes widened upon seeing the cat.

“What’s the biggie?” the cat woman, Sheba, frowned. “I just wanna snuggle ‘em.”

“Tell her to leave me alone, Mr. Felix!” his son called out from Oswald’s arms. ‘Mr. Felix’ skidded to a halt, much like the woman. His eyes widened, and his face darkened with a flush.

Was the cat trying to watch out for Oswald’s son? How kind of him. “Hello.” Oswald greeted the cat with a smile. Felix flushed from the tip of his pointed ears to the end of his tail.

Sheba rolled her eyes. “Dads.” She crossed her arms. Felix suddenly swayed and fell over, but Sheba was able to catch him. “Whoa, man! Are you okay?”

The cat man’s eyes swirled. He didn’t respond. “Oh dear!” Mickey said. “Quick, here.” Mickey offered them a chair.

She lowered Felix onto the chair gently. Several of the kids gasped and gathered around. “Give them some space,” Oswald told them. His children glanced up at him before hopping back a little.

“Is he gonna be okay, Papa?” his son asked.

“I...think so,” Oswald said uncertainly. He had no idea.

“Maybe a kiss from a prince will wake him up! Like in the fairy tales!” one of his daughters suggested.

“That stuff isn’t real,” another son argued.

“Yes, it is!” His sister frowned. Oh no. There they went. So early in the morning too. Oswald glanced at the crowd of children. He could practically see each one choosing sides. Luckily, they were interrupted before it became a war.

“Oh, thank goodness! You scared me there, Feel!” the cat woman admonished.

The cat sat up and rubbed the side of his head. “Oh my...was it all a dream?”

“What ‘chu talkin’ ‘bout?” Sheba blinked and stood back up so her friend could rise.

“It was so real,” Felix murmured in a daze.

Sheba tilted her head. “What dream?”

Oswald put his son down and came up behind the chair. “How are you now, sir?” And, of course, since he approached, all his kids followed.

“Mr. Felix!”

“Are you okay?”
“Do you have a sleeping curse on you?”

The cat’s ears fell, and his eyes widened. He turned completely around in the chair. “Oh, I’m fine! I just had a f-fever!” he stammered. Fever? His friend got a weird smile on her face.

She leaned over and whispered in the other cat’s ear. “So, this is the ‘handsome bunny’ you’ve been ramblin’ to me ‘bout?”

“Mhm,” Felix hummed. Oswald carefully kept his face blank. If he didn’t have his awesome ears, he wouldn’t have heard that. Best not to let them know. It kept things interesting.

“Ya sure know how to pick ‘em,” she purred. “Yeah, he’s a schmuck, but he’s one hunky shcmuck.”

Huh?


“I’m okay.” Oswald shrugged lightly. The cat woman, in the meantime, slid next to Mickey. Oswald kept an ear on her. She seemed to be implying something.

She leaned toward his brother. “Do you see the sparks?”

Sparks?

“See what?” Mickey raised a brow and lifted a finger to his chin.

“The sparks, man!” Sheba tossed an arm around his shoulder.

“Uh?” Mickey’s brow furrowed, and he stiffened a bit from her touch.

“Just like the sparks between us,” she said and lowered her eyelids.

Ooooh. Heh. Poor Mick.

“Uuuuuuh?” Mickey blushed, and his jaw dropped.

The cat smirked. “What’s the name, cutie?”

Oswald bit his cheek to keep from laughing. Mickey pulled back quickly. “Oh, hey! I-I forgot something...somewhere!”

“You wanna play cat and mouse?” Sheba puckered her lips, amusement in her voice. “We’re literally made for the parts, fella.”
Chapter Notes

Mercowe: For anyone who didn't read the notes in the past weeks, Tap is gone on her honeymoon, and I'm going to be posting some pictures of different characters she's drawn. I looked over all of them and decided to put forth a theme for each week. So! This week's theme is the wonderful ladies of this fanfic. That includes a certain villain! I hope you enjoy the pictures!
Later concept art for Alice.
Oh, there's the Alice we know. XD
A drawing of Alice's home. The Upper.
Sasha looking good and singing at the Dancing Lady.
The detectives looking ready for action!
Holly dressed up to go to a dance.
Last--but definitely not least--Madam Facilier. Poor Cups...
Pictures: The Gentlemen

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Here's our favorite character--Bendy!
Personally, I love how young and adorable Boris looks here. XD
Here's a collage of different things the boys have done. I love that Tap drew Cuphead and Mugman 'drinking'. ;D
I know that Tap drew this from a different scene in the story, but every time I look at this picture, I can't help but think it's from when they were at Oddswell's, pinned down behind a table with the others...
A look to the future. Those of you who read the comic know what I'm talkin' 'bout.
Sigh. Wilson Wiseton when they met him. He always makes me tear up. Wilsooooooon!
Wilson, before he was accused of murder and had to run away from the Cup Bros.
Wilson, going to a friend's grave?
A collage of Wilson.
I thought since this pertained to Wilson's research, it would be nice to add a little diagram about the races...and magic. I wonder what the guy in the hat is doing there? XD
...And Fairfax, the slimy reporter who competed against Xedo...

Chapter End Notes

Now, I don't want to raise any hopes here, but Tap does tend to stress/relax write, so there is a chance we may--I repeat--may get a chapter sooner than expected. She mentioned to me that she has been writing as she and her hubby have been traveling. We'll see. Anyways, have a good week, y'all!
So...There is a chapter in progress...But only part of a chapter...So, we all will just have to wait for next week, friends. Sorry. I hope you enjoy these pictures, though. The first section of art was drawn by Twinfeather for those of you who didn't see it when she posted them in the comments. I love them all. They are sooo beautiful! The second section of art are bonus doodles that Tap drew that I stole because I like them. Ha. Ha.

This is art drawn by Twinfeather, who has done a lot of amazing drawings for this fan fiction!!!

Bendy, Boris, King Dice and Black Hat, oh my!!
Scary, scary King Dice.

I love the Warners...They are the best!
Here's Black Hat again. I hate him...

But, I think Wiston and Xedo are adorable.
And...poor...melting...Bendy...

Also! Here is bonus material. This is not story related. It's just fun doodles that Tap drew. *Shrugs* Sorry, guys, I ran out of the other stuff...But personally, I think some of these are funny.
Tap called me a grammar wizard, and this is how she ended up deciding to draw me. Ignore the comment to the right...
I thought it would be funny to impersonate her.
But then I caught a cold and turned into a wet blanket.
This is Tap devotedly working on this story...Ignore the anvil.
Strange cartoon people in her life, including the grim reaper--AKA--her husband; our former roommate, the wind spirit; and a mutual friend, the fire demon...

Next is a short comic about said fire demon. The events portrayed here are one hundred percent true. Yes, there are such things as running trees. XD
Quick! Follow that tree.

How did this even happen?!

I don’t know. You tried to steal it, didn’t you?

We only needed a golden apple. Why would you try to take a tree?

Seemed like a good idea. Gold would pay my bills.

What bills? You’re a demon!

Well, I guess you would call it ‘debt’ but I never liked that term.
Well, in the words of Porky Pig, T-t-that's all, folks!
Mixed Feels

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Mic slides onto the stage. He is wearing a Hawaiian shirt and a loosely woven straw hat. "Hello! Welcome back! I had a great vacation myself, but I really did miss home! This chapter of the Inky Mystery features the brave and daring Felix the Cat! The great archaeologist and treasure hunter! The writer and researcher! Let's see what the world has in store for him, shall we?"

Chapter Notes

HELLO! My dear, dear readers!
Boy have I missed you! I have missed writing this! I am so excited to get back to it. This...isn't the chapter I would have returned on, but I'm neck deep in the comics. I. Am. So. Close. To the. End!!Aaaaaaaaaaaagh.
Anyway, that's on my side. YOU get to enjoy yourself again. Have fun and thank you for all the well wishes! You guys are the best! Boo and I had a great honeymoon. We loved it. Now, we are trying to pull together a living space and 'adult'. Hehehe. Me. Adult. That's funny. Thanks again! I loved all the messages! Those of you that asked questions, I'll get around to answering them...eventually. ^^u

Felix was in trouble.

Here he was, surrounded by lovely, sweet children. His best friend making a fool of herself and...him. He couldn’t judge Sheba, though. Felix was the biggest fool here. He couldn’t stop staring at Oswald. The bunny had been brushed, his ears were up, and his shirt was only partially buttoned. His sleeves were rolled all the way up, showing his toned arms. Ooooh, but that wasn’t the biggest change. Oh no. It was the light in his eyes. They were clear and bright and lively. The shadows were gone. The dull, blank stare was gone. It was glorious.

Ooooh dear. Felix was in trouble, and he knew it. One of the little ones hopped up and wrapped his tiny arms around Felix’s neck. Felix lifted a hand to hold the kid steady. The child’s father leaned closer. He wouldn’t look Felix in the eye and seemed troubled, his light eyes focused on something off the side. “Look. I don’t want to waste your time, but I need to say that--”

That voice! He had an amazing voice. Deep and smooth and containing a rumble that seemed to hint at a roughness that he was trying to control. Felix swallowed. “No! Not at all! In fact, I so totally fancy your voice. It’s divine!”

Ozzy’s eyes widened, and his face darkened with a blushed. Felix swore he heard a train wreck in the back of his head. The little one in his arms turned to face his father.

_Da heck was that Felix? You can’t just let your mouth run off on you like that!_
“Umm...thanks?” Ozzy dropped his ears and scratched the back of his head. His face was still flushed. Felix wanted the floor to open up and swallow him. “I just wanted to say I’m sorry for how I treated you last time.”

He...was ignoring it? Oh, thank the stars! Yes, ignore it! “What? That? Nah, no need for that!” Felix half ducked behind the child he was holding. His face was on fire.

They each took a second to compose themselves. Felix gave Ozzy a shy glance. His face was cooling. He wasn’t looking at Felix, but off into the distance again. Felix felt the corner of his mouth pull up. He seemed...less sad. It was nice. Felix was glad he seemed better. He wasn’t sure what changed, but he was glad it had changed.

After that, Felix wasn’t sure how long they stayed. Long enough for a lunch apparently, because the next thing he knew, he was sitting between Mr. Ozzy and the duck, his stomach was full while Sheba was complimenting the cook.

“Thanks for the meal, Duckers. That was purr-fetto!” She grinned.

“I know.” Donald grinned egotistically.

“Welp, I gotta scram, Sam.” Sheba snapped her fingers.

“Wait, you’re leaving already?” Felix asked.

“Yep, duty calls Feel.” Sheba shrugged lightly and stood.

“That’s one weird way to say ‘goodbye,’” Donald muttered under his breath. He smiled. It was best he go with her, there was no reason for him to stay after all. He stood up.

“Sheba, wait up,” Felix called after her.

“Oh?” Mickey came in from putting dishes in the sink. “It’s a shame you’re leaving so soon, but I guess if you have to.”

“Aww,” Sheba purred. She turned to him and put a hand under his chin. His eyes widened, and he went as stiff as a board. “You want me to stay, Mickey?” His face exploded with a bright blush.

Ozzy rested his head in his hand and whistled. Donald snickered and smirked. “Two girls? Nice!”

Mickey turned to scowl at his friend, and brother. “Guys, stop!”

Felix bit back a chuckle. He turned to Ozzy. “It was a pleasure meeting you and your lovely kids again, Mr. Ozzy.”

Mr. Ozzy tilted his head. “Ozzy?”

Felix blinked. “Sorry, isn’t that your name?”

He chuckled and lifted a hand to cover his mouth. His chuckles turned into full laughter. Felix swallowed nervously. He felt sweat form on his forehead. He had just made a huge fool of himself, hadn’t he?

“I’m so sorry for laughing. It’s just that Ozzy is my nickname.” Felix felt his face heat. Ozzy lowered his hand. “My actual name is Oswald.” At least it was a nickname. “No one calls me that much. Mostly just my brother and--” Suddenly his eyes widened, and he stiffened. He turned away and took a shaky breath. Oswald wrapped his arms around himself. What was going on?
“Mr. Ozz—I mean, Mr. Oswald?” Felix wrung his hands in concern. Was he shaking? What had Felix done? What could he do to fix it? Felix took a hesitant step closer. He had a hand half raised, unsure if touching him would make things better or worse. Was it a panic attack? A flashback? Did Mr. Oswald have P.T.S.D.? “Please say something,” Felix murmured. He could hear the worry in his own voice. A couple of the little ones noticed.

“Papa?” One of his daughters dropped her ears sadly.

“Oh no! Not again!” One of his sons hopped up next to the little girl. Again?

Mr. Oswald took a deep breath, still trembling, still clinging to himself like he was trying to hold himself together. He let it out in a puff of air. “I-It’s okay. I’m fine.” He lifted a hand in a stopping motion and didn’t turn back to face the cat. Felix’ eyes widened. He had definitely stumbled on something major. What had this man been through?

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Felix couldn’t stop from asking.

Oswald glanced at him from the corner of his eye. His large ears were down. He grabbed them and brought them close to his face. Almost like he was hiding in them. “I...I said, I’m fine.” His face flushed as he frowned into his large furry ears. Was...was he embarrassed! Felix thought that him ducking away was, well, absolutely adorable! No! Bad Felix! A serious thing just happened!

Felix lifted up his hands. “S-sorry! I’m being nosy again,” he quickly backtracked. “Thanks for everything.”

“Aaaaaw!” came the whine of several little voices.

“Do you really have to go, Mr. Felix?” one lovely asked. She came up and hugged his arm. Felix’s heart melted. He smiled sadly at the kids.

“I’m afraid so kids,” he said.

“Is it ‘cause you miss your hat?” It was the little girl that taken his hat last time. She put her little hands on its rim. “You can have it back if you want.” Cuuuuute.

Felix grinned and lifted his pack. “Nah, no worries! I got plenty of those.” He reached in and pulled out an identical hat. A little splash of stars appeared with it, twinkling at the lovelies before going out. He put the hat back on his head with a wink and a thumbs up.

“Wow!”

“Berries!”

“Woah!” the kids said in awe.

“Bye for now!” Felix waved.

“Bye-by, Mr. Felix!” the kids all cried.

“Awww, you lovelies make it so hard to leave.” Felix smiled. Suddenly, he was tackled in a pile of fluffy fur.

“Then stay for ever,” one darling said.

Felix grinned and gently wrapped his arms around a number of them. Several of the kids nuzzled him, and he could swear, he heard purring. “I wish I could, but I have things to do. Maybe we’ll see
each other again soon.”

Several of the children agreed immediately. Some pouted that he had to leave at all. How darling! Felix didn’t notice their father had gotten up until he was standing in front of Felix. A number of children hopped off him to make a path for their dad. He had a warm smile and soft eyes as he spoke.

“Thank you so much. It means a lot to me that you treat my children so kindly.” His smile grew, and Felix felt himself heat up. “I really do hope we meet again very soon.”

“Oh, Mr. Oswald.” Felix felt his lip curl.

“You sure you’re okay, though?” Oswald suddenly asked. “It seems like your cold is getting worse!” Felix felt his mind hit a wall like it had been in a car crash. Was he really blushing that badly? What was he supposed to say! In the end, he couldn’t come up with anything. The children all left Felix to go to their father’s side. They waved and called their goodbyes as Felix turned away. Oswald waved as well, that nice smile still on his face.

Felix hurried to catch up to Sheba.

“Ya know, If ya wanted to stay, ya could’ve just said so instead of makin’ me wait all this time.” Sheba smirked with her hands on her hips.

“Sorry, Sheba.” Felix shrugged. “Time really flies when you’re with those little sweethearts.”

Sheba chuckled and threw an arm around his shoulders. “Feels, if it won’t get ya in a world of trouble, I’d say you should write a book about your new bunny boyfriend!” she cackled. They made their way toward Sheba’s book shop at an easy going walk. It was a nice day today. There wasn’t a reason to rush.

Felix shook his head and rolled his eyes. “He’s not my boyfriend, and I’ll pass on even considering that ridiculous thought.”

Sheba chuckled again. “D’aawwww, but you two are so cute.”

Felix shrugged her away with a laugh. “Enough, Sheba. There’s no way I’d write something like that!” He thought--

A bucket of water landed with a splash over Sheba’s head. She shrieked as her clothes and fur were soaked. She ripped the bucket off and turned toward the nearest street corner with fire in her eyes. “INKY! WINKY!” she screeched.

The two kittens appeared around the corner with devilish, completely non-repentant smiles on their faces. Inky had a baseball cap turned backwards on his head. “Gotcha!” he cackled.

Winky’s cap was facing forward, a ‘W’ proudly displayed over the bill of the cap. The hat sat so low that it half covered his eyes. “Hey! You should have told us Uncle Felix would be here. We could’ve made a bucket for him too!” He laughed.

Felix dropped to a knee and lifted his arms. The boys rushed to him with excited smiles. “Hey, Uncle Felix! What’ve ya been up to?” Winky asked.

“Hiya Uncle Felix!” Inky greeted.

“Now W, there was no need for such a prank!” Felix admonished. He pulled the kittens into a tight
“But seriously, nice one kids,” Felix whispered. He winked as he listened to the two little troublemakers giggle quietly in his ears.

Sheba was squeezing water out of her hair and clothes. She turned to Felix when he stood back up. “You’re enjoyin’ this, ain’t cha?” she said deadpan.

Felix crossed his arms and raised a finger, refuting her. “Hey now! You used to pull that on me all the time when we were kids.” Felix winked. “I’m just enjoying some sweet revenge.” He felt like there were stars gleaming in his eyes at that moment.

Sheba turned away with a huff. She smirked suddenly. “If only your boyfriend knew how much of a stardusted schmuck you really are!”

Felix felt his fur lift as he bristled. “He’s not my boyfriend!” he hissed at the soaked cat.


“Yeah, Uncle Felix! Don’t fall for the yucky trap!” Inky fake gagged. Felix grimaced.

“Whoops!” Sheba covered her mouth. She quickly turned to his nephews. “Now, that there is a secret, boys! You keep it no matter what.”

The two shared a look. Sheba frowned. “For your uncle’s sake.”

“Okay!” they chimed.

“But why does it have to be a secret?” Inky asked.

“Well.” She drew out the word with a sly smirk.

“Sheba!” Felix whined. “Stahp!”


Felix sighed. “It’s...hard to explain. It’s not...really bad...per say. Just, uh, complicated? Can you do this for me, boys?”

The boys nodded. “I don’t get it, but alright!” Inky said. Felix let out a sigh of relief.

“Boys!”

“Uh-oh! Gotta go! Bye Fun-cle!” Inky waved. The two raced off. Sheba rolled her eyes. Once they were gone, Felix looked over at her.

“Ya know, for someone that cares about my career, you sure are doing a good job trying to ruin it,” Felix muttered.

“Pfft,” Sheba scoffed. “The public’s opinion is dumb. You should do what you want, Feel. Chase down your sunblazin’—”

“Sheba!” Felix shrieked. The female cat burst with laughter. He marched away from her and toward the shop.

“Wait up! Haha! I’m sorry!” she called after him, still laughing. “But your face, man! If only you could see it!”
Felix’s ears dropped. He listened to her squishing footsteps. She was still completely soaked. Felix smirked. He’d have to do something to repay the boys.

“I always do what I want anyway. You know that,” Felix said.

“Yeah, but you are terrible at dating,” Sheba said.

Felix sighed. “I’m not going to date him.”

Sheba shrugged. “But you just finished a date with him. Stars, you already met the family!”

Felix felt heat rise in his face. “Wha—bu—no, I didn’t! We literally ran into them!”

“Suit yourself.” Sheba smirked. “But it looked like a lunch date to me.”

“Sheba!” Felix groaned. She snickered. “But your ‘support’ aside, we both know I can’t. I would lose a lot of funding and support.”

Sheba snorted. “Those old crones and bats at the universities and museums shouldn’t have any say in your personal life, Feel. You and your friends have discovered dozens of things that have changed history already! So what, if you’re crushin’ on a fella!”

Felix sighed. “It’s about image and politics.”

“That’s so starfallen stupid!” she hissed.

Felix inwardly agreed. “Point is I can’t afford to lose their support right now. Not with some of the things I’ve come across lately.”

“You talking about your trail following Wilson Wiseton?” Sheba muttered. Felix nearly tripped in surprise. He stumbled and caught himself.

“Wha—”

“Oh please, like you came back to town to have me edited and publish you unfinished manuscript?” Sheba rolled her eyes. “It’s obvious you're here because of the owl. You were one of his favorite students…and a pal.”

“Colleague,” Felix corrected.

“Oh please! You guys were pals!” Sheba shook her head with a smile. Felix smiled. Wilson had always had a compliment for his mind and work. He thought Felix’s methods were a little foolhardy, but Wilson told him once that he had a certain class to his daring feats.

“Well, I can’t argue with you. Do you know what’s been going on?” Felix asked.

“Of course!” Sheba rolled her eyes. “The minute I heard his name, I knew you’d ask about it.” The woman began explaining to Felix everything that had been reported on the news. Felix listened carefully, not fully sure how to take it all, considering what he knew. He didn’t feel inclined to share though. It was delicate and...well, her knowing about his feelings had been enough secrets shared for one day. Besides, he wanted to ponder on it longer before talking about it with anyone.

They reached Sheba’s shop. She took some time to wash off her ruined make up and change from her leather jacket into a simple white t-shirt and shorts. It was a touch odd to see her without makeup. It reminded Felix of their childhood. He decided to stick around and help with the shop. He missed his friend and the manual work of unpacking new orders was a nice distraction. They went about
tasks in silence for a while. Felix’s mind went back to that morning and lunch. He had never been so flustered before. It was like he lost all focus and his head had started floating. It wasn’t normal for him. He was usually level-headed, yet around Mr. Oswald he lost all hope for being savvy. Good heavens, it was embarrassing.

Why was he being like this? He was pretty sure he wasn’t interested in...gentlemen, yet...Oswald was different. He couldn’t put his finger on it. What in the world was wrong with him? Either way, he couldn’t do anything about these feelings. Society wasn’t accepting of it, and to be honest, worse things could happen to him or Mr. Oswald than a loss of career or face to the public if his feelings got out. Felix couldn’t do that to Mr. Oswald or his family. Plus, he needed his resources if he was going to do anything about this Ink Illness business.

And he planned to get involved. There wasn’t anyway he wouldn’t. This was earth changing! History in the making! Heavens, maybe he would be able to bring Wilson’s story to light sooner than he’d thought. He hoped to attend Dr. Oddswell’s upcoming trial. Then, Felix would offer his help and the knowledge he had to the doctor, as long as the lizard was free of his charges. If not...well, he’d go from there.

So, to accomplish anything, even simply traveling, he would need his resources. Thus, he couldn’t acknowledge anything for the handsome bunny...even if every word and action around the man gave Felix away like a neon sign. Felix felt heat rise in his face just thinking about it. Was he as bad as he thought? Another opinion might be a good idea...Maybe. Felix glanced to the front of the shop where Sheba was. She wouldn’t tell and was one of his oldest friends. It’d be fine to tell her. Stars, she was even rooting for him, the oddball.

“Um, Sheba, do you think I act weird whenever I think or I’m around him?” Felix asked as he unpacked the box. She seemed to know instantly who he was talking about because she answered immediately.

“Not really, you’re just in love, fluffball.” Sheba’s voice drifted to him from the front of the shop. Oh heavens above, that was not what he meant! He wasn’t ready to hear something like that!

“N-no! I mean, uh, I act a bit half my age. I just don’t think it’s normal for an adult like me to act in such a way.” Felix scratched the back his head uncertainly. Golly, he had a lot to think about.

“Well.” Sheba came into the back room and dropped a box on another stack. “You never wanted to get into such things even in your golden days.” She shrugged. “So, I guess your inner youth is finally comin’ out.”

“You think so?” Felix felt his lips curl. It was true that he had always been busy either studying, writing, or getting into trouble. He hadn’t gotten involved with anyone since...well...Candy Kitty, and that had been...Yeeeesh.

“Oh! Here it is! I knew I saw these guys from somewhere before!” Sheba grinned as she pulled out a poster and held it up.

“Uh?” Felix murmured.

She turned the poster around to show Felix. “Ya know, Mick and your bun-bun crush.”

Sure enough, there was a picture of a younger Oswald and Mickey. The mouse must have been a teenager. Oswald was dressed in a dramatic vest and long sleeved shirt. His long ears were up, and his smile was slick. He held up a hand of playing cards. Mickey was wide-eyed and energetic, his arm thrown out in a showman gesture. He looked so innocent and young.


“This poster is really old, though, back when it was just the mouse and his bro.” She lowered the poster. “Some friends of mine tend to talk about how their crew got much bigger, but I guess I never bothered to care, eh. Something about a clown and a flying elephant.” She shrugged. Felix snatched the poster from her to look at it closer.

He...looked so different. Happier, lighter, and so on. Felix frowned. He was so very handsome, it was painful. What had happened? Was it the loss of his wife? How long ago had it been? Those children weren’t very old...Felix swallowed. Could he ever look that lighthearted again?

Felix couldn’t be sure. He didn’t even know if it was his place to do anything about it, even if he had any idea of what to do. Still, he couldn’t help but want to see Mr. Oswald smile like he had today with his children, to be as bright as he was next to his younger brother. Obviously, the man loved his family. He wondered what his act had been like...

Oh boy. He didn’t know if he would be able to keep these feelings from them. From him. That was not good.

Felix really was in deep trouble.
Mic walked on to center stage and adjusted his bowtie nervously. "Oh dear," he muttered. He looked over off stage before turning back to face you. "Welcome ladies, gentlemen, and readers of all kinds to another chapter of Bendy and Boris in the Inky Mystery!" He cleared his throat and glanced away again. "I, uh, need to issue a loud warning so please bear with me readers."

~~WARNING!! There are descriptions of violence and abuse in this content! For those that are sensitive to such topics, the author has provided a quick summary in the end note. Please scroll to the bottom if such topics are troubling to you. Thank you. ~~

Mic cleared his throat again and returned to his normal volume. "Thank you for understanding. The author doesn't want to cause anyone any real distress. For the rest of you, please enjoy!"

Chapter Notes

Hello readers! Sorry about the warning, but when things need to get real in this story they do so pretty quick. I have been avoiding this all week and finally got it finished. -_- I didn't like writing it, but it had to happen. :(  

On a completely different note, school is starting up again so I'm gonna get busy! Yaaay! Married life agrees with me. Boo and I have been enjoying our time together immensely. I'm gonna miss my reaper when I go back to class. *sigh* The sacrifices made for a higher education. Anyways, enjoy the chapter. See you at the end.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy growled. That was it! He was done!  
“Bendy?” Boris asked as the demon dug through his bag and pulled out some clothes from the bottom of it.

“What?” Bendy snipped.

Boris’ ears drooped. “What are you doing?”

“I need a drink. I’m going out,” Bendy stated. Today had been a bust. He needed to loosen up, have a little fun, maybe find a willing dame that would like to dance.

“Are you sure that’s…” Boris started to ask, but stopped. The wolf looked at him. Bendy returned
his searching gaze with an annoyed frown. Boris sighed and nodded. “Be safe.”

Bendy blinked, then nodded. He half expected a lecture and following argument. There must have been something in his expression that changed the wolf’s mind or maybe Boris was just taking pity on him. Bendy took off his shirt and started buttoning up a clean dress shirt. “Don’t wait up.”

“Like I could do anything else.” Boris rolled his eyes and plopped onto the bed.

“You could come, bring your clarinet,” Bendy halfheartedly offered.

“Nah.” Boris waved off his offer. “I’m exhausted. I’ll just watch something from the telly ‘til you come back.”

Bendy changed into dress slacks and pulled on a pinstripe vest. He rolled the sleeves up to his elbows. Dress shoes finished the look. “Alright, I’ll try not to be too late.”

“Have fun bro,” Boris said, deadpan, and gave him a little wave. Bendy left the hotel and headed back toward the inner city. He had lost the whole day to the meds, supply shopping, and then, people just bugging them. They had made the mistake of going near the university. There, people apparently were more open to talk. The boys were questioned by a number of students, staff, and professors. Some were very open about their opinions on Ink Illness, the court and justice system, and--to Bendy’s great annoyance--him.

Sure, there were some that were supportive, some intrigued, but others...Well. Bendy was really stuck wondering what in the world was going through their heads. He’d had to deal with the questions he usually got for being a demon. But, there were new questions he hadn’t been ready for, questions about Oddswell, Ink Illness, the mob, and so on. He was given advice (useless opinions) on what he and Boris should do. The wolf pup had even had to hold him back from knocking the teeth outta some pompous schmuck once. The guy had really thought he knew why the two were there and what they wanted. Money and fame. Ugh. He had been asking for it!

Bendy growled again. He did not like this kind of attention. He was used to keeping his head down and blending into the background as best he could. The only time he came into the stage light was to dance.

He took a deep breath and let it out in a rush. That was the light he was after tonight. It took him a bit of a walk to reach a promising club. It wasn’t in the loud, boisterous scene of in the inner city. This place was easy going, calm, good for some jazz and a slow dance.

Bendy stared at the sign for a moment, deliberating if he should look for a more exciting place. He checked the time, then headed in with a shrug. The lights were dim, the tables were lit with a candle. It was kinda laid back, like he expected, but it would do. He went up to the bar and snapped his fingers. “One martini and make it snappy.” Bendy smirked to show he was making a joke.

The good-natured bartender nodded and smiled in return. “Comin’ right up.” He turned, cleaning the glass in his hands. Bendy let his eyes rove over the crowd. There weren’t any dancers at the moment, and the song wasn’t the right tune to dance to anyway, but…

Hold the phone. Bendy did a double take. It was! It was the cute nurse from the hospital. She was there with a rather beautiful friend, a rabbit in a very flattering dress that stopped at the knees and showed a pleasing amount of shoulder and back. She seemed annoyed and bored. Bendy bet he could fix that. He felt his lips pull up into a smirk. He couldn’t believe he hadn’t made a move on the bird nurse before. Guess the time hadn’t been right. Well, it was time to fix that now.
He adjusted his vest before he approached. It didn’t take the beautiful bird long to recognize him. “Oh, hey! It’s you. Your friend is better than ever, I can assure you.”

Uh? Who…? Oh, right. “Oh, I know.” He held back the sarcasm and kept his smile in place. The facade of a gentleman was an important one for first impressions. “Thank you miss—” He drew out the word, waiting for her to fill in the rest.

“Dovil Feathertin.” She lifted her hand to introduce herself. She wore long, white gloves and a classy hat that matched her dark, strapless dress. “Pleasure to meet you, mister?”

“The pleasure is all mine.” Bendy took her hand and kissed the back of it. “The name is Bendy.”

“And this is my friend, Francine Cottontail, but we just call her Fanny.” Dovil waved her hand toward the rabbit woman.

Bendy also kissed the back of her hand. “Miss.”

“Charmed,” she stated.

“Care to join us? We’re just waiting for my boyfriend to arrive.” Dovil smiled with a glimmer in her deep, dark eyes.

“Oh?” Bendy muttered. Well, she was out for him. He didn’t make moves on other guy’s dates. That wasn’t his intent. Sure, he might ask for a dance, but that was it. He didn’t play the game that way. It wasn’t...honorable.

Well, maybe he would have a chance with the rabbit. “Sure.”

“So, you’re one of the B-brothers, right? The ones in the papers and on the news?” Fanny asked suddenly.

“Fanny!” Dovil piped, embarrassed.

“What? You want to know too.” Fanny raised her brows condescendingly. Bendy glanced between the two. Uuuuh. He sat down next the rabbit, now less sure of this than he had been three minutes ago. Fanny turned back to him. “So, are you?”

Bendy sighed inwardly. Please let this go better than it had near the school. “Yeah, that’s me.” Dovil gasped and Fanny nodded.

“You and your brother were so brave in the courtroom! The way you stood up to everyone was the bees knees!” Dovil complimented.

Fanny huffed. “Yeah, real heros.” She rolled her eyes. “Now, anyone that gets the flu or just a mild cough comes in and thinks they’re dying. The hospitals in town are getting overrun with Ink Illness epidemic mania.”

“But it is nice to know what was going on with that Wakko boy. You were really worried, remember?” Dovil pointed. Fanny grumbled and looked away. Dovil smiled.

“Don’t mind her grumpy attitude. We are grateful to have some answers,” Dovil said.

“What we need is a cure,” Fanny muttered.

“Oddswell is working on that. My brother and I are helping,” Bendy said. He hadn’t come here to talk about this. He had wanted to get his mind off Ink Illness.
“Oddswell,” Fanny scoffed. “He’s been in prison for weeks. And how are you helping?”

Bendy smirked. “Oh, we just spread the word, travel around, try to find resources, and so on.”

Fanny kept her unimpressed frown. “That’s it?”

Bendy frowned. Time to change subjects. “So, what has you out on the town tonight?” Bendy asked the rabbit.

“She’s my third wheel and wing woman,” Dovil jumped in with a smile.

“That, and I needed a break from my husband,” Fanny added with a shrug. Bendy felt his eye twitch. Married. The woman was married. Great. Whelp. This was a waste of time.

He stuck around through some more idle chat before finally extracting himself from the girl’s questions and comments. It was all work or town gossip. And sadly, Boris and he were the town gossip right now so...Yeah. Otherwise, they wanted to know about Oddswell’s upcoming court case and just assumed he and his brother would be there.

He pulled himself back to the bar and bared his fangs in frustration. “One has a boyfriend, and the other is friggin’ married. Why not?” he hissed to himself. He waved at the bartender and got another martini. He chugged the thing before the guy stopped talking. Carelessly, he set the empty glass aside where it tipped and somehow didn’t break on the bar counter. He sighed and let his head fall into his hand. He rested his other elbow on the counter.

Why was he here? Why did he even try? He didn’t have a chance in hell. Flirting, wanting to date, it was ridiculous for him. Why did he do this to himself? Was he hoping things would be different in the city? Or that his infamy turned fame would win him some luck? Stupid. He was still the same demon. It was still the same old dance. And even if he did have a chance, he couldn’t be there for any girl.

He was going to die soon anyway.

Bendy’s shoulders dropped. If it wasn’t from thugs, traps or witches, it would be this starfallen illness. No dame should have to sit on her thumbs and hope he came back from this quest. Sure, his and Boris’ names were now clear, but they still had such a long way to go. Stars, with how bad that last attack had been, Bendy didn’t know how much longer he could keep this up. He kept up a brave face for Boris, but if it was going to be like this from now on, Bendy didn’t know if he’d see the end of the week.

“Another one, sir?” the bartender asked.

Bendy looked up. “Yeah.”

Fanny grimaced. This night had grown insufferable. Ever since Dovil’s date, Puphead; not Cup head like she had originally thought, but Pup head; had shown up, the two of them had been all over each other. Fanny could have gagged and nearly did a couple of times. Dovil’s date with the doctor was going swimmingly, and Fanny almost wished that kid would come back. At least he had pulled some entertaining faces. But alas, no such company came her way. Thus, she was trapped, forced to witness the unending drivel of two touchy-feely, cupid-clowns attempting to flirt.

When Dovil had invited her to have a night of drinks, this wasn’t what she had in mind. She had thought that young punk was going to come. She had thought he would be shy, and mumbling, and easy to mess with. She was sure that guy would be a hoot to get drunk. But no. She was stuck here
with this fancy pants doctor making disgusting puppy eyes at her friend. This had become a flat-tire event.

Cripes.

She wasn’t drunk enough for this. Sadly, she couldn’t and wasn’t willing to get drunk enough to forget this. She had work the next day. When it was late enough, she tried to excuse herself, but Puphead insisted on walking her home.

So, this was how all three of them ended up leaving and calling it a night. Dovil was wrapped around the dog’s arm as they walked. Fanny couldn’t tell if their faces were flushed from the drinks or from the cringey flirting. Fanny missed what Puphead said, but Dovil giggled obnoxiously.

“No need to be such a gentlemen, Pupsy.” Dovil winked.

“Pupsy? Oh, goodness!” he chuckled.

Fanny grimaced again. “Oh, the pain.”

They finally reached her door. From what she had seen, she didn’t have to worry about this guy giving Dovil any trouble, so she was comfortable leaving her friend with him. Fanny was certain that the doc would just walk her to her home and--gag--be a complete gentleman and call it a night. There may be a kiss, but Fanny didn’t want to imagine that. Her queasy stomach could only take so much. She opened her door.

“See you tomorrow, sweetie!” Dovil called from over her shoulder.

Fanny turned and waved. “Bye.” Dovil drove her nuts some days, but Fanny still loved her feathered friend. She hoped this worked out for her. Dovil deserved to be happy, even if it disgusted Fanny.

Brute leaned out into the entrance hall. He was a tall, muscular wolf. His hat was broken, and he had on his lazy overalls on. Fanny shut the door and walked past him. “Hi hunny,” she greeted as she went.

“Don’t you find it off that the man of this house has to make his own dinner while you spend the night having fun with your loose friend?” Brute grumbled with his rough growl-of-a-voice.

Fanny felt her brows furrow. She looked over her shoulder toward her husband. “Umm, I’m pretty sure I made you dinner. You just had to heat it up.” She dismissed his jab at her friend. Brute didn’t like Dovil at all, and Dovil disliked Brute just as much. Their mutual hate was the reason they never went on double dates. That, and Brute never wanted to go were Dovil and Fanny choose to have dinner.

Brute followed her into the living room. He crossed his arms when he stopped next to her. “I’m sorry, hunny, but I had a hard day at work, and I’m just too tired to do that.” All he had to do was turn the damn knob on the damn oven and set a timer. Pull it out, and there was food.

Fanny took a deep breath. “I know, Brutsy.” Fanny turned away and started to brush her ear with her fingers. “But I had a hard day at work too, so if you don’t mind, I’d like to relax--” She should have known better than to turn away because suddenly her ear was yanked out of her hand. She found herself half lifted off the ground. Pain shot down her sensitive ears and around her head. She cried out.

He lifted her face up next to his. “Alright, you listen here, ya rag! I’m hungry, so I better see my dinner served to me, okay!” he barked in her ears.
She felt tears come to her eyes. She was shaking. He snarled, “I said o-kay!”

She swallowed. “Okay, okay! Let go of--”

“Don’t you dare cussing sass me again, capiche?” he growled.

“Mhm,” she hummed. The tears spilled over, and she fought the urge to grab his hand to relieve some of the pain.

He threw her down. The right side of her forehead hit the corner of the coffee table. She cried out in pain again. Hot liquid quickly flowed from the wound. “Now, get to work!” She was bleeding. She covered it with her hands, trying to think past the throbbing in her head. Brute scoffed and walked away. “Oh, you’ll walk it off. You’re a nurse, remember?”

Fanny bit back a whimper. She waited until she could see past the tears and then pulled herself up, going to the bathroom to get out the bandages. Quickly, she cleaned off as much of the blood as she could. Her eye was starting to swell. Cripes. She wrapped the bandages around her head. The first layer quickly became soaked, but she kept going. She really should have known. He was in a bad mood. She sighed. These little fights between her and her husband happened often enough that she shouldn’t have been surprised.

She’d have to cover her eye tomorrow. Makeup wouldn’t be enough. Stars.

No, she shouldn’t complain. She was lucky she’d found a man with a decent job. Little fights like these weren’t going to end it all for them. Besides, it wasn’t like marriage was about love and all that stardust. She had tried that avenue, and it had ended in heartbreak. Definitely not worth it. Dumb rabbit.

No. There wasn’t a difference. Whether it was the heart or the body, men only knew how to hurt people. They were all the same.

Boris lay on the bed and flipped the channel to a crime show. After living one himself, it wasn’t the kind of show he was very interested in, but it was better than nothing. Bendy sure was staying out late. He should be home soon, but Boris had a guess at what state he would be in.

As if taking that as a cue, Bendy slammed the door open. “You’re back,” Boris said in greeting. His brother’s face was flushed, and he had a dopey smile on. His vest was unbuttoned, and his dress shirt was a bit wrinkled. Ah, so Boris was right in his assumption. Bendy plopped on the bed next to Boris and leaned on one arm toward the wolf. Brois could smell the alcohol on him. Bendy made a hand gesture.

“Ya know,” he practically sang. “Whenever um crusin’ fer chicks, I end up bein’ all sad an’ stuff,” he stated in a slur, like it was the most obvious of facts. “Buuuuuut, wheneves I’m wisssh--hic--you, I’m aaaaallll happy again.”

Boris furrowed his brows. Bendy seemed to be on some logical path in his drunken state. “Soooo, blaze it! Yoouuuu be mah gurl!” Bendy poked Boris in the nose with a finger. He nearly fell over on top of Boris doing it.

Boris smirked. How many times had Bendy said this? “Okay?”

Bendy looked around, still smiling, but a little deadpan. “Yeah, I knows I’m drunk.” Oh good, then he remembered these conversations too. Bendy collapsed on his stomach next to Boris. Boris bent his knee, swinging his leg into the air and turning back to his show. This always seemed to happen
when Bendy went out in hopes of finding a date. Ever since he could legally drink, he would show up like this, either swearing off girls forever and determined to be a hermit or claiming that Boris was the only person Bendy ever needed in his life.

To be honest, Boris used to worry about it. He wanted Bendy to be happy, and he would treat any girl that decided to give him a chance like royalty. The problem was that the girls Bendy was interested in either didn’t give him the time of day or were unavailable. Now though, it was almost nice to have this happen again. It was a splash of normal amongst all of the crazy they had been through the past couple months.

“Nevermind.” Bendy sighed. “I’ll just date myself.”

“Uh-huh, you do that, bro,” Boris humored. He was in for one nasty hangover in the morning, but Boris knew he wouldn’t accept any water from him.

“Would dat be considered gay?” Bendy asked.

“Dunno.” Boris shrugged.

“Yaaay, I’m gay!” Bendy cheered. Boris snorted a surprised laugh. Oh man.

Chapter End Notes

Summary for those that skipped:

Bendy went out to get a drink and find a girl. He ran into Fanny and Dovil (the nurses from the hospital) and hit a dead end when he discovered Dovil had a boyfriend and Fanny was married. Bendy became depressed after that and drank himself silly when he couldn’t find an available girl to dance with him.

Fanny third-wheeled Dovil’s date. It went great for them. Fanny thought it was gross. She returned home to an angry husband (Brute) that bashed her head into a table corner. She bandaged her wound while convincing herself that this was a normal. Little. Fight.

Bendy returned to the hotel wasted. He lamented the fact that women depress him and tell Boris that he should be Bendy’s girl. Boris humored him and listened to his brother’s drunken rambles. He was grateful for something normal to happen after all the months of craziness.

Feewuu. Okay. That was a heavy chapter. Next week should be lighter. Thanks for reading! Hope you have a great week! There is a pair of Cups I’m excited to get back too! ^^ Until next time TAP out!
To Become a Quester!

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"Welcome readers one and all to another exciting chapter of Bendy and Boris in the Inky Mystery!" Mic waved his hand in a grand gesture. "This episode Bendy and Boris have some important decisions to make. Will they gain the help they need or trip into a deadly trap? Find out today!" He lowered the microphone from his mouth and walked to the side stage. Even with the microphone lowered the crowd could hear him. "Golly, I'm really starting to root for those boys. Hehe." He stopped. "Uh? What? What do you mean they can still--oh...oh no!" There was a muffled sound and then it cut off.

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello!
It's been a long week and I'm back in school!... Yay! It's weird not having Mercowe here, but I do love living with my dear Boo! ^^ To make up for such a short chapter this one is extra long! Ya know, as a gift...to you...and not something like, oh I don't know--mespeedingupsowecangettotheactionandanawesomeupIhavebeendyingtowriteandtheotherpartsof or anything like that, right?! -w-u hehehe. BUT SERIOUSLY I have been DYING to write this ever since I started in on Inky Mystery and it's taken seventy-five chapters to get here! Bendy and Boris need to get their butts in gear if they are going to build that thing! So, enough of my blabbering!
Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Boris groaned as he pulled himself out of their room. His fur was a mess, and he had bags under his eyes. “Why does he have to be extra loud when he’s drunk?” the wolf lamented. But Boris didn’t really have time to consider if he was the one suffering a hangover instead of Bendy.

A loud, familiar voice demanded his attention instead. “Boris!” A blur was suddenly in front of him, wrapping him up in a tight hug. “Good morning!” Mugs greeting. Oh yeah, he had a ‘friend’ now. He had forgotten about Mugs at some point yesterday. Then again, when Bendy had gotten a little overloaded with unwanted attention Boris had been busy trying to find a way to answer questions he didn’t have answers to and stop Bendy from attacking someone for being insensitive. It had been exhausting. Even though he was greeted by the excited Cupman, he wasn’t prepared for the other to suddenly appear.

Cuphead stepped out of his and Mugs’ room with a big yawn. His fluffy hair was as much a mess as Boris’ fur. Instead of his turtleneck and coat he was in a simple t-shirt and shorts. Boris’ stomach back flipped and landed somewhere near his feet.

As soon as he was finished yawning, the guy’s eye landed on Boris, still trapped in Mugs hold. Oh
shoot, the crazy one was coming this way! Was he even aware that Mugs asked to be his friend? Bendy had said they were playing nice now, but the look in his eyes seemed a little murdery to Boris!

Mugs pulled back and grinned at his older brother. “Mornin’ bro!” he greeted. Cuphead looked down on Boris with a dark, piercing glare. Well, this was it, Boris thought. This was how he died. Bendy was right. He had been way too trusting.

Suddenly, Cup’s face lit up with a bright smile. “Mornin’ Mugs! You too Boris!”

Boris locked up. Somehow, it was more unsettling than the usual Looks he gave. Boris gulped. He was still sure that this guy was a bit unhinged.

“Yeah Mugs, why don’t ya and Boris get ready and head to the market. You and I need supplies,” Cup suggested.

Mugs look like he had just been invited to a candy shop. “Berries! C’mon Boris!” Mugs dragged Boris by the arm before the wolf could protest.

“I’ll go talk to Bendy about us joining you guys on your quest,” Cup said and headed toward their room. Yeah, he should probably talk to Bendy before--wait.

“What!” Boris squeaked before he was dragged away.

Bendy pulled his shirt on and adjusted the collar. He looked in the mirror at the mess that was his hair. His face was pale, and he had a few shadows under his eyes. His head pounded with the hangover. It seemed like his pain tolerance had gone up since they left Sillyvision, he could still function despite it, at least. The pain wasn’t worth it either way.

“You always promise to lay off over drinking,” he muttered to himself in the mirror. “But noooo, you just love to torture yourself. Don’t cha, Bendy?”

Hands suddenly covered his eyes. He jumped and stiffened. “Guess who?” a disturbingly familiar voice asked cheerfully. Oh no.

“Cuphead?” Bendy muttered hesitantly. He had nearly attacked! The guy was creepily quiet. How had he sneaked in? Boris was quiet on his paws too, and that was the only reason Bendy hadn’t swung. Now that the raspy voice revealed itself, he kinda wished he had. He wasn’t ready to deal with this guy right now.

“Bingo!” Cuphead pulled his hands back. Bendy looked over his shoulder to the grinning thug. He forced a chuckle and tried to smile, but he was pretty sure it was a grimace instead. Oh boy, he wasn’t ready for this today. This guy was nuts.

“Who sneaks into a room to play guess who?” Bendy couldn’t help but ask.

“Ah, you don’t mind right, Bends?” Cup wrapped an arm around his shoulder. “We’re buds now, after all!” Buds? Buds! When had he agreed to that? Also, Bendy’s personal space was being invaded.

“Do you really want me to answer that?” Bendy murmured, disgruntled. Cup pulled back and looked at Bendy. His grin slipped away. He sighed and looked away. Whoa, what was with the mood swing?
Before Bendy could ask, Cuphead looked back at him. “You don’t believe me, do you?”

Was that a trick question? Did he really have to ask? He wasn’t sure what his expression was, but he was sure it gave away his uncertainty because next thing he knew, Cup was getting up to leave. “Sorry, I’ll just leave,” he said sullenly.

Bendy should just let the fella go. Let him walk away and never have to deal with him again...Though he doubted it. He should turn around and finish getting ready. He and Boris were heading to the mountains, and it wasn’t going to be an easy hike.

And yet...a twinge of annoyance pulled at his conscience. This was the guy that had chased him from at least Warnerburg, if not Sillyvision. This was the guy that shot at him a number of times, shouting threats and taunts. This was the guy that had a break down and nearly ended himself in front of Bendy. This guy!—that saved his brother from a mugger and even helped Bendy on two different occasions when he was having an Ink Attack.

Bendy was so done with this grey zone. Bendy grabbed his shoulder and yanked him back down on the bed. He ignored the minute fact that he was only a couple inches taller than this guy while he was sitting on a bed. Bendy swallowed the annoyance and growled. “Alright, sit your cussing rear back down, and let’s be real for a minute.” Cup looked back at him, startled. “Sure, we saved each other’s butt, and that was swell and all, but why the cuss did this conflict between us start in the first place?”

As Bendy talked, Cup pulled a leg up and rested his arm on it. His face became serious. His jaw twitched as he clenched his teeth. Bendy vaguely remembered Mugs saying something about them being forced to do this when they’d talk back in New Orleans. He also remembered being angry because the schmuck admitted that they really didn’t know why they were after Bendy and Boris. Well, the time had come for everything to be made clear. Bendy was sick of not knowing. Cup looked away. Bendy didn’t let go of his shoulder, just in case he tried to leave.

“Were you...forced to in some way?” Bendy asked.

Cup hesitated, but nodded. “Mhmm.”

Good. He was willing to talk. “All I can tell you is that we were forced to.” He cleared his throat and looked back to Bendy. His eyes were pleading. “But I hope you understand that I can’t tell you who forced us!”

Bendy took a moment to think. He didn’t know if that was a good idea. He needed to know who he was dealing with, why they were after him, why they were trying to stop him. Stars, how could they force someone like this to do anything!

Bendy focused on Cuphead again. “Well, I guess I can respect that.” He really couldn’t, but if he played his cards right, maybe he could get more information later. There was still the issue of this fella being a loose cannon. “But this is a bit sudden.” And how did it change so he and Mugs were being friendly now? “You’re still a dangerous killing machine with that power of yours.”

Cup’s eyes widened, and he suddenly grimaced, dropping his eyes to the floor. “I,” he choked and cleared his throat roughly. “I don’t like this power I have. I used to think it was swell but...” His voice broke. “Then I—After it hit my brother like that—” Tears. There were tears! Bendy’s eyes widened. “I-I just can’t stand it!” Cup wiped at his eyes vigorously with the back on his hand.

Ah! Ah! Nono! That wasn’t what he meant! The memory Cuphead’s despair back at that alley came to the little demon. “Noo! Nonono! You don’t have to remember that! I’m sorry!” Bendy automatically reached around Cup’s shoulders in a gesture of comfort.
He opened his mouth to speak, but then remembered that this wasn’t Boris… How the hell was he supposed to comfort this guy! He never really helped anyone crying except Boris and Sasha that one time! What was he supposed to do? What did he say? Embarrassment made his mind race.

He had nothing to say. No idea what to do. “Uuuuhh, um, there, there?” Bendy patted Cups’ shoulder awkwardly. Oh great! Good job, Bendy. Lotta help that was!

Cup had already brushed the tears away. He raised a brow at Bendy, then smirked. “Wow,” he finally said. “You bite at this!” Bendy was taken aback by that smarmy smirk.

He pulled back and stuffed his hands in his pockets. “Hey man! I’m trying at least!” He wouldn’t feel embarrassed or called out. Not by this schmuck! The smirk grew, and the stare Cup was giving him asked ‘really?’. Bendy kept his face serious. They both knew he was bluffing, though. The silence stretched. “Pfft!” Then, they were both laughing. Bendy pulled out a hand and scratched the side of his head.

“You don’t seem like you have many friends!” Cup said, still laughing.

“Ha! Shut up!” Bendy replied without any heat. He just didn’t have friends that cried in front of him very often. Weirdo. They finally got control of themselves.

“Well, I think it’s time someone shows you what friends do for each other. Let’s get breakfast,” he said easily and stood up.

Bendy blinked. “Uh?”

Cuphead snorted another laugh. “Breakfast. I’m buying. Be ready in fifteen.” He turned on his heel and headed to the door.

“W-wait, Boris and I--”

“Mugs already took Boris out shopping. We need to figure a few things out, and I don’t know about you, but I’m starved,” Cup said and waved as he opened the door and stepped out.

Mugs took Boris? When! How! But they had...a machine...piece...to.... The schmuck was already gone. Bendy scowled. Why did he feel like he had just been played? He turned back to the mirror with a huff and started to brush his hair. Boris would probably be fine, but Bendy couldn’t help the frustration burning in his soul. How many days have they wasted? Two? Three now? Bendy didn’t have time for this!

Bendy found himself at some cafe sitting next to Cuphead. He hadn’t bothered putting on his goggles or travel vest because--sigh--he wasn’t going to need them for this outing. All his stuff was back at the hotel, waiting. Cup, likewise, didn’t wear his long coat for once, opting to sport just his turtleneck and pants in the cool October air.

Bendy rested his head on his folded arms. “Whadda ya want?” Cup asked brightly.

“Don’t care,” Bendy replied.

“Yo doll!” Cup called to the waitress. “Two lattes and two muffins please.” The cute dog woman smiled and turned back to work. Cup turned back to Bendy. “See, that is what swell pals do for each other. I’m a real cat’s meow.” Bendy didn’t even have it in him to roll his eyes. Guess he was still feeling a bit low from the other day. Cup wasn’t letting him get away with no response though. He pinched Bendy’s cheek and winked. “I don’t do this for anyone, you know!”
“Knock it off!” Bendy swatted his hand away. Bendy turned back to the table and pulled the napkin toward him, fiddling with it. There was a breath of silence that, sadly, Cup decided to break.

“Seriously, Bends, what’s going on?” Cup asked. Boy, if that wasn’t the question of the cussing year! Bendy glanced up at him. His arms were crossed on the table top. He was looking at Bendy with large sad eyes. He actually seemed truly concerned. Bendy turned back to the napkin.

Just focus on the stuff that concerned him. “So, you fellas were sent to stop us,” Bendy started.

“Mnhmm.” Cup nodded.

“That means you know what we’re trying to accomplish, right?” Bendy asked.

“You mean building the machine?” Cup asked.

Bendy felt his brows knit together. “How--”

“I don’t know.” Cup sighed. He sounded just as frustrated as Bendy. “I was just told what to do. I didn’t get to know how or why. I don’t even know who’s really involved.”

Bendy watched him carefully, trying to see if there was any deceit in his body language. If he saw the smallest hint of something less than complete honesty, then Bendy would be out of there and in the foothills with his brother. But, to his surprise, Cup seemed genuine. Cup glanced to the side before looking at Bendy again. He put a hand on Bendy’s arm. “Look, while we’re talking about it, I thought that--Well, ya see.” He let out a breath. The guy didn’t seem to know how to say whatever he wanted to say. “You need us in you journey,” he blurted out.

“Wait.” Bendy blinked. “You wanna tag along?” Was this guy...Wait, bad question. Of course he was nuts. He shot deadly blasts out of his fingers, for Yen Sid’s sake!

“Sure!” He smiled gently. “The more, the better. Just think about it. How many times have you and your brother gotten by on dumb luck or someone else saving your hides?” he asked.

Bendy sat up and opened his mouth to give a sharp retort, but then froze as he reflected on the past few months. The detective’s evidence and witnesses saved them at court. Tiptail’s article helped with public opinion. Mama Odie saved them in the temple, and Mugs helped with the Voodoo Queen. Holly fixed the map, and Boris had gotten it from an angel. Oddswell and his pills. The Warners, Sammy and Finley in Warnerburg. Alice protecting the machine piece. Without all of them, Bendy and Boris would have been up a creek without a paddle. They had gotten a lot of help and had a lot of luck.

“How long do you think that luck will hold?” Cup asked. Looking back on everything, it was a miracle that he was alive now. “With us around, you would be much safer,” Cup offered. It was true. He and Mugs were powerhouses.

But…

Was Bendy willing to trust the Cup brothers with their lives? Even after everything that had gone down between them?

How had they been freed from whoever was forcing them before? That was the question that bothered Bendy the most. It could all be one big trick, and if he fell for it, who knew what the consequences would be. Just then, the waitress returned with two plates in her hands.

“Here you go, sir.” She smiled brightly at Cuphead.
“Thank you.” Cuphead took the plate and returned the smile.

“And these are free for you, little guy!” She turned the smile at Bendy and offered him the plate. He stiffened. Did he look like a child to--Well, obviously he did! Aaaagh! He heard Cuphead snicker. Oh great!

Before Bendy could say anything, though, Cuphead intercepted. “Excuse me, ma’am,” he said gently. “My friend here is a grown man.” Bendy’s eyebrows flew up in surprise, mirroring the waitress’. This was a surprise. “What he lacks in length, he makes up for in smarts, strength and looks.” Was that putting it on thick? Maybe, but he didn’t say anything that was untrue either.

The dog grew flustered. “Oh goodness! I’m so sorry!” Her face started to flush. “I didn’t mean to--”

“No worries.” Cup cut her off neatly with a bright smile. “At least his order ain’t free anymore.”

Bendy smirked.

“Hehe, yeah. Super sorry about that...again.” She seemed relieved that they weren’t angry and made a quick getaway.

“Well, ain’t you smooth all of a sudden,” Bendy commented. He rested his head in his hand. “You do realize you’re paying, right?”

“Pfft! What are you talking about? I’m always smooth.” Cup smirked back. “And I made sure that you aren’t getting free meals from this place later on when it’s your wallet’s turn.”

“Don’t you think you went overboard with those praises?” Bendy asked.

Cup’s smile dropped. “What? I was wrong?” He almost seemed annoyed that Bendy was bringing it up.

“Oh no, it’s true. I’m all of those things.” Bendy smirked. “I just didn’t know that’s how you saw me.”

Cup snorted and rolled his eyes. “Shut your trap, and eat your muffin.” Bendy chuckled. Okay, he wasn’t sure about the guy. He was still a bit shady, and he couldn’t really explain much to Bendy, but on the other hand; he seemed alright and was genuine in the things he could share. They ate in silence for a few minutes before Bendy finally decided on what to tell him.

“About you coming along,” Bendy started. Cup perked up and lowered his mug. Bendy smiled. “I’ll talk to Boris about it.” Cup’s face lit up like the sun.

“Oh! I knew it! I knew you wouldn’t turn me down!” Cup grabbed his hand and shook it excitedly. Bendy fought the urge to wince. He hadn’t exactly said ‘yes’, but what could he do in the face of all that joy and excitement? Bendy really hoped he was making the right choice here.

Boris really hoped he was making the right choice here. They had started pinching their pennies again, and he didn’t want to pick an overripe pear. He wasn’t the best at spotting these things, but he wanted one. He would get tired of canned food quickly and knew that as soon as they hit the trail, that’s all he would have for a few weeks. He might as well enjoy the little things while they were still offered to him.

Boris ignored Mugs, who was using two glasses as binoculars--much to the annoyance of the shopkeeper. After he had gotten the list Cup had given him, the guy had gone around, goofing off.
Honestly, Boris wasn’t sure which of the two of them came off as younger...Wasn’t this guy older than Bendy? How?

He turned back to his fruit. This one smelled good enough. He paid for it and slipped it into his bag. He started to move to the next stand when he heard a loud, high-pitched shriek. He almost had to cover his ears. He turned to the source.

Mugman was holding a screaming mouse-child by the back of the shirt. In the kid’s arms, there was a fruit. Mugs looked like he was going to kill the kid. “Lemego! Lemego!” he squeaked.

Boris rushed to Mugs’ side. “Mugman! Wh-what are you--Let the poor kid go!”

Mugs plucked the fruit from the mouse. “*Hey! No!*” The kid thrashed and reached for it. Mugs gave it over to Boris.

Boris blinked in confusion. It was...his pear. “Wait. He stole this from me?” Boris looked back at the struggling child. He was trying to claw at Mugs’ tight grip on his back. Tears were coming to his eyes. He looked terrified.

It was too easy for Boris to put a young Bendy or even himself in the mouse’s position. Hungry, scared, and desperate. Fighting with everything they had to survive on the streets, every scrap of cloth, every morsel of food. It wasn’t a time easily forgotten. With his past standing behind him like a shadow, Boris offered the fruit back to the little mouse. Mugs’ brows flew up in surprise. The mouse stopped struggling and stared at him. “You could’ve just asked, little guy. Here you go,” Boris said.

The mouse stared at him with large eyes. He looked down at the fruit and back at Boris. He didn’t seem like he could quite believe Boris, like it was all a big trick. Boris understood that mistrust too. Back when adults were the worst. Boris smiled warmly and pushed the fruit gently into his tiny hands, then let go. The mouse kept looking back and forth at the fruit and the wolf. His face was starting to darken with a deep flush.

Mugs gently lowered the kid and let him go. “And stay out of trouble, okay?” Boris grinned. That made the tips of his ears flush. Cute. The child blinked and silently turned to leave. “Bye!” Boris waved. He wondered if that was the young mouse’s first positive interaction with someone as old as them. With how he acted, it was possible. Hopefully, it left a good impression. Boris could think of a few adults that did that for him. Sasha, specifically.

Mugs chuckled at the kid’s retreating back. Boris bumped his shoulder with his own. The two grinned at each other and moved on down the street. Boris could have sworn they seemed familiar somehow. “Hey Mugs, do those nurses look familiar to you?”

Mugs followed his line of sight and gasped. “What? You know them?”

Mugs shrunk behind him. What the heck? Boris perked his ears to listen in on the women.

“So, what did I miss last night?” the rabbit asked the bird.

The bird scoffed. “Oh hush. You know that’s not me.”

“Also, nice glasses. You sure are snazzy today.” The bird turned to her. The bunny grinned back. Boris guessed she was talking about the hat and sunglasses the rabbit was wearing.

“You know it, hunny!” the rabbit preened. The two turned a corner while Mugs and Boris continued straight. Boris raised a brow and looked back at Mugs. Mugs was watching them warily. It wasn’t
until they were a block away that he spoke.

“Those two were some of the people that looked after me while I recovered,” Mugs explained. “That rabbit is scary. I didn’t want her to notice me out and about.”

“Why?” Boris dropped an ear inquisitively.

“She was always on me about bed rest and taking care of myself and no matter what I did I messed it up,” Mugs muttered into his scarf. “I didn’t want her to turn her fire on me again.”

Boris chuckled. It was funny to see this fighting, big, scary thug cower in the memory of a bunny nurse. The rest of the walk back to the hotel, Mug talked about his time in hospital and the terror that was Fanny Cottontail. Boris did his best to not laugh...too much. It was difficult, Mugs could make some hilarious faces, and he made the most mundane things sound so dramatic.

“So, she took the pudding.” Boris chuckled.

“Yeah! Right out of my hands!” Mugs said, exasperated. “All day. I had chased that cup around all day. That was the only good food in that place, and she just walks by and plucks it away.”

Boris shook his head. “Oh boy.”

“No kidding,” Mugs huffed.

They were getting close to the hotel when they bumped into Bendy and Cuphead. “Hey bro,” Bendy greeted.

“Hiya Bendy.” Boris smiled. “How has the morning been?”

Bendy shrugged. “Interesting. Yours?”

Boris nodded. “It was eventful.”

Bendy turned to Cuphead. “I’m gonna go talk.”

Cup smiled. “Sure. Mugs and I will take the supplies back to our room and catch up to you guys.”

“Alright.” Bendy headed to Boris’ side. Boris passed the couple of bags he was helping Mugs with to Cup.

“Thanks for the help.” Cup smiled pleasantly.

“Sure.” Boris smiled uncertainly. Cup still made him nervous. He could never tell what the guy was thinking.

Boris and Bendy watched the Cup brothers walk away before Bendy turned to Boris. “So, whadda you think?”

Boris blinked and looked down at Bendy. “About what?”

“If about them.” Bendy tilted his head in the direction the two had gone. “They want to come with us.”

“Yeah…” Boris dropped his ears. “You were against it yesterday.”

“Yeah,” Bendy muttered, looking toward the hotel like he could still see them.
“And?”

Bendy shrugged. “Cuphead isn’t as bad as I thought. I dunno, bro. Do we trust them? They tried to kill us. They were forced to chase us and neither of them have shared much about it.”

“But?” Boris asked.

“But.” Bendy sighed. “Mugs really saved our tails with that Voodoo Queen in New Orleans, and if we are headed to a place like that swamp temple...” Bendy looked up at him with serious eyes. “If we have to face something like a giant snake, I’d rather have those blasts on our side. We can’t keep relying on dumb luck on this quest. It’ll get us killed. It’s a miracle we’ve gotten this far.”

Boris nodded. It made sense. Everything was so dangerous, and it would be nice to have a couple of other people watching out for them. “I think it’s a good idea.”

“Yeah?” Bendy raised a brow.

Boris nodded. “They seem okay to me. Mugs is really sorry about what happened. He isn’t a bad person. I think they honestly want to help.”

Bendy took a deep breath. “I just wish they could tell us more about why they were after us.” Boris hummed. “Anyway, let’s check out this shop and then head out.” Bendy pointed behind him. Boris turned to see a bookstore. He repressed a smile. Bendy just couldn’t help himself, obviously.

“Su--” An apple stand sat near the bookstore. “Actually, go on in, bro. I will be with you in a minute.” He still hadn’t gotten his fruit, after all.

The demon glanced at the stand, then shrugged. “Alright. See ya.”

Boris licked his chops. “Bye.”

Bendy opened the shop door. He didn’t see anyone around. Was the place closed? It was still a bit early, but most other stores and stands were open now. “Hello? Is it still closed here?”

“Nah, we’re open! Come on in!” A woman cat appeared from the back with a yawn.

Bendy smiled and headed to the shelf of adventure books. He scanned over the titles quickly. There were a lot of Felix books. Fantastic! Felix and the Ara Scroll. The Berlin Bridge. The Caverns of Crisis. The Stream of Gi’nal. He felt excitement rise in him. He had read all of them. This was how Bendy had imagined traveling the world. Adventure, treasure, excitement, mystery solving, not the terror that he was dealing with, plus a timer that was quickly ticking down.

“Hey Sheba, I washed the pan, but that mark isn’t coming off,” a male voice said.

“Eh, don’t worry about it. I’ll take care of it later,” Sheba dismissed. Bendy looked over his shoulder to see none other than the cat himself coming out from the back. Whaaaaa!

“You sure? I hope I didn’t ruin it,” he said with a furrow in his brows.

“Forget it. The thing is a piece of junk anyway.” Sheba rolled her eyes.

“Alright.” Felix’ eyes wandered to Bendy. The cat blinked before smiling. “Oh! Hey, it’s you! Bendy right? We met at that restaurant?”

Holy sun, moon, and stars! He remembered his name! *Felix the Cat* remembered his name! He held
in a strangled noise of excitement. Okay, he had to calm down. He had this.

“Hey, it’s you! Felix, was it?” Bendy grinned and lifted a hand to shake. Felix raised a brow, but didn’t drop the smile. “Heh, just kidding. I already know ya.” Uuuuugh, end him. Why did he say any of that? Felix didn’t seem to pick up on his inner panic. The cat shook his hand.

“So, how can I help ya?” Sheba asked.

“Uh? Oh. I was wondering if you had the latest Felix book?” Bendy asked. He tried to not feel embarrassed that the author and adventurer of said book was standing right there! Especially with that cringe-worthy reintroduction. It didn’t change the fact that the copy Boris had given him as a gift was busted. It was probably only going to get ruined again, but Bendy couldn’t help himself. He didn’t get to finish it!

Felix grinned, and Sheba chuckled. “Sure thing. One moment.” She headed to the back. “Oh Feel, you got something on your face,” Sheba said in passing.

“Nope?” Felix lifted a hand to his cheek and rubbed.

“How can you see it from over there?” Felix frowned. She only laughed at him. “Lemme just--” He lifted the side of his shirt to rub at his face. The hem lifted on his stomach and revealed the three jagged scars that ran over his right lower ribs and hip. Bendy felt his jaw drop. No way!

Those scars couldn’t be from the Fire Tiger, could they? Bendy remembered the tale. In his second book, The Lost Letter of Princess Oriana, he gone head to head with a Fire Tiger. While battling it, the tiger had managed to wound Felix very badly. But even with his wound, Felix had come out victorious. He recovered from his injuries, but the scars would forever mark him.

There were rumors that his books were mostly fictional, but this was proof that Felix’ adventures were legitimate! Holy stars above!

Bendy stepped next to him. He pointed to the mark. “Are those scars from your fight with--”

“The Fire Tiger?” Felix finished for him. “Sure are.”

Bendy grinned. “So, your books are actually about real events?”

Felix chuckled. “With a little exaggeration, but yeah, most of it is true.”

“Wow!” Bendy couldn’t hold back his excitement. Luckily, before he could really embarrass himself again, Boris came into the shop.

“Hey Bendy, did ya get what you wanted?” Boris asked.

“Almost, then we’ll head out,” Bendy said.

Boris glanced over to see Felix. The cat was going back to put books on an empty shelf. “Woah, am I seeing things or is that Felix the Cat?”

“No question, bro. It’s all real!” Bendy gushed.

“Bro, that smile is a little scary,” Boris muttered.

“Uh?” Bendy blinked.
“You’re gushing man,” Boris whispered.

“Yeah, well, maybe I am,” Bendy muttered back.

“Wait, what?” Boris snickered and covered his muzzle to hide his laughter.

“Don’t take that the wrong way!” Bendy said.

“How am I supposed to take? You gotta crush or something?” Boris asked.

“So what, if I do!” Bendy hissed back.

“What!” Now Boris was losing it.

“Bro!” Could Bendy stick his foot any further into his mouth?

The wolf calmed down after a minute. “Ah! Before I forget, Bendy, the map has changed a bit.”

“Changed?” Bendy asked.

“Yeah, the item moved and some of the details have cleared up.” Boris reached under his scarf and pulled out the map. “What do ya think? Should we look or wait until we get to the room?”

“Just open it up here. We’re the only ones that can see it anyway,” Bendy said.

They unfolded it and looked. It was true. The ‘x’ was now a weird symbol. It looked like a...gear? A cog? Uh. And it had moved from the mountain to the cliffs between the mountain and the sea.

“Think someone got it?” Bendy muttered. Boris shrugged. “Either way, it’s nice that it’s the piece that shows up and not just the place.”

“It’s just nice that we can read it,” Boris muttered.

“Yeah, I think the easiest way there is still through the mountains. Those cliffs, we wouldn’t be able to get near them on a boat.” If they could even find a way to get their hands on a boat. “So, right here at the base of Bulk Mountain.” Bendy pointed. “That should be the fastest and easiest way to it.”

Boris smiled. “Thank goodness. This is way easier than before. Now, this map really is--”

“Magical!” A voice behind Bendy made the two of them jump a foot in the air. Boris even yelped. Felix didn’t seem to notice their unease. He stared at the map with stars in his eyes and a hand on his chin. “Did you, by any chance, mean the ‘Ink Machine piece’ by the word ‘piece’? And is this an angel’s map? I can’t believe it’s real! And it really is blank! Golly!”

H-How did he know! Bendy stared in amazement. Boris raised a suspicious eyebrow...and ear.

Felix suddenly looked bashful. “Oh, sorry. I got carried away!”

“Umm, how did you come up with all that, sir?” Boris asked.

Felix’s ears fell. He looked off to the side thoughtfully. “Quite the strange discovery in the town’s nearby casino. Let’s just say, I found a secret message and spent ages deciphering it.” A casino? “After that, it seemed risky to tell the world of such a thing. It’s just hard to believe. A magical cure or what not. And with how much of a touchy subject Ink Illness is becoming...Well, there’s a reason I won’t be mentioning it in any of my books.” He almost seemed forlorn about it.
He snapped out of it quickly when he looked back at Bendy and Boris. “But, you two! You must feel like some sort of chosen ones with that map! Must be berries feeling like heroes!”

“U-us? Heroes?” Bendy blushed. Did his idol just call him a hero? Had he died and somehow gotten into heaven? What in the world was in that muffin he ate?

Felix lifted an arm and scratched behind his head. “Maybe I’m being nosy, but ya know, I can really offer you guys my help by joining you on this quest?” His voice went up at the end like it was even a question. He brought his hand down in a gesture like he was offering them something. To Bendy, it was the greatest, most unbelievable thing he had ever heard. “I know the way around Mount Bulk like the back of my hand! What do you say?”

“That would be--”

“Would you excuse us for a second?” Boris yanked Bendy away by the back of his shirt. He pulled the demon behind the shelves and turned to him with a worried expression. “Bendy, I--”

“Bro!” Bendy cut him off. “Before you say anything, let me just stop you there! This is Felix we’re talking about here. Felix! He can be a major help to us. Also, just think of being on one of his adventures!” Bendy sighed. Wow. “Being there, on his side all the time and...ahhgbsluaaa.”

“Bendy? Bro? You’re scaring me man.” Boris waved a hand in front of Bendy’s face. “You are waaaaaay too smiley. Can you come back to earth now? And what about the Cups?”

That brought Bendy crashing back down. He smiled, crossing his arms and rolling his eyes. “Let’s just say, he’s way more experienced and trustworthy than those cup-lings we so foolishly let into our team.” Boris frowned at him. Bendy turned around and went back to Felix.

“I don’t know if he is that trustworthy, bro. I’m sorry, but you told me to be suspicious,” Boris muttered to himself. Bendy ignored him.

“You can come with us, sir,” Bendy told him. “Just consider me your right hand man on this adventure!” Felix grinned.

“What? No, I’ll be yours!” Felix rubbed Bendy’s head vigorously. The demon usually hated things like this. It made him feel small, but with Felix, it was the best! The great adventurer just gave him the lead!

“So, do you need to pull together any supplies or anything? We have to head out today, especially if the piece is moving,” Bendy said.

“No need, young man,” Felix said. “I’m always ready to go on an adventure!” His grin became sharp with determination.

Boris stepped up to Bendy’s side. “Well, I guess you gotta admire his enthusiasm.”

“Uh-huh,” Bendy agreed in a giddy tone. This was a dream come true.

“I’ll grab my coat and hat, and then, we can head out!” Felix turned on his heel. He disappeared into the back.

Bendy could faintly hear him talking to Sheba.

“Where you headed off to?” she asked.
“An adventure awaits!” Felix claimed.

“There was wondering if they were those two,” Felix said.

“Wow, just make sure it turns out to be a bestseller,” Sheba said. “And call me up when you get back into town.”

“Sure thing!” Felix answered. He came back through the door with a smile, a worn heavy coat and his signature hat.

“And have that manuscript done!” Sheba’s voice followed him. Felix winced and smiled sheepishly.

“Alright! Let’s go!” Felix grinned.

And then, reality had to come in, because of course it did. This time, it was in the form of the Cup brothers walking through the door. “Hi, guys!” Mugs greeted. “We’re ready to go!”

Cup was right behind him. He was smoking a cigarette. His half-lidded gaze slid to Felix. “Who’s that with you?”

Felix tipped his hat. “Archeologist, adventurer, and writer, Felix the Cat. Pleasure to meet you!”

Felix introduced himself. Cups frowned. Bendy had to hold back a snort. Of course these guys wouldn’t know of him. They probably had never read a book in their lives.

“He’s joining us, so deal with it,” Bendy stated. If he was letting these two on, there was no way Felix wasn’t coming.

Boris quickly jumped in. “Ah! He, uh, means, ‘If you don’t mind.’”

Mugs grinned. “Berries.” Cuphead furrowed his brows and gave Felix a mild glare. Bendy ignored him and headed out the door.

“Alright! We’ve wasted enough time! Let’s blow this popsicle stand! We have a quest to get to!” Bendy declared with excitement. This time would be different. It wasn’t just him and Boris flailing around, hoping the answers would just come to them. This time, Bendy had a team. This time, Bendy wasn’t the only powerhouse they had. He was sure that they would get the rest of these pieces and fix that machine in no time!

Felix followed the group out the door. Bendy sure was excited! He liked that. The kid was a ray of sunshine. And to think, one of his fans was on this Ink Machine quest! One of the Bbros, even! Goodness, the things those two have already faced! And then there was the message about the map and machine in the casino…

As for the other two that joined them…Well…Felix wasn’t sure about them. The one in the scarf seemed pleasant enough. The other didn’t look very impressed. Boris fell back to talk with Felix. “We’re heading to our hotel to get our bags,” he said. Felix nodded. “Oh, and that’s Cuphead and Mugman.” Boris pointed to the two. “They are strong guys that can shoot lasers out of their fingers.” Felix blinked. Uuuhh?

“Out of…their fingers?” Felix asked slowly. He had heard the kid right…Right?

“Yep, some kinda weird magic.” Boris shrugged like it was nothing. Magic again.
“I gathered,” Felix replied softly and glanced at the back of their heads. Boris nodded. They walked in silence for a beat. The group made it to the hotel and their rooms. Cuphead and Mugman went into one and Bendy into the other. Boris stayed next to Felix. He waited another breath before he spoke up again. “Sir, there is one more thing. Since you’ll be traveling with us, there’s something you may need to know.” Boris’ ears dropped.

“Oh?” Felix tilted his head. Boris cupped his hand to his mouth and whispered into Felix’ ear.

“Ya see Mr. Felix, we are on a bit of a time crunch, but at the same time we may need to stop sometimes because...Well.” Boris swallowed. “Bendy has Ink Illness.” Felix’ jaw dropped in slight horror. “His attacks are almost daily. He doesn’t like talking about it so…”

“I understand, I won’t bring it up to him, poor kid,” Felix said quickly. He looked at the ground. How could such a happy kid suffer like that? He was so young too. And daily! How was he still standing at all!

Bendy came out of the room with three bags. He was now sporting a vest with a number of pockets and had goggles on his head. He offered the biggest bag to the wolf. “Here’s your backpack, bro!” Bendy smiled.

“Thanks.” Boris returned the smile.

The little demon looked at Felix next, the smile turning into a grin. “We’re all set, Mr. Felix!” The poor thing. He didn’t have long to live, and he was so young. The Ink Illness had no cure, and who knew how many years it would take for the Ink Machine to be complete. He was starting this quest with a sliver of a chance to see the end of it. Felix’s heart twisted. This was a tragedy waiting to happen, and yet, he was smiling so warmly, like he didn’t have a care in the world.

Felix would wear this knowledge like a steel burden on his back.

Bendy’s smile fell. “Mr. Felix?” He tilted his head. Felix pet his head and turned away. He had to say something. He couldn’t linger on it. Boris asked him not to.

“Alright then, let’s get going,” Felix said. He wasn’t sure what face he was making. This was what Professor Wiseton had been dealing with. These were the people he was seeking out. The people he wanted to help. This quest was to save them. But, time was an enemy and Felix had no illusions about how long this expedition would take. Weeks. Months. Years. Those with the Illness today would most likely not see the day the machine was turned on.

With that thought circling his hat like a vulture, Felix began the first steps of a new adventure.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys! Mercowe here. So, I wanted to share something funny that happened this week. As you guys may have noticed, last week’s chapter was a little shorter than usual. Like eight pages? The reason for that was because Tap absolutely hates writing abuse scenes and depressing stuff. She spent all of last week struggling through that scene and the ones leading up to it. Then, she sends me the link for this week’s chapter two days after we post last weeks, and she’s already written nine pages. XD The way she writes really cracks me up sometimes.
On a side note...So, recently I got a job...However, unfortunately it isn't an editing job. I don't want to get rusty though, (Eventually, I do want to get an editing job.) so I wanted to mention that if anyone out there has something they would like edited, I am looking for projects to do to keep in practice. Just send me an message through Tumblr (Mercowe there too), and I'll give you my email.
Quest Begin!

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Mic adjusted his bow tie and smiled from the stage. “Bendy and the quester start their journey—but it’s not all smooth sailing for the team!”

Chapter Notes

Hello! Sorry it’s a day late! This week has been nuts with changes and news and fun and drama and just—HUGHTENOFUWA!—Sorry, I have no idea what just happened. I think I need a break with a good book. Anywho, I am vibrating with excitement! It's starting! It’s gonna be awesome! Thank you everyone that commented! Mercowe and I love hearing from you guys! And those of you that are facing difficulties right now, our thoughts and prayers go out to you. One last thing, even though Bendy and the crew are outta town doesn’t mean things have stopped happening in Toon Town. Catch up with Holly over on Inky Extras to see what in the world is happening while the boys are out questing! Alright! That’s enough of my blabbing. Go enjoy the chapter!!

Cuphead was annoyed. The cat was ruining everything. He set the pace, he led the group, he kept chatting away to Bendy and Boris like old pals. He was getting in the way! Cup held back his grumble of annoyance. He had just gotten the pipsqueak to let them come along and now this schmuck was taking over like he had been here the whole time!

What the cuss!

And Bendy was acting like some pushover and letting the sleaze do it! From the few interactions Cup had with the demon, he hadn’t thought the guy was spineless. From that crazy get-away in the car at Warnburg to attacking the Voodoo Queen in New Orleans, Bendy was one to take charge and take action. So, what was this load of moon rocks!

He was acting like a little brat, mooning after the cat like the ground he walked on was sacred. It was annoying. The longer he had to watch, the more disgusting it became. Was this what the whole trip was going to be like? Cup might just gag.

He slid his eyes from Bendy, still gushing over the old fleabag, to Mugs, who was his other headache. Mugs was talking away happily with Boris. Mugs—who knew that this was all to get these sun blazing parts—was getting way too friendly. Sure, Cup didn’t want to kill these two either. He...kinda owed them. But, they were still going to betray them and rob ‘em blind! Last he checked, people weren’t very forgiving of such acts. So heaven help him when the time came that they had to split because Cup was not going to put up with his brother’s pouting. No way in hell!
They crested a steep hill, and Felix paused to survey the area. Cup suppressed a groan of annoyance into a sigh. Suddenly, something flew at his face and his hand came up instinctively to catch it. He pulled it back to see a large apple. Felix was tossing similar apples to everyone else. Mugs stepped up to join him. Felix grinned at Cups. “And what are you zoning out about?”

Cup narrowed his eyes, but before he could put the cat in his place Bendy spoke up. “Mr. F-Felix? Can we t-take a break, please?” Bendy asked quietly, his hand covering his mouth and chin.

“Already?” Felix asked with confused eyes. Cup looked back to the demon. He was somewhat hunched in on himself. Boris’ eyes widened and his ears dropped. “O-oh! I mean, sure thing!” Bendy turned on his heel and disappeared around a large boulder before Felix could finish, his brother right on his tail. Ah, he must be having another attack. Damn.

“Where are they going?” Mugs asked, a brow raised in confusion. Cup gave him a quick glance. Oh yeah, did Mugs even know? Cup wasn’t sure. They hadn’t really talked about it, and any time Bendy’d had an attack he hadn’t been around, at least to Cups knowledge. Oops. They’d have to have that conversation later.

“They’ll be back. Let’s just wait for them,” Felix stated in a somber tone. So, it seemed the cat knew. Great.

They found a place to sit and dug into their apples. After a few bites, the cat spoke up. “So, I’ve been told you guys can shoot laser beams out of your...fingers?” The cat’s voice raised on the final word like a last second question of disbelief. Cup oh-so-wondered who possibly could have told him that.

“Yep!” Mugs grinned from Cup’s other side.

“Mhmm,” Cup hummed from around his mouthful.

Felix perked up with a large grin asked, “Mind showing me?”

Mugs, rolling with the cat’s energy, turned to Cuphead. “Yeah! Show him, bro!”

Cup felt a twinge of annoyance. “Ugh, why me?” They had the same stupid power.

“You do way better than me.” Mugs smiled.

Cup rolled his eyes and stood up. “Such a bother.”

He lifted his hand and lit a blast. The energy built up into a soft blue glow. Easy, nothing to it. As easy as breathing, still he hadn’t done this in a while, just let a blast go flying. They hadn’t needed to use their blasts on the Mayor, after all. So, the last time he had fired a shot was--No! That wasn’t it! He had chased Bendy and Boris! Right! Shot up a whole restaurant. Chased them through the street into that alley, and when he didn’t see them...When he realized he was alone and nothing mattered and--

He was shaking. He couldn’t do it. Mugs and--No, he couldn’t. He couldn’t.

He dimmed the blast and shrugged with a pasted-on smile. Hopefully, Mugs wouldn’t notice the cold condensation on the side of his head. “You know what?” Cup said quickly. “You’re right. Mine’s already berries, why don’t you work on yours, Mugs?”

Mugs frowned and pulled himself up. “Oh, come on,” he complained and dusted off his pants. He readied his blast. “Alright!” He aimed out into the woods, a simple tree. Cup took a small step back. Felix stepped up to watch closely with a huge grin. Cup felt a shiver go down his spine. Mugs let the
blast go, and Cup turned away and lifted a hand to cover his eyes. He didn’t want to see the blue blast, the burns, the sound of crunching wood. Nausea made his throat close and his stomach turn.

“Astounding!” Felix praised loudly, bright stars in his eyes. Did he even know he could do that?

Cup quickly made a thumbs-up. “Nice o-one!” he said halfheartedly.

Mugs beamed at the praise, his eyes large with excitement and a slight flush to his face. He was doing...great. Just great. If Cup didn’t know better, he’d forget about the bandages around Mugs’ chest, the scars that he was still hiding from Cuphead.

Yeah. They were doing fine…

Bendy lost his balance again and caught himself on a boulder. He panted as he clung to the cool stone for dear life. The burning was intense, so intense. He was melting from the inside out. His limbs were shaking. He was already exhausted, spent, and he wasn’t even--

“Bendy! We’re far enough. Please rest!” Boris begged. He wasn’t even winded. “You can’t walk anymore.”

Bendy tried to suck air into lungs that no longer worked completely. Ink rushed up his burning throat, choking him, gagging him. Bendy coughed violently, and speckles of ink stained the rock he was facing. His skin was on fire, dripping down his face and blinding him. It mixed with his tears, making his eyes burn and sting. Finally, he was able to get control of his airways. “P-please take me further away, Boris!” Bendy croaked. “I don’t want anyone to see me like this, especially Mr. Felix,” he begged. The idea of the rest of the team seeing him this weak was just as mortifying as his body slowly melting away.

He sunk to his knees. Boris was next to him. “It’s okay, Bendy! It’s okay. No one will see. It’s just us! You’ll be okay! Let’s get your shirt and goggles off.” Boris worked quickly to remove his vest, shirt, shoes, socks, and goggles. He was only getting worse with every passing heartbeat. He was completely blind from the ink running down his face. He gasped for breath around the ink that built up in his throat again and again. His stomach was a rolling car crash of sickness and fire. His heart was pounding too fast, too loud. It felt like it was on the verge of bursting.

He wasn’t sure if he was going to make it. He cried and screamed himself horse. Boris-- he couldn’t hear the wolf’s words past his own screams, but his tone was soothing and calm. He hadn’t thought this could get worse. Every single time, he thought he had hit the lowest point, that the pain would either knock him unconscious or bottom out, it never did. This time was scarier. It felt like he was drowning in the ink, sinking from the world around him into a sea of pain. Touch was nothing but fire, he couldn’t move, he couldn’t breathe, he couldn’t see, he couldn’t hear. Maybe he had died and this was hell. Some people would say he finally was home. Ha. Boris wouldn’t like that. Was Boris still there? He must have melted completely by now, right? If he did, would it end? But...a puddle at Boris’ feet. He couldn’t do that to Boris! No! Nononono! Not his little brother! He had to live! He had to lead the team! But how was he going to do that if this was his Ink Attacks from now on? He was dying!

The pain was receding. Instead of relief, exhaustion replaced it. Burning heat gave way to cold numbness. He didn’t know when it went quiet. He just realized his ears had stopped ringing. There was a coolness that would brush his skin. It was wet. His arms, his chest, his back. What was that? It was kinda relaxing.

“Boris?” Bendy’s throat throbbed with pain.
“Bendy!” Boris sighed in relief. “I got worried when you went quiet like that! Don’t do that again!”

“So-sor--” Bendy sobbed. He lived. Stars above, somehow he’d lived through it.

“It’s alright,” Boris said. “We’ll clean ya up and regroup with the others in no time.” How was he so calm? Bendy couldn’t see his face. He was still covered in ink. Bendy felt the cool cloth on his head. Ah. That was Boris. He was probably making a mess of his brother as much as himself.

There was the dripping of water, a scrubbing sound. “No need for this, Boris, I’m making a mess outta you. Just wait until it cleans itself,” Bendy whispered. He absorbed a lot of it anyway. It didn’t matter.

“Is that what really matters right now? Stop saying stupid things and get over here,” Boris wrapped an arm around Bendy’s shoulders and pulled him over. Bendy half raised a shaking hand to stop him, but was just too tired to do it. The cloth washed the ink off his face, finally allowing him to see again. His eyes still stung, but it wasn’t in blinding pain anymore. Bendy blinked a few times to clear his vision and adjust them to the light of the day.

There was Boris, ringing inky water out of the rag he was using. His shirt had a few spot of ink, but his arms were soaked. He turned back to Bendy and gave him a tired smile. “Almost done.” It took a few minutes to clean him up. Boris did the best he could. Afterward, they just had to wait for the effects of the illness itself to recede. Bendy shivered and leaned back against Boris’ chest. The wolf pup sat behind him with his legs on either side of the demon. The wolf draped his arms over Bendy’s shoulders loosely. The two simply sat in companionable silence for a time. Bendy fought off the urge to sleep. He was a little dizzy and so tired.

Stars. This was the worst. How was he going to lead anything like this? Was it going to be like this every time from now on? Every other day? Worse? How could it be worse? Was being dead really worse? The mental imagine of Boris with a puddle of ink...Yeah, it could be worse.

But.

Why was he so calm? Didn’t Boris get it? Could he be this calm for the others? Maybe Boris would be fine. He could lead. Boris was a great leader. He could connect with people far better than Bendy could. Yeah, he’d do great! They had to complete the machine. Even if Bendy...wasn’t there for it.

“Hey B-Boris?” Bendy asked hoarsely. He was slowly regaining his voice, but there was still a ways to go. Boris hummed to let him know that the wolf heard him. “Can you promise me something?”

“What’s that?” Boris asked. He did sound tired. Maybe there was more pressure on him than Bendy had thought. Still, he had to press forward. They always pressed forward and everyone was relying on them, those that were sick and those on their team. They couldn’t let everyone down. There was so much at stake!

“Promise me that you’ll keep looking for the Ink Machine pieces, even if after I die, okay?” Bendy said. He felt Boris tense behind him. Bendy looked down.

“We’re doing this to save everyone, not just me,” Bendy explained solemnly.


“So go ahead, promise me.” Bendy looked up and slightly turned his head. He still couldn’t see the wolf’s face.

“You’ll be fine,” Boris stated with a shaky voice.
What? Didn’t he get it? What was going on? Boris needed to be responsible here! He had to be. There wouldn’t be anyone else to read the map.

“Boris!” Bendy hissed in frustration.

“You’re not going to die,” his voice sounded thick, he was shaking. Frustration lit in Bendy’s heart. Boris had to see the bigger picture here!

“Boris! Promise me!” Bendy demanded as he turned around.

Boris glared down at him with watery eyes. His ears were pulled back and fangs showed. “You’re not going to die!”

“You have a team to lead!” Bendy argued.

Boris pulled back and snarled. “No! We have a team to lead!” The tears escaped his eyes and stained the fur on his cheeks.

“It’ll be that way once I--”

“LA-LA-LA! I can’t hear you!” Boris slammed his hands on his ears and squeezed his eyes shut. Bendy grit his teeth. Why was he acting like such a brat! Yelling wasn’t doing anything.

With great effort, Bendy reigned in his anger. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Then another one. His throat was still sore, but the air felt good filling his lungs. Now, in a calm tone, he spoke. “Okay bro, I’m not yelling anymore.” He remembered that the wolf’s sensitive ears didn’t appreciate loud noises. Hopefully now they could talk about this reasonably. “But I still need to know…” Bendy trailed off. Boris sat hunched over. He had dropped his hands from his ears to wrap around his own arms in a mock hug of comfort. Like he could hold himself together as he sobbed his heart and lungs out. With tears flooding his face and his ears drooped, he was the image of misery.

Bendy felt his heart shudder painfully, not with this starfallen illness, but with the love that he held for the young wolf. His little bro, whose face still had the soft roundness that pups held. His innocent, sweet baby bro who was on the other side of the country from their home, trying to do his best. His brother who was trying so hard not to show his worry and heartbreak. Bendy felt his own tired, sore eyes sting with fresh tears. He stood up and pulled Boris into a hug.

“My baby bro,” he whispered. Bendy had pushed him too hard. He didn’t want this. He didn’t want to push his brother to tears. Boris had always been his number one priority. When had that changed? Bendy couldn’t do this to him. He couldn’t ask this again. Why did he have to be sick? Why did his sweet brother have to go through this? He didn’t want Boris to suffer like this. “I’m so sorry.” He petted Boris’ soft ears. He was. For all of it. Bendy wasn’t sure how long they stayed like that. He waited for the tears to stop before he pulled back. He was feeling a bit recovered, so he reached for his shirt. Boris had this dull look in his eyes. Bendy wasn’t sure if he could fix it either. “Come on now, the others have been waiting for a while.” He went to hunt down his shirt and pull it on.

He started to button it when Boris whispered, “Sir, we’ll be with you soon, please go before Bendy-” Bendy turned at his name, his eyes wide.

“Mr. F-Felix! What’re you doing here?” Bendy cried in surprise. Boris’ face fell.

“I just wanted to check on you fellas, seems you’re just fine,” Felix said quickly. He raised his hands in a placating manner. He looked a bit worried and very sorry.

Boris stepped up to Felix’ side. “It’s okay sir, no need to hide things from each other.” Bendy
blinked in confusion. Boris turned to Bendy. “We’re a team, Bendy. I already told him about your condition.” Felix looked away, sad and guilty.

Bendy felt his face heat up. He looked from Boris to Felix. What? What? His mind stalled and struggled to make sense of what was going on. Felix...knew? He, the Felix the Cat knew about his--! The horror and embarrassment crashed over him in waves. Felix knew! He thought he was weak and pathetic and a disappointment. Bendy clenched his shirt closer to himself like he could hide in it. Oh stars above, no! Why did it have to be Felix! He didn’t want that look of pity! Bendy didn’t want to see it! His eyes blurred.

Felix stepped up and rested his hands on either of Bendy’s arms. He leaned forward enough that his hat touched Bendy’s forehead. He made sure that Bendy was looking him in the eye. Bendy was frozen. Felix smiled, his eyes gentle and warm. “Now, why on earth would you be embarrassed about such a things?”

“It’s just that...you’re my...and I...and you,” Bendy muttered in a tiny whisper.

“You didn’t choose to bring this on yourself,” Felix said gently. Bendy clapped his mouth shut. Felix’ eyes suddenly turned steely and serious. “And what’s this nonsense about death?” He didn’t allow Bendy a chance to answer. “You’ll be fine!” he said. “We have each other, and we’ll save everyone, including you!” He said it with so much certainty. Bendy felt his throat close up. “Now, enough crying, show me that smile.” When was he crying? Felix lifted his hands to brush Bendy’s tears away.

No one had ever done this for him, talked to him like this. Why was he suddenly so happy? So relieved? It was like Felix walked up and just lifted an enormous responsibility and burden from his shoulders. He'd never even noticed it until it was suddenly gone! Bendy grinned. “Atta boy!” Felix smiled back warmly. He gently turned Bendy away, “Off you go now. Get dressed quick!”

Bendy hurried to finish buttoning up his shirt and pulling on his vest and goggles. He stumbled, trying to pull on his socks and boots. Boris came over to help him. There still seemed to be a weight on him. Bendy smiled at the wolf. “Stop worrying so much bro~!” he practically sang. “Everything will be just fine!” Bendy purred. Felix knew what he was talking about after all.

Boris smirked and gave Bendy a half lidded gaze. “Yeah, yeah, clearly I was the one who started to worry.” It was dripping with sarcasm. Felix chose to ignore it, instead, basking in the light feeling he had. Boots taken care of, he flung his side bag over his shoulder.

He almost stumbled from the weight change. Weird. He was still a bit light headed, he supposed. Bendy shook it off and hurried over to Felix.

“Ya know, we can still take a break if you want,” Felix said. “You still seem tired.”

Bendy raised a hand to wave off the suggestion. “Oh no! I’m absolutely fine!”

“Well, at least let your brother carry you for a while. Boris?” Felix turned to the wolf. Bendy shot his bro a dark, knowing look. Years of memories of them growing up together came flooding to mind. Every single time someone thought Bendy was the younger sibling or friend. The times he was too tired to get up and Boris would dare try to pick him up. Years of people holding him up and talking to Boris about him like he couldn’t understand them. Seriously! How young had they thought he looked! The number of times Bendy used to bite anyone that reached for him with the hint of lifting him. Years of comments about how small he was!

Boris’ eye twitched, and he gave Bendy a nervous glance. “I-I mean, I’d love to…” Bendy’s anger
went up a few more notches, Boris must of noticed because he quick backtracked. “But he
doesn’t...like that much.” Yeah, Boris would know all about it.

“Are you still mad at each other or something?” Felix asked. He shrugged and turned his back to
Bendy. “No matter. Hop on. I’ll carry you!”

Bendy’s eyes widened. “Wh--what! No, no, no! You don’t have to!” He waved his hands around.
What was...Why was he--? How had this happened!

Felix looked over his shoulder and frowned at Bendy. “Sorry Bendy, but I have to insist. I’m not
letting you walk until you’ve recovered more!” Bendy’s hands half dropped. What was he supposed
to do? If it was anyone else he’d say no, but this was Felix.

To his complete and total mortification, the next moment Bendy found himself being carried on the
back of his cat hero somehow. His face was on fire, and he did everything in his power to avoid
Boris’ smug little smile and taunting eyes as they came back to the Cup brothers.

“T ook you long enough,” Cup gruffed as a greeting. Bendy couldn’t bring himself to look at him
either.

“Well, we’re here now,” Felix said brightly.

Mugs lit up when he spotted Bendy and Felix. He jumped up with excitement in his eyes. “Hey! We
doин’ a piggyback race?” he asked excitedly. ‘I’m in!” he declared before anyone could answer.

He rushed in front of Boris and suddenly the wolf was on his back. How fast were these guys!
“Let’s go, Boris!” Mugs called out excitedly.

Boris, eyes wide with shock, looked around. “What?” And then they were racing away in a blur of
wolf ears and a long scarf. Bendy caught the most unbelieving look of deadpan annoyance on
Cuphead’s face he had ever seen.

“Hey! No fair!” Felix called out and suddenly Bendy had to hang on for dear life. How had
this happened? Bendy’s tired mind struggled to make sense of anything as Felix and Mugman raced
through the wooded hills and deeper into the mountains. Felix was somehow able to catch up to
Mugs. “So, is there a finish line to this race?” Felix called to him. They jumped over a log, and Boris
had to cartwheel his arms to save himself from falling off.

“We’ll make one!” Mugs answered with a grin. “How ‘bout that tree on top of the hill?” Bendy
spotted the distant tree he was talking about. It was a large oak tree, and half of its leaves had fallen
thanks to the fall chill. It towered over the others in a grand majesty that only age could bring.

“What about your brother? Shouldn’t we slow down and let him catch up?” Felix asked Mugman.

“Serves him right for not knowing how to have fun!” Mugs called and pushed to get ahead. Felix
didn’t let him and kept up, step for step. They were neck and neck as the oak grew closer. They
reached the foot of the hill and started up. The race was anyone’s win! Suddenly, there was a blur
that cut between the two of them.

They reached the tree a moment later to see Cuphead. He flicked his hair and winked with an

“No, you didn’t,” Mugs argued. “This is a piggyback race!” Bendy noticed that Boris had swirls
spinning in his eyes. When had that happened?
“Oh, I found this cat,” he turned around and threw his thumb behind him. There, a small kitten was clinging to Cups' coat for dear life. “So yeah, I still win.” He said it so matter of fact!

“Where did you find it?” Felix ask. “It seems to have owner.” Bendy took a second look and saw it. The kitten was wearing a bow around its neck. Cup coaxed the cat off and gently held the frightened thing in his arms.

“It was just walking around in the woods I guess.” Cup fiddled with the bow. “Looks like it’s name is Figaro. Weird name for a cat.” Mugs walked up to take a closer look.

An annoying smile spread across Cup’s face. “Ya’ll got your partners, so this’ll be mine from now on.” He looked down at the kitten. He tickled its belly, and it pawed at fingers. “And his name is Jackpot.”

Bendy frowned. “Ya can’t do that, you mook! It’s not yours!” He understood taking when it was necessary, but stealing something just cause ya could...Bendy shook his head.

“Finders keepers,” Cup shot back with raised brows, just asking him to start arguing.

“Whatever,” Boris said, climbing down from Mugs with a sway in his step. He looked a little sick. “We’re already hours away from the city. Let’s just get the part and worry about returning it when we get back.” He turned a half hearted glare at Mugs. “And you will pay for this!” Mugs looked like he was trying not to laugh.

That reminded Bendy that he was still on Felix’ back. Bendy quickly climbed down. “I’m fine now, Mr. Felix. Thank you.”

Felix looked back at him. “You sure?”

Bendy let go and went to take a step back, “Yeah, I--” Suddenly, the world tilted.

“Bendy!” Felix lunged forward and caught him before he could fall over. “Bendy! Why in the world would you lie to me?”

Bendy swallowed. What was that? Why wasn’t he better? He was used to feeling exhausted after an attack, but this was different. “I-I didn’t mean--” He tried to explain to Felix that this wasn’t normal for him. “Mr. Felix, I--” But then what? Would Felix make them turn around if he admitted it? They didn’t have time for that. “I’m just feeling a bit numb.” Not a total lie. “That’s all.” He couldn’t hold the group back, or worse, cause them to turn around.

“Our break wasn’t that long, Bendy,” Mugs spoke up. “We can rest a bit longer.” He scratched at his chest.

“Yeah, I could use a break myself,” Boris muttered, rubbing his head and giving Mugs a look.

Cup shrugged. “We have gotten pretty far today.”

“And the sun will start setting soon,” Felix murmured, looking at the horizon. “We might just want to set up camp for the night.”

“Berries!” Mugs said and wrapped an arm around Boris. “Then, Boris and I can make ya some mushroom soup! We talked about making it, and I think now would be a swell time to do it!” He grinned.

Boris gave him a disgruntled look and muttered an annoyed, “Get off,” and then looked to everyone
else when Mugs didn’t. “But I’m in for making dinner.”

“No need, guys. We can go a bit further before we stop for the day,” Bendy said. “Besides I’m not that--” His stomach growled loudly. Bendy’s face flushed. “--hungry,” he muttered.

And with that failed attempted from the demon to push forward, the group went about setting camp. Mugs and Boris went out for firewood. Cup and Felix set up the sleeping arrangements. Bendy, to his annoyance, was forced to sit against the big oak and watch.

He sighed. Well, day one of the Ink Machine Questers wasn’t the worst thing that could have happened. Besides the delay this starfallen Ink Illness had caused, they were making good time. A day or two more of walking, and they’d be there. The Cup brothers, other than being a little annoying, weren’t terrible traveling companions, and Felix was a saving grace.

If things continued like this, then maybe Felix was right. Maybe they would pull this off before he melted for good. Maybe there was hope. Bendy watched Mugs and Boris come back with arms full of wood. Cup cursed when a squirrel startled the kitten into a hissing fit. Felix laughing as Cup calmed the troubled ‘Jackpot’ with a glare at Felix. With a team like this, there might really be a chance.
We’re Going Camping!

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Mic adjusted a bowtie with little bats on it. “Do I really have to wear this thing?”
A muttered reply came.
“Alright, alright, I was just asking. Cool your jets.” He turned to face away from the
side stage. “Hello again, readers and welcome back! Today features the questers moving
fast, but will they make it in time to get the Ink Machine part? Will this team be able to
stick together or fall apart? Find out!” Mic tugged on the bowtie again. “And Happy
Halloween.”

Chapter Notes

Hello readers! Sorry I missed last weekend! I was really busy with school and my social
life. @-@ It’s a madhouse! But I was able to get this out on time! ^^u Hehe...I’ll
remember I’m a chapter behind until I catch up again. XP It’ll just bug me. XD
On a different note--HALLOWEEN! AAAAAHHH! XD I love this holiday! It’s the
time spooks like me can run around wild and free! I am wearing all my creepy stuff
every day and getting weird looks, and I am so stinking proud of myself. What’s your
favorite part of Halloween? Wish I could do a Halloween chapter...It wouldn’t fit with
how the timeline is now…*Shrug* Maybe in Inky Extras. We’ll see. You guys have a
great week! Bye!

The sun was sinking, the soup was bubbling, the fire was warm and crackling. It should have been a
wonderful evening. Sadly, Bendy tossed a worried look toward Felix. The cat glared at the fire as he
stoked the flames with a stick. He hadn’t talked directly to Bendy since they had started setting up
camp. The moment Bendy had tried to turn down dinner and had his stomach betray him, Felix’s
smile had dropped.

He seemed...angry, and it worried Bendy. What had he done? Was it him? It had to be, right? Was
he wrong to want to press forward? Oh, course not!...So why was he upset? What should Bendy do?
Felix got up and sat down next to him. The sunset stretched their shadows out across the hill. Felix
rested his head on his hand, pointedly not looking at the demon. Bendy shifted and glanced over at
the cat. “Mr. Felix, you don’t look too happy,” Bendy stated. Brilliant conversation starter there!
Felix looked to Bendy from the corner of his eye. Bendy’s heart shriveled at the cold gaze. “A-are
you mad at me?” Felix huffed a sigh and looked back at the fire. Bendy felt a cold sweat break out
over his forehead. Whelp, that was it. Felix hated him.

Bendy ducked his head away and did everything in his power to hide how much that hurt. Was it
that he had said he didn’t want to eat? He wouldn’t lie to Felix ever again. Obviously, the cat didn’t
like him lying. He just didn’t want to be a burden! Was that so bad? To his disappointment, he felt
his eyes sting. Really? When had he become such a stupid pansy?

A hand brushed the tears away before they could fall. Bendy looked up at his idol in surprise. “I’m sorry Bendy, I’m not really mad at you.” Felix smiled sadly.

Felix rested his arms back on his knees, the smile disappearing quickly. “I just don’t like it when you hide the truth from us about yourself,” Felix said. “I know you still don’t trust me—”

“That’s not it!” Bendy cut him off quickly. “It’s not like that at all!” Felix went quiet and watched him. Bendy looked away. He had just yelled at his idol. Oh man…

Bendy grabbed his tail and fiddled with it nervously. He kept his eyes down on his gloved hands and tail. “I do trust you. I trust you a lot actually.” Bendy gulped. “I just wanted to make a good impression.” He sighed. He really had messed that up, huh? “I always looked up to you, and meeting you as always been a dream of mine. So getting to actually meet you, well, I realized you’re even better than I imagined.” Bendy gave a half shrug. “I knew you would be brave, but I had no idea you were so kind and thoughtful.” He wrung his tail when he didn’t hear anything from Felix. Well, at least he had been honest.

“Bendy,” Felix said gently. Bendy let go of his tail and glanced over to his hero. Felix was smiling. He pulled Bendy into a side hug. “You don’t have to prove anything kid. You’re easily very likable.” The tip of Bendy’s tail wagged with the compliment. Funny, he thought only Boris’ tail did that.

Before Bendy could enjoy the attention too much, Cup cut in. “Goochie-goochie-goo!” Cup taunted. “Shut your face!” Bendy barked. Cup started to laugh. Bendy clenched a fist. “Mr. Felix, would you excuse me for a second?”

“No can do. You aren’t going anywhere,” Felix said, his arm still around Bendy’s shoulders.

Bendy glanced at his idol’s smile and relaxed a bit.

“Yeah, no worries. I’ll get your pacifier,” Cup snarked.

“Ya, palooka! I will end you!” Bendy hissed and lunged. Felix held him back. Cup rolled with laughter. Eventually, Felix was able to calm Bendy down again. Then, the still-tired demon drifted in and out, leaning against Felix’ shoulder.

He heard Boris clicked his tongue next to the fire. “Crud, I only have four bowls.”

“That’s fine Boris. I have my own,” Felix answered him. “Bendy, are you awake?”

Bendy bolted up with a flush to his face. “Yeah, sorry!” Felix smiled and reached for his bag.

“Man, you sure have everything in that magic bags of yours! What next? A rabbit?” Cup snickered. Felix frozen, and his face flushed.

“Mr. Felix?” Bendy asked.

“I’m fine!” Felix said quickly and pulled out his bowl. It only took Boris a minute to fill two bowls of soup and offer them to Bendy and Felix.

“Bon Appetit!” Boris said with a smile.

“Thank you!” Felix said warmly. Bendy took his with a smile to his brother.
“Bo-petite?” Mugs said as he offered a bowl to Cuphead.

Cup burst into laughter. Mugs grinned proudly. “Yeah, I have no idea either,” Cup said taking the bowl.

After a few minutes of eating, Felix hummed in satisfaction. “This is delicious!”

Bendy bobbed his head. “It’s no bacon soup, but it still tastes great! Good job bro.”

The group enjoyed the meal quietly. Boris pulled out his clarinet and played a few cheerful tunes for them. The sun disappeared and the stars began to appear. Bendy leaned back and listened with a smile on his face. This was nice.

When Boris stopped for a break, Mugs spoke up. “Does anyone else know any instruments?”

“Sadly no. My family tried to get me into the piano, but I have no ear for it,” Felix said.

“Oh! Bendy used to play guitar!” Boris said excitedly.

“He did?” Felix turned to him.

“It was a long time ago. I’m probably not half as good as I used to be.” Bendy brushed the praise away. Cup snickered next to him.

Bendy turned a sharp look to him. “And why are you laughing?”

“I just heard, ‘Bendy plays guitar’ and immediately imagined you playing a guitar two times your size!” Cup chuckled.

“Why you little schmuck,” Bendy growled.

“Funny, I thought you were the little one,” Cup laughed. Bendy almost lunged for him again, but laughter from his other side distracted him. He looked to see Mugs and Boris laughing.

“Boris!” Bendy barked.

“I’m so-sorry Bendy, but that is a funny image,” Boris laughed.

“Traitor!” Bendy muttered. Cup’s snicker reached Bendy again, and he turned a stern finger on him. “Alright! That’s the last straw!” Bendy barked.

“Eeeeeeeyy.” Cup snapped his fingers and winked at Bendy.

“Wait.” Bendy’s face dropped when he realized what he had said.

Mugs and Boris howled with laughter.

“Boris, you don’t even like puns!” Bendy growled.

They ignored him in their mirth. “It-It’s actually a bendy straw!” Mugs gasped.

Cup smirked. “Why yes, it is.” He reached up and touched it. “Wait!” His eyes lit up in a way that Bendy didn’t like, a huge grin spreading across his face. “Bendy-Straw! That so needs to be our team name!”

“Cuss no!” Bendy snapped. “That makes us sound like we are way closer than we actually are.”
“Oh really?” Cup raised a brow. “And what would you call us? Felix and the gang?”

Bendy snorted and shot a worried look to Felix. The cat was leaning back and watching. He simply raised a brow. “No, I was thinking something simple. Like the Ink Questers.”

Cup scoffed. Boris sat up. “That’s actually not bad, bro.”

“Yes Bendy, that’s rather good,” Felix said.

“I like it,” Mugs said brightly. “Makes it sound like we really are part of this huge thing as a team.”

“Yeah!” Boris agreed. Bendy smiled. Cup rolled his eyes. “Mr. Felix, I was wondering, do you know the constellations?”

Felix’ face lit up. “Of course!” Bendy smiled. He and Boris shared a smile. They had found a half-destroyed book on the constellations and had memorized the ones that were there. They had always meant to find a complete book to learn the rest but never got around to it. So, the rest of the evening was spent on their backs listening to Felix point out the constellations and the tell the stories behind them. For the ones they recognize, Bendy and Boris threw in their knowledge. Mugs threw in some funny statements that had them all laughing. Cup only tossed in a pun or two.

Bendy wondered what was up with him, but it was only a passing thought, and he was too focused on what they were doing. He’d ask about it later. Eventually, it got late and everyone turned in for the night. Bendy couldn’t believe what a day he had. There were so many ups and downs. He head spun with it all. He actually felt excited for tomorrow.

Boris woke up with a big yawn. His nose twitched with the smell of burning wood. The wolf sat up and stretched. He got up and tiptoed across Bendy and toward the firepit. There, Felix was starting up a new fire from the cold coals. The cat nodded to him when he sat down.

“Morning Boris, how did you sleep?” Felix asked cheerfully.

“I slept well. How about you?” Boris answered.

“Swell.” Felix smiled. “I’m more used to sleeping outdoors than in nowadays.”

Boris gave him a half smile. “I know how that feels. What has you up so early?”

“I was almost too excited to sleep,” Felix said. “I feel like this adventure is going to be one for the ages, and once I start thinking like that, I can’t help it.”

Boris smiled. He could see why Bendy liked him so much. Felix was charismatic, determined, and brave. He seemed like a really swell fella. “So, I’m sorry for that awkward situation yesterday. I shouldn’t have made it a secret between us.”

Felix looked up from the fire. “Don’t worry about it. You were just watching out for your brother.” Boris let out a huff. Why did it have to be a full-time job?

“Does he always act like that?” Felix asked.

Boris perked his ears. “Act like what?”

“Act like he’s okay?” Felix sat back as the fire really started to burn. He lifted a knee and rested his arm on top of it.
Boris sighed. “Yeah, back at home he would want to go to work even if he had a fever. I really had to fight him when he was sick. I even locked him in his room once!” Boris chuckled.

Felix nodded with a serious look on his face. “Has he ever seen a doctor?”

Boris’ blinked. “Um, Dr. Oddswell, and I guess there was a doctor in Warnerburg…” Boris couldn’t remember the crow doctor’s name, but he did remember that the bird was as short as Bendy and had really reflective glasses.

Felix nodded, face serious. “I don’t mean to pry--”

“Don’t worry about it.” This time Boris smiled reassuringly. “You care. It’s nice to see Bendy so happy.”

Felix nodded. “He’s a good kid. But Boris, I have to ask, has he ever talked about his death like that before?”

Boris’ ears dropped. Oh… “No sir,” There was that one time he said he wanted to die, but he apologized right after. He had scared Boris. He had been acting like it was inevitable, like he had no hope. What was that yesterday? “Why did he do that?” Boris whispered.

Felix’ eyes softened, and he rested a hand on his shoulder. “Don’t be too angry with your brother Boris. He’s only afraid,” Felix said.

“Afraid?” Bendy asked. That didn’t sound like Bendy. Bendy was the headstrong, brave one out of the two of them. He used to throw himself into all kinds of trouble to protect Boris without hesitation. He used to sneer at people three times his size and mook them without a care in the world. He would stare down cops and adults until they were uncomfortable and looked away.

“Yes, he’s afraid of what will happen to you if he doesn’t survive. He’s afraid of letting everyone down. I believe he feels responsible, and he doesn’t want to mess up,” Felix said.

Boris glanced back at the lump that was Bendy under his blankets. “Oh, but then, why did he act like he wasn’t…” Boris swallowed.

Felix followed his gaze sadly and squeezed his shoulder reassuringly. “You and I don’t know how painful those attacks are.” Boris felt sick. No, he didn’t. He had watched Bendy suffer since the beginning though. First, just little chest pains and a cough. Now, his horns were melting and blinding him! He screamed himself hoarse! Boris shuddered. Maybe it was a good thing Bendy couldn’t see his expression. Boris wasn’t sure if the demon wouldn’t have spotted the panic he felt.

One thing was sure, Bendy was getting worse, and they only had one of those five parts they needed. That reminded the wolf, the doll was still attached to Bendy. He wondered if that had made the attacks worse or something. He had almost forgotten since Xedo had hid it, and it hadn’t been touched since.

“Don’t worry Boris. Part of the battle is with despair, right? As long as Bendy has hope, he’ll recover. We have to be strong for him and assure him that he’ll be fine,” Felix said. Boris turned back to the cat.

“How do you know he will be, sir?” Boris asked in a small voice.

Felix looked at Boris with dark, determined eyes. “Because we’ll be here for him.”

Boris sniffed and felt his eyes sting. He rubbed at them quickly. He had cried enough yesterday.
Felix didn’t need to see him turn into a crybaby. Suddenly, there was an arm around his shoulders.
“You’ve been so brave, Boris. I was really impressed with you yesterday.” Boris sobbed and Felix pulled him into a tight hug. “But you both need learn that it’s okay to rely on others more. You two aren’t doing this alone anymore,” Felix said softly. Boris wept and shook with all of his pent-up emotions.

“I w-w-was so scared,” he hiccuped. “He never talked like that b-be-before. I didn’t kn-know what to do!”

“Shhhh, it’s okay Boris. You both are going to be okay,” Felix said. Boris was surprised at how easy it was to take comfort in Felix’s words. He sounded so sure, so very resolute that Bendy would survive, and that they would complete their quest—like he wouldn’t allow any other outcome. Boris was able to calm down and find resolve thanks to that. Eventually, he pulled back and with a sniffle turned to the fire with a flush.

“Sorry, Mr. Felix. I didn’t mean to—”

“Don’t worry.” Felix smiled kindly. “I’m actually honored that you trust me enough to tell me how you feel, Boris.” Boris blinked and looked at the relaxed cat. He moved a kettle into the hot coals of the low fire. Boris guessed Felix was ‘berries,’ as Mugs would say. He definitely didn’t treat Bendy and him as most other adults did. Felix acted like they were still kids, but not in a bad way, like they had to be looked down upon and corrected constantly. Or that Bendy was some kind of an abomination that dared walk in the daylight. He corrected them, but he didn’t lord it over them. He was gentle, kind, but firm.

It seemed, nowadays, that most people forgot that the famous ‘Bbros’ were a pair of fourteen and eighteen-year-old scamps from the streets and a tiny garage. Most people looked at them as adults now, and Bendy technically was but…The wolf glanced at Felix again. It was strangely nice to have someone like Felix around. Boris wasn’t exactly sure how this all worked, but they were a team, so trusting him was a part of it.

Boris looked to the others that were still sleeping. Viga--er, Jackpot had woken up and meekly approached them. Boris lowered a hand to pet the small kitten. Bendy, he would always trust. Mugs was a friend now, a little pushy and annoying at times, but Boris knew now that he wasn’t a bad guy. There there was his brother. Boris didn’t know what to think about the eldest brother. He wanted to be on the team, but the moment Bendy let him in, he acted aloof and sarcastic. Boris didn’t get it.

The morning moved slowly, but thanks to Boris’ talk with Felix, he was ready for a long day of hiking. The pair started to prepare breakfast, which woke the others. It didn’t take long for the food to disappear and the camp to be collapsed. An autumn breeze followed the group as they hiked their way deeper and deeper into the mountains.

Despite the climbing and rough terrain, they made good time. The questers were able to make up a day with the quick pace they were all able to keep. Bendy seemed extremely invigorated after yesterday. Boris couldn’t help but think Bendy was trying to prove himself after his lapse in strength yesterday. Felix seemed skeptical at first, worried the demon was pushing himself, but Bendy and Boris both reassured him that this was his usual energy level.

The cup brothers didn’t seem to struggle to keep up at first, but near the end of the day, Mugs was starting to slow.

Cup stepped up next to the annoying cat. “Hey, don’t you think we’ve gone far enough today? The
sun is gonna go down soon.”

Bendy scoffed. “We’ve gone far enough when we get there.”

Cup gave Bendy a deadpan look.

Felix cut in before he could give the pipsqueak a piece of his mind. “We’ll be setting up camp in that meadow.” Felix pointed to a clearing that seemed to level out at the top of the mountain they were climbing. “Just a few more minutes. We’re almost there.”

“What’s the matter, Cuppy? Getting tired?” Bendy snarked.

Cup sneered. “Yeah right! I just don’t want to set up in the dark pi--” He cut himself off before he finished his insult. “I’m not the one that needed to be carried yesterday.”

Bendy scowled at him.

“Now, now, no need to fight.” Felix lifted his hands in a placating manner.

Bendy huffed but complied. “Yeah, sure.”

Cup scoffed and dropped back to Mugman. “You doing okay?”

“I’m fine.” Mugs smiled. “Just a little sore.”

Cup eyed him for a long moment. “How’s the-”

“It’s fine Cupsy. Really. I’m just sore from yesterday. I guess I overdid it a little.” Mugs gave him a little shrug. “I’ll be right as rain after some sleep tonight.”

“Alright, alright.” Cup sighed. “Fine. Just don’t push yourself today. Speak up if we need to slow down or stop.”

“Sure thing, bro.” Mugs gave him a mock salute.

Cup glanced up at the others. Boris was in front. Felix right behind him and Bendy by his side. Cup leaned closer to Mugs. “And remember that you need to keep your distance. We want them to like us, but you have to be ready to cut ties the moment the hat drops.”

Mugs frowned. “I know that.”

“Do you? You are acting pretty chummy,” Cup accused sharply.

“I don’t want them to be suspicious, and besides, I’m having fun. That’s not a crime,” Mugs grumbled.

“You better watch it,” Cup warned him. “Don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

Mugs huffed and picked up his pace to catch up to the others. Cup narrowed his eyes. Jackpot meowed from his shoulder. Cup lifted a hand to scratch the little kitten’s head. He had a bad feeling that he would have to tell Mugs ’I told you so’ later. He just hoped that his younger brother wouldn’t be too much of a headache.

He also noticed that Mugs was completely avoiding any mention of his wounds. His arm and other small injuries were taken care of, but Cup still hadn’t seen the one on his brother’s chest and back. He knew there were stitches. He knew what he had done. Why was Mugs act like this? He didn’t get
When they reached the clearing he and Bendy went out to get wood while Mugs and Boris set up camp, and Felix started in on dinner.

They were quiet at first as they went around picking up dry sticks and branches. “Hey Cup, what’s the deal with you lately?” Bendy asked.

Cup looked over at the demon. “What?”

“You’ve been so moody,” Bendy said. “What happened? You seemed excited to come.”

“Nothin’ really.” Cup shrugged.

Bendy raised a skeptical brow. “So, you’re going to be like this the whole trip?”

“You got a problem with that?” Cup frowned.

Bendy shrugged. “Just seems like a waste is all.”

Cup grit his teeth. “What the hell does that mean?”

“It means you’re a wet blanket, man,” Bendy said. “But you weren’t like this until we left town, so what the hell is your problem?”

“What about you? Fawning all over that cat?” Cup rolled his eyes.

“What? Mr. Felix? But he’s the best!” Bendy said.

Cup snorted. “And just what is so great about that schmuck?”

Bendy snickered. “You’ve obviously never read one of his books.”

“Ah no. I ain’t a nerd,” Cup scoffed.

“Then you can’t judge him ‘til you read one. He’s a true adventurer.” Bendy practically stuck his non-existent nose in the air.

“Yeah, when the cussing sun burns out,” Cup said. “And what the hell have we been, if not adventurers, this whole time?”

Bendy barked a sharp laugh. “You’ve been thugs, and Boris and I have been bumbling lucky nimrods.”

Cup rolled his eyes again, only to have something shoved in his face. He leaned back to see it was a-sigh-Felix the Cat novel. “Read it.” Bendy pressed. “It’ll give you an idea of how lucky we are.”

Cup pushed it away. He smirked when he realized Bendy had stood on tiptoe to get it in his face. The guy was so small. “I thought we were going to do fine without the annoying know-it-all.”

Bendy scoffed and smirked. “As I said, read it, then complain to me. I won’t listen until you do.”

Cup made an agitated noise in the back of his throat. Bendy stuck the stupid book in his hand, nearly causing him to drop the sticks he had collected. Cup fought the urge to toss it over his shoulder. “You’re not worried I’ll get in the way of your love life?”
“Excuse me?” Bendy frowned.

“What? You’re practically gay for the schmuck.” Cup shrugged and smirked.

Bendy snorted. “It isn’t like that.”

“Oh really? You could have fooled me,” Cup snarked.

“Oh shut it and just read it. I want it back too, so take care of it.” Bendy gave him a sharp look.

“Bet this would make a great fire starter,” Cup murmured.

“Hey!” Bendy growled. Cup laughed and pocketed the dumb thing.

The second night ended on much the same note as the first. Cup reluctantly admitted that the annoying cat could cook. He poked more fun at Bendy to watch him pull the best faces and funniest threats. He ignored his brother still acting way too friendly and had an okay time falling asleep. He wondered how long it would take to get the part and get back to the city. There was a chill in the air hinting at winter, reminding him that they had a few things to do when they got back, but Cuphead didn’t really care to think about it. He would just focus on the now. The cat thought they might get to the location sometime tomorrow. Cup could only hope.

Chapter End Notes

Mercowe:
Get ready friends! The action is coming up and it's comin' up quick! *Grins* I'm so excited. :D
Chapter Summary

Mic adjusts his bat bow tie and grins at the audience. “Welcome to another chapter, ladies and gentlemen! Boy, is it an exciting one! The questers find themselves in the caves of the--Well, that’s giving it away, now isn’t it? Still, there is so much that happens! Enjoy all the twists and turns! And Happy Halloween!” Mic waved.

Chapter Notes

Hello again! Welcome one and all! I can’t believe I am finally at this point! One, maybe, two more chapters, and that’s it! I’ll have completely caught up with the questers comic! Don’t worry, though! I’m not stopping!
I want to say a special thank you for everyone that takes the time to comment. You make a busy ghost’s week worth the while. ^^ I love talking to you readers! And a quick reminder! If any of you are interested in what is happening in ol’ Toon Town, head over to Inky Extras! Oddswell, Red, Mickey, Alice and others are all over there talking to Holly! Things haven’t calmed down just because the boys are gone! Now, enjoy the chapter! And like Mic said, have a great Halloween!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Felix sighed as he packed up his tent. Bendy and Cup were...well, bickering wasn’t quite the right word for it but along the same lines. The cat adventurer had worked with a number of teams over the years. Some had been great, others not so much. It all depended on how well the team worked together. They, surprisingly, didn’t have to get along, but it usually helped. This team...he wasn’t quite sure yet. He’d find out when they got to the part.

The air was cold with a pre-winter chill. Felix was a little worried that if they failed to find the part today that they may be dealing with snow. Felix would rather not face those challenges. The morning was pretty calm despite the bickering. Mugman and Boris didn’t respond to it much, so Felix assumed the back and forth between the other two was normal.

The sun was inching its way up into the sky. They stopped for lunch and for the boys to check the map. It seemed to be close. Felix felt that spark of excitement. He wondered if he would ever get tired of it.

The cup siblings went away for a moment, and when they returned, Mugman was more subdued. Felix raised a brow but didn’t comment. Boris seemed confused by this but was too focused on the map to talk to him. The two stood away from each other as the group gathered again.

They started to climb up steeper paths. Cliffs came into view, but they did well to avoid absolute walls. Bendy hopped up with little problem. It was like his attack didn’t happen the other day. It was a bit amazing to the cat. Cuphead and Mugman, again, demonstrated their physical prowess as they
climbed without breaking a sweat. The two tallest of the group, their reach gave them an advantage on the rocky paths. Yet, Mugman was pushing to be ahead of Cuphead and closer to Boris. It seemed to annoy the other. Felix wasn’t sure what was going on with this group, but he felt like he was missing something.

He was just about to bring it up with Bendy when Boris’ voice called back to them. “Hey fellas! Come quick!” Boris stood on the rise of the mountain, looking out. The rest rushed to get up and see what he was talking about.

Bendy jumped forward. “What the--wow!” he gasped.

Boris looked back at them with wide eyes. His hands clasped the backpack straps tightly. In front of him, the map floated in an aura of light. It had spun itself into a cone-like shape and simply floated. “The map is acting weird.”

Felix felt that swell of excitement again. The other did not share in his energy, instead they stayed back with looking of alarmed and disturbed.

“Creepy,” Cuphead muttered. Mugman crossed his arms and blinked. Bendy raised a brow with wide eyes. Felix deduced that this hadn’t happened before. “So what? It wanted to make itself into an ice cream cone?”

Bendy snorted. “That genius, or it could be pointing at something.”

Felix looked around the expanse before them. The mountain leveled off to a massive lake. On the other side of the water, two peaks rose above them. Pine trees dotted around the water. Sparse plant life sprouted here and there but most of the landscape had become rock. The water appeared clear and most likely cold. The map was floating above the water. Water was running down the peaks into the lake. Felix spotted a stream on the other side level the large basin. He got to work on removing his shoes and socks.

“But pointing to what? It’s just a lake,” Boris said. Felix rolled up his pant legs and stepped into the water. He fought the shiver that wanted to work its way up his spine. It was freezing. His fur puffed up. He splashed out to the spot the map was hovering and looked down.

He didn’t see anything for a moment but then something caught his eye. He crouched down and put his hand under the water to touch it. Carved into the stone was a symbol of some kind. He heard the splash of the others coming out to join him.

“Cuss, that’s cold!” Cup hissed. Bendy laughed.

Felix focused on the symbol. It was circular, framing some sort of fishtail and figure on it. “Interesting, yet somehow familiar,” he murmured.

“What is it, Mr. Felix?” Boris asked.

“Wait a second!” Bendy said and moved next to Felix. He put his hands on his knees and bent over to get a closer look. “Boris, doesn’t this look like that warning thing that was carved on that rock in New Orleans?”

Felix looked up at the boys. Boris narrowed his eyes until his ears perked with surprise. “You’re right, Bendy!”

“What does that mean? What happened in New Orleans?” Felix asked.
“There was a rock, turned out to be a passage to the part,” Bendy said.

“A passage?” Cuphead asked. “How do we get it open?”

“I’m not--Wah!” Felix started to say when Mugman slipped and fell onto of him. He threw his other hand down and leaned forward to save himself from getting shoved into the water. Something gave underneath him. He leaned back. The symbol raised up into a pillar. Symbols were carved along the sides. Felix blinked in surprise.

Mugs chuckled. “Sor--”

Then the pillar dropped, and he was suddenly falling. He felt Bendy and Boris grab him. Water whooshed and washed them down, down, down into darkness and freezing cold. Felix tumbled in the current, losing any sense of which way was up. His lungs were starting to burn. He reached out for something to grab but found only smooth stone. Then, was he being swept to the side or was this a complete fall? He wasn’t sure. He landed with a splash and the current was suddenly calm. In another moment he hit the bottom and pushed off it. Felix gasped for sweet air the second his head broke the surface, his burning lungs sucking in the cold air greedily.

The place he was in was dim but there was light coming from somewhere he couldn’t identify. The water was lazily pulling him further down the underwater stream. He swam to the side and collapsed on the bank to recover. He was shivering and gasping for breath. He was lucky there was the open area. A cave? The stalagmites and stalactites seemed evidence of that.

Were the others here too? They all fell into the drain together. He didn’t hear--There was the sound of movement on the stones. Felix pushed himself up. “Who’s there! Guys? It’s me, Felix!” He approached the noise that had quieted at the sound of his call. He came around a curve in the room and stopped. “Oh, it’s Jackpot.” The little kitten looked up at him, miserably shivering and let out a little meow. Felix tried not to let disappointment rise within him. Look at the bright side of things, Felix. “Cuphead could be near then.” His voice echoed and then was washed out by the water.


“This would all have been so fascinating if I wasn’t so worried about the others.” Felix sighed. He was shivering and so was the kitten. They could possibly freeze like this. Better do something about it.

He pulled off his soaking hat, jacket, and shirt. He did his best to wring them out and place them on the stalagmites. Then, he pulled off his magic bag, spun it and had it turn into a hairdryer. Gotta love magic. He flicked it on and was nearly blown back. Oops. Had it on full blast.

He turned it down, but his fur was already a complete mess. At least it was a dry mess. He picked up Jackpot and made sure it was on low before turning it on. The kitten hissed and squirmed in his grip. “Heh, stay still. It’s not that strong anymore,” Felix laughed.

Dry and ready, the cold wasn’t so bad. Felix put his hat back on and looked around. “Time to find the others.”

Cup’s head was throbbing. What happened?

“Come on, don’t do this right now.” Bendy’s voice cut through his headache. There was a pressure on his chest and burning in his throat. Cup coughed. He cracked a eye to see the soaking wet
demon’s face go from worried to relieved. “Oh, thank goodness.” Bendy sighed.

His goggles were askew, and he was dripping water on Cuphead before leaning back. “You okay there?” Bendy asked.

Cup groaned and slowly sat up. His head spun, so he had to close his eyes again. “Ow, my cussing head.” He lifted a hand to the side of his face. Yep, that was a chip. He pulled his hand back from the stinging spot.

“Ouch!” Bendy gasped. “Your...face.” Cup opened his eyes to see Bendy looking at him with wide eyes and a bit lip.

“Whatever,” Cup grumbled. He'd had much worse than this. “Just where the hell are we?” He tried to look around. His vision was fuzzy and shifting. He rubbed his eyes and blinked. His right eye was still messed up. He brushed his dripping hair back. Cuss. Great, maybe the crack got to his eye?

“Seriously Cups, is your eye alright?” Bendy asked. He had cleaned off his goggles and was snapping them back into place on his forehead.

“Things are blurry, but I guess it still functions.” It was giving him some weird double vision though. To hell with it. “Where are the others anyway?” Cup asked.

Bendy shook his head...or at least it looked like it. Maybe he had just turned to look out into the wherever-they-were. “One thing’s for sure, they’re not around here. We better go look for them.” Bendy helped Cuphead stand up. He wobbled a little but was able to stand fine. Besides his head, he seemed fine.

“Mugs! Jackpot!” Cup called out. He started to walk forward and slammed into something. Some kinda rocky pillar thing that hurt. Bendy snickered behind him.

“Hey, watch out,” Bendy said half-heartedly. Cup could hear his smile. Oh that little--

“Gee, thanks,” Cup growled and pushed away from the pillar thing.

“Seriously, you need a nurse man,” Bendy said. He snickered again. “Actually, everybody needs a nurse, a real hot one with some nice gams.”

Cup’s mind went back to a rather strong bunny nurse that had dragged him down a hall. Her heels had clicked along, complimenting the legs that her uniform revealed.

“Heeey, what’s with the look, Cup?” Bendy’s voice suddenly cut into his thoughts. Bendy elbowed his side joshingly. Cuss, did his expression give something away?

“I-it’s no big deal. Shut up,” Cup muttered. Her scolding him for leaving Mugs there and giving instructions on how to take care of his brother came forth in his memories. Her dark eyes had glittered, full lips turning into a scowl and long ears tied back. Her slim arm had hid real strength.

Sure, she'd saved his brother, but she was still a Ms. Grundy. She practically bit his head off...Why was it that he found himself falling for her anyway? He had too much on his plate to go chasing after a skirt, and yet...he couldn’t help but think about the few times his mind had wandered back to the beautiful rabbit woman. Keep this up, and he was going to get distracted.

“Come on! Tell me!” Bendy was leaned up trying to get in his face. There...might have been a really annoying grin on his face. Cup deadpanned.
“Jump off a cussing cliff, Bendy,” Cup growled. The demon wouldn’t let him hear the end of it if he admitted to anything. Nope, his trap was permanently shut on the subject of nurse Fanny Cottontail. End of story. He wasn’t gonna ever see her again, anyway...until they went back to take care of Mugs stitches. Cup restrained the urge to smack his forehead. Oooh boy, he did not have the time to be worrying about this. He needed to find his brother, the cat, and wolf, and maybe, the kitten before getting outta here.

He hugged his wet coat closer to himself. It was freezing in here. Was Bendy cold? Cup’s bad vision made it impossible for him to see if the pipsqueak was shivering. Hopefully, they’d find the others soon. “Ouch!” he barked as his nose collided with another pillar thing.

“Pfft, sorry. Want so help there, pal?” Bendy asked. Cup grumbled a few choice curses.

“Here, hold onto my shoulder, I’ll lead ya,” Bendy offered. He pulled one of Cup’s hands out of his pocket and put it on his shoulder. Cup sighed but didn’t remove his hand. This double vision was messing him up. He blinked a couple of times. His eye was half swelled shut now. A crack from the chip definitely got to his eye. What a pain.

Boris bit back a whimper as the cavern only seemed to grow darker and darker as he walked on. He had called out for the others but no one had answered him. He had decided to step away from the underground river in hopes of finding them. They couldn’t have gone far after all. But the farther he went, the darker and quieter it became. It was a silence that the wolf wasn’t used to. No living thing seemed to be anywhere in sight or sound of him. Only the dripping of the cave, his own breathing and his footsteps interrupted the unearthly silence.

\[\text{Drip, drip, drip.}\]

If his fur was dry, it would be standing on end. He felt like the cave was watching him. It was the temple place they had fallen into, right? That weird little symbol thing and the map had pointed to it, so…

He looked around the rough walls. It wasn’t carved or decorated like the other had been. Had other people found their way down here? Had they ever found a way out?

\[\text{Drip, drip, drip.}\]

It was only getting creepier. He imagined Juju, back when he was a giant killer snake, slipping around corners and turns in the tunnels. Who knew what traps and horrors lived here.

\[\text{Drip, drip, drip.}\]

He’d have to be really careful. These cave spikes looked like they could hurt a lot if he fell on one.

\[\text{Drip, drip, drip.}\]

How long had he been walking? A stone clattered behind him, and he jumped. Boris turned around and looked for the cause of the noise. Was that breathing? He strained his ears, trying to hear anything beyond his swallowed breathing and racing heart.

\[\text{Drip, drip, drip.}\]

Nothing.

He was alone. In this cold freezing cave with shadows that looked like monsters and damp air. The
stone spikes on the floor and ceiling reminded him of teeth. It still wasn’t as scary as the killer snake. At least, that’s what he told himself. He wandered around to make sure he was alone.

Tip, tap, tip.

Boris let out a sigh and adjusted his backpack. “It’s fine, Boris,” he told himself. “Don’t freak out. Just keep looking around. They can’t be too far off.” His voice echoed strangely. It almost made it sound like he was talking to someone. Weird, hearing himself like that. Maybe it would be able to carry his voice far enough for someone to hear him!

He cupped his hands around his muzzle. “Bendy!” he cried. He drew his ears back. Boy, that was loud. “Bendy! Hello? Is anyone there?” He turned to call the way he had come. “Ben--” There was something that looked like the spikes from the ceiling, but it was sharp, knife-like. It hadn’t been there a second ago. And it was covered in eyes. “--dy.” His voice died. It swung back. Boris gasped and turn, but before he could move further, it swung forward. He shrieked as pain slashed up his side and pulled him into the air.

The claw, because that’s what it seemed to be, had hooked his backpack strap and trapped his arm. Boris, half in a panic, slipped his other arm free of his bag. He dangled in the air, trying to pull his trapped arm out. Pain shot through his side. A warmth was running down his leg. He did his best to ignore it, blinking at the tears that blurred his vision. He ignored the eyes watching him as he twisted his arm, a little more. More pain. “C’mon. Just...a little more.” He turned his arm up and his weight pulled him free. He fell to the cave floor clumsily but was able to stop himself from falling over on landing. He crouched on the cold stone. His side burned. He wrapped an arm around himself. It felt warm and wet. He swallowed a whimper and looked up. “M-my bag.” It had most of their supplies for the journey. He saw what had caught him and froze.

It looked like a cross between a spider and a crab. Hardshell, sharp, claw-like legs scraped against the stones of the carven’s ceiling and wall. Legs and eyes. So many eyes. All of them focused on Boris. It opened its mouth, showing rows of jagged teeth and lifting the claw that still had his bag hooked. A line of blood dripped off the razor-sharp limb. It was a grotesque creature of angles and blades, mad eyes full of hunger. It was the size of a truck. Slowly, so slowly, it lowered itself to bring Boris back into reach of its blade-like claws.

Boris wanted to run, but his body wasn’t responding. He wanted to scream, but he had no voice. He couldn’t feel his body beyond the pounding of his heart, which threatened to burst. He stared in frozen, silent, horror as the thing eased its way closer to him. The smell of rotting meat and salt hit his nose. Why wasn’t he moving? Was this really how he was going to end? But he couldn’t die. Bendy needed him.

The creature lifted another of its claws. Even Boris’ heart seemed to pause. His life flashed before his eyes.

It came down.

There was a powerful yank on Boris’ arm that dragged him back and away. Boris gasped and nearly tripped. The grip on his arm didn’t slacken instead, becoming firmer and pulling him into motion. He looked up.

“What are you doing! Run!” Mugs barked as he pulled Boris along.

“Mugs!” Boris cried in relief. There was a skittering behind them. Boris glanced back to see the thing rushing at them with its clawed leggings scratching the stone around it. “It’s catching up to us!” Boris shouted.
“Not for long!” Mugs lifted a glowing, blue finger just as the monster lifted a claw to slash at them. Mugs turned on his heel and fired. The blue blast cracked the claw to bits. The monster screamed. They kept running.

“Boy, am I glad you’re here, buddy!” Boris cheered as they raced away. Mugs smiled. They ran and ran until they were out of breath. Mugs had them duck around a stone wall. Boris leaned against the cold stone and panted. His side was aching and throbbing.

Mugs stayed close to the corner. After a few minutes, he approached Boris. “You alright, Boris?” His serious face changed to one of concern. Boris smiled and threw his arms around Mugs’ chest, his tail wagging a million miles an hour. He was so relieved that Mugs had shown up. He was Boris’ hero! Mugs got over his surprise quickly. “So, that’s a yes?” Mugs chuckled and returned the hug. He also petted Boris’ ear, which only had his tail go faster.

Eventually, he calmed down and let Mugs look at his side. “I think it’s just a shallow cut, Mugs. I’m sure I’ll be fine,” Boris said after he had taken off the ruined shirt and his bandana. It was a bloody line that ran from his upper left shoulder blade and down his left side to his hip. It really wasn’t that deep. It had even stopped bleeding mostly.

“I think we better wrap it anyway. Who knows what infectious things are down here,” Mugs said.

“But all the bandages were in my bag. What are we going to use?” Boris asked.

“How ‘bout this?” Mugs pulled his scarf off.

“What? No! That’s your—”

“It’s fine Boris. I insist. Come here.” Mugs smiled and shrugged. Boris frowned. There was something under the collar of his shirt. Were those...bandages? The wolf scooted closer and allowed his friend to wrap the scarf around narrow torso securely. When he was done, Mugs sat back and smiled. “There we go.”

Boris lifted a hand to the soft fabric. He glanced at his side to see that there were a few spots showing through already. “Oh man. I shouldn’t have let you insist. I feel bad for ruining your scarf.”

Mugs chuckled and shook his head. “It’s fine. It’ll wash and besides, I rather you be okay.” Boris still pouted at him. He glanced at the white fabric peeking out of Mugs own shirt. He was injured? When? It couldn’t have been...But of course, it was. How could Boris forget that? It really hadn’t been that long ago, and yet it felt like a lifetime. Mugs had been running around with such an injury? How bad was it now? It couldn’t be that bad, right? He had run a piggyback race, for stars’ sake! Yet.

Boris mind went to Bendy putting on a brave face for him. Always insisting he was fine. He remembered Cup pulling him aside to talk and the one day he slowed down. Maybe Mugs was putting on a face for all of them? Boris was just about to ask when a low rumble came to his sensitive ears. Boris perked them to hear it better. “Do you hear that?” he asked Mugman.

Mugs lifted his head to look up at the ceiling. He stood up, and Boris followed him. The rumbling grew louder. “Boris! Get behind me!” Mugs ordered and lifted a glowing finger. Boris obeyed and looked out with wide eyes.

“Tall?”

“Stop.”
“Curvy?”

“Bendy.”

“Front or back?”

“Bendy, I swear,” Cup threatened. His hand tightened on Bendy’s shoulder.

Bendy sighed. “Fine.” He crossed his arms and frowned, not that the schmuck could see it. “But
don’t blame me if I end up stealing your girl,” Bendy huffed. This guy was clammed up tight. He
obviously had someone in mind, but not even a hint was given.

Cuphead scoffed and looked away. “Seriously, it’s not worth talking about.” That just made Bendy
want to ask all the more! What was his type, damnit! Who was it! “Look, just shut up and lead the
way.”

Bendy sniffed and put his hands on his hips. “Relax.” He smiled. “I’m looking out for-
-uuuuuuuuus!” The floor was suddenly gone.

“Whhaaaaaa!” Cup shouted as they fell. He lost his grip on Bendy and darkness consumed his
vision. The fall curved gently, and Bendy found himself sliding down a black nothingness. The
surface was smooth and cool and continued to sloop around gently. He had no idea how far he went
until he saw a light. It grew and grew and then was upon him.

Bendy was spat out, skidded on his feet, and waved his arms wildly to try and save his balance. He
straightened out, a bit surprised he had landed like that. He threw his arms up in victory and grinned.
“I’m okay!” he exclaimed before he was bowled over by Cup who came in right behind him. “
Gwaat!” he choked. They ended up a heap on the floor.

“Ugh,” Cup moaned on top of him. “This is getting ridiculous.”

“Cuppy!” Mugs voiced shouted. Cup sat up.

“M-Mugs! Where are you?”

“I’m right here, silly!” Mugs said and knelt down in front of Cup. He was grinning ear to ear. Cup’s
face lit up with equal relief and joy.

“Sorry, things are kinda blurry,” Cup explained. Bendy propped his head in his hand and watched
the two for a moment. He waited to see if either of them would remember him...didn’t seem so.

“Hey, that’s cute and all, but can you get off me?” Bendy said from underneath Cup. His back really
wasn’t meant to be a cushion. Cup snorted, but thankfully, moved his boney butt. Bendy sat up and
popped his spine. “Ugh,” he groaned. He had gotten thrown down a hole twice today. Boris walked
up to him and helped him stand up.

“I’m so glad we’re together again!” Boris said cheerfully. Bendy blinked and stared at Boris. He
wasn’t wearing his shirt and bandana. Instead, he had some cloth wrapped around like-- Icy dread
washed down Bendy as horror dawn with realization.

“B-B-Boris! What happened!” Bendy lifted his gloved hands to the stained makeshift bandage
around his little brother. His eyes stung with tears. “Wh-what is this! How did you get hurt! Are you
alright!” Bendy demanded. He touched the stain. It was long, running all the way up his side.

“Ouch!” Boris stopped Bendy’s fretting hands. “I’m fine now, Bendy! Calm down!”
Bendy struggled to do just that. It wasn’t like Boris had never been hurt before. But it was just...different somehow. Bendy should have been there! Hell! What could he do! He had been there at other times and had completely failed Boris then too! Stars! Why was this so much worse? If Boris said he was okay, then he was. He wouldn’t lie. Why was he--

Because he didn’t have long left to be here for him. Bendy’s mind skittered back from the dark thought. No! No! Felix said that they would make sure he would be saved. Bendy believed him! He did! Bendy looked back at Boris. Didn’t he? Then, why did he was panicking over not being here for Boris? Stars and moon help him.

“Bendy?” Boris asked.

Bendy rubbed the tears away. He plastered on a smile and threw an arm behind his head. “Well! We’re all here! Grand! We better get to looking for Mr. Felix!” Bendy said. He turned. “Mr. Felix! Mr. Felix, can you hear us!”

Bendy gave Boris a long searching look before the wolf turned to call out. “Mr. Felix!”

Did he guess at Bendy’s doubts?

It took Bendy a moment to realize that the Cup brothers hadn’t said anything. Bendy turned around to see them talking quietly to each other. “What are you two doing? We need to find the best of the group.”

Cup scoffed and smirked. “I’m already here, idiot!”

Bendy snorted and returned the smirk. “You wish!”

They started walking again. Bendy came back to Cup’s side as Cup pulled out a comb. Guess he was tired of his hair being a frizzy mess. Bendy thought about the madness that was his fur. He didn’t really think he had time to deal with it all, though. Cup seemed a bit relieved, but there was still something off. Bendy couldn’t quite put his finger on it. Maybe he was worried about that kitten? “Hey, maybe we’ll find your little Jackpot too.”

Cup glanced at him from the corner of his eyes. “I doubt it. He couldn’t’ve survived.”

Bendy blinked. He said it so matter-of-fact. Bendy frowned. “Don’t be such a downer there, man.” If he thought that way, he’d be a goner for sure. Bendy watched him as he fixed his hair. His eye was now completely swollen shut. But his face was smooth on emotion. “C’mon, Cupperoo! You don’t actually think that!” He tapped Cup’s shoulder with his knuckles.

He looked down at the cave floor and stuck his hands in his jacket pockets. “I do, but I hope I’m wrong.”

Golly. Bendy didn’t know Cup was such a pessimist. Then again, maybe he should have figured that out. Bendy opened his mouth to say something, but a deep guttural roar echoed down the cavern. All of them jumped. Boris gasped.

A giant monster collapsed right in front of them. Boris yelped. The Cup brother’s straws changed into exclamation points. Bendy felt his own tail stiffen in shock. It was huge, full of weird angles and sharp armor like a shell. Eyes littered it’s body.

Before any of them could panic or attack, Boris spoke up. “Wha? It’s dead!” Bendy blinked. He was right. It was cracked and bleeding profusely over the cave floor. It lay limply on the floor. Something moved on top of it. Bendy looked up and saw a familiar figure.
Felix straightened up on the monster’s back. He held a bloody battle axe in his hand, a chain on it’s handle led back to his magic bag. He reached up and tugged down the rim of his hat. He glared down at the creature before noticing the group. A look of surprise crossed his expression before he hopped down. He moved the axe behind him, and it seemed to vanish.

“Goodness!” he exclaimed when he came to ground level. “What happened to you fellas?” He looked over Boris’ wrapped chest and Cup’s chipped cheek.

Boris grinned. “Mr. Felix! That was—”

“Amazing!” Bendy jumped in, his arms raised in excitement. Felix chuckled, then stopped when his jacket shifted. He pulled his lapel aside to reveal the little kitten.

“It’s okay, little guy. It’s gone now.” Felix lifted a hand to help the kitten out of his jacket.

“Jackpot!” Cuphead’s face lit up in surprised joy. Felix offered him the kitten. The little creature purred and pulled itself close to Cup. He and Mugs grinned. Mugs scratched the top of its head with a finger.

The cat adventurer looked back at the wolf pup. “I was so worried when I saw your bag with this—”

“My bag! Do you have it!” Boris’ tail started wagging a mile a minute. His big eyes widening with excitement.

“Look around. I’m sure it’s still here somewhere,” Felix said and tugged the brim of his hat up.

Boris went around the side. He carefully stepped over one of the claws. “There! I see it!” Boris said happily. He disappeared around the creature’s corpse.

Felix turned to Bendy. “Did it attack you too, Bendy? Your hair is a mess.”

Bendy felt his face heat up. He pulled a hand behind his head. “Oh no, this is a different story.” And a fall down a hole. Twice. And having someone—the same someone land on top of him. Twice.

“Well, you’ll tell me while I help you with your messy hair!” Felix smiled and pulled a brush out of his bag.


Boris came back around with his pack in his arms. “Can I have that brush when you’re done, Mr. Felix?” he asked. Cup was snickering behind him.

“Certainly.” Felix smiled at the pup. Boris set his bag down and opened it. Felix finished brushing Bendy’s hair into place, moving his goggles and placing them back when he was done. “And done,” he pulled the brush away. Bendy felt great. This is how it should be. Why had he missed out on this?

Bendy grinned. “Thanks, dad!”

“The cuss?” Cup snorted.

Bendy’s eyes widened as the world crashed around him. Had he just said that...out loud? The wide eyes and dropped jaw of his idol was evidence enough. His face darkened with a light blush. “Aaaw, Bendyyyy,” he chuckled.
Bendy couldn’t handle it. No! Nononono! He dropped his face into his hands and screamed.

Cuphead slapped a hand over his face and shook with surprised laughter. “Starfallen cussing damnit!” he snickered. Even Boris was biting his lip and ducking behind his pack to hide his laughter. Mugs was the only one watching impassively.

“Bendy...you are such a dork.” Boris covered his eyes and shook his head. He was still smiling. Bendy wanted to disappear and never come back. He was mortified. Embarrassed didn’t cover it at all. Bendy couldn’t take it. He dove into Boris bag, half in before their supplies stopped him.

“Hide me forever, Boris!” Bendy pleaded.

“No,” Boris said, deadpan. “Now get out. I wanna get a shirt, Bendy.” The disgruntled wolf pulled Bendy out and ignored his crisis. So much for brotherly love! Boris changed and the group pulled itself together again. The boys checked the map. They were closer to symbol and the coast. Bendy was surprised how close they were actually. It knocked off an entire day of travel. How far did that river carry them?

They kept going, everyone in higher spirits now that they were together again. They were walking for a while before Bendy noticed how quiet Felix had gotten. Bendy swallowed and hoped it wasn’t from his terrible outburst earlier. He dropped back to ask. “Something on your mind, Mr. Felix?” Bendy asked hesitantly. He was staring at the ground with the same intensity he had the monster.

“Boulder spiders always live in groups, and they’re rarely that big,” Felix muttered, not looking up. Boulder spiders? Felix knew what that thing was! Before Bendy could say anything Felix looked up at him with the same grim expression. “I’ve been noticing some eaten parts of boulder spiders on my way, so I’m afraid there’s something far more dangerous around here.” Bendy’s eyes widened. Worse? What could be worse? What could eat one of those things?

“Everyone?” Boris’ voice cut through Bendy’s disturbed thoughts. “The map says we should keep going forward, but the path is blocked.” Bendy glanced up to see what Boris was talking about. The cavern seemed to have had some kind of cave in. Some of the rocks were as big as the boulder spider. Well...cuss.

Felix approached the rocks and laid his ear against the wall. “I can hear a waterfall. There is something behind all this!”

Whelp. It might take a while, but the river already gave them a day so! “Let’s get rid of these rocks, then! They don’t seem too heavy,” Bendy said and rolled his sleeves up to his shoulders.

Cup scoffed behind him. “Don’t kid yourself, pipsqueak! There’s no way you can move those.” Jackpot meowed from his shoulder.

Bendy ignored them and worked his fingers under the first boulder, about three times his size. He braced his legs and lifted it. Yeah, just like he thought, not that bad. But there were a ton of them, and he’d have to find a place to move them all. “This is gonna take forever, Bendy.” Boris voiced his thoughts.

Bendy glanced over his shoulder. “Then what do you suggest?” He glanced Cup’s hanging jaw and held back a laugh. Smart aleck was getting a reality check. His face changed from shocked to disturbed. Bendy mildly wondered what he was thinking. Bendy refocused on moving the rocks. He was able to get a few out of the way when Mugs stepped up.

“I think I have an idea,” Mugs said. He grinned and rolled his shoulder. He turned to the wall of
rocks that was still in their way. “Don’t sweat it, Bendy. We’ll destroy this wall in no time! Right, Cup?”

Cuphead blinked his face falling. “Umm, huh?”

“Let’s do this, bro! Two mega blasts should easily do it!” Mugs bumped his shoulder.

Cup gave him a shaky smile. “Uuh, okay?” Bendy raised a brow. Cup pulled his hands out of his pockets. He was looking at his hand with a distant stare. Mugs blinked, waiting on Cup to say something.

“Cup? You ready?” Mugs asked.

“I don’t want to, okay!” he suddenly snapped and grabbed his wrist. “My vision is still blurry!”

Mugs blinked and frowned. “Alright, alright, jeez. Calm down.” He shrugged. “Well then, double the power for me! You fellas might wanna stand back for this.”

Cup stared at the floor with this odd, haunted look. Bendy frowned. He grabbed his sleeve and yanked him back. Cup made a sound of surprise. “Earth to airhead! Your bro said we should stand back.”

“Oh...sorry,” Cup muttered. He looked dazed. What was his deal? And was that perspiration on his head? Sweat? Did cups sweat? Boris was standing behind Bendy with Felix. The cat had stars in his eyes, and he clenched his fist in front of him like an excited kid.

Mugs lifted his fists. They glowed with bright blue energy. He brought them in closer to himself, drawing them back. Then, he threw them forward like a double punch. The energy flew from his fists and crashed into the rocks. The boom was big. Rocks and stones clattered everywhere. When the dust settled, the way was open. Mugs hands were smoking. “Hehe.” He grinned. He rubbed his nose with one hand and put the other one of his hip. He was pretty pleased with himself.

Boris and Felix cheered. Jackpot cowared into Cup’s neck. Cup smiled and patted it comfortingly. Felix gave Mugs a thumbs up when he turned around. Boris hopped up and gave Mugs a big hug, his tail wagging. “My friend is better than yours, Bendy~!” he laughed.

Bendy scoffed. “No way! Mugs is my friend too! You can have the other one!” Bendy smirked. He expected a smart retort from Cuphead, but the fella just tsked and stuck his hands back in his pockets. They stepped through into a large cavernous room. A waterfall cascaded from above, sunlight poured in with the water.

“Finally some sunlight!” Boris commented joyfully.

“At least we found an exit, I hope,” Felix said looking up.

A further look around revealed more of those boulder spiders...in pieces.

Bendy grimaced. “You were right, Mr. Felix. There sure is something eating these b-spider things.” Boris gulped next to him.

“But hey, maybe whatever did this died a long time ago! That can be a theory,” Felix suggested, though he didn’t sound convinced himself.

“Umm.” Bendy’s mind went back to giant Juju. Knowing the last temple, probably not. Bendy didn’t say that though. They made their way around the dead spiders and toward a curve in the cave
that seemed to get brighter and brighter. Boris pulled out the map.

Boris gasped, his face lighting up. “Golly! It looks like it’s just up ahead! This is it you—”

Felix grabbed his arm and pulled the map down. He put his finger to his lips. “Shh!” he hissed. Boris blinked, then a loud crunch echoed through the cave. The questers quietly made their way around the bend and to a large opening in the cave wall to the outside. Bendy could see the ocean and cliffs. Clouds dotted the bright sunny day, but he wasn’t able to focus on any of that. Sitting at the mouth of the cave, it’s back to them, was the creature, eating a spider. It--She was huge. He could only see her upper body. And that was already two stories tall!

“Well cuss,” Cuphead muttered.

Chapter End Notes

Mercowe: I wonder what they should Cala?

I know, I'm terrible. I love puns. :D

See you next week!
Cala Maria

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Mic stared off wide-eyed. "I don't even have words, ladies and gentlemen. Boys and ghouls. So much happens. You just have to read it." He dabbed at his brow with a handkerchief with little bats stitched in it. "Oh dear. You all enjoy. I'm going home to bar my door and windows. Weird things come from the casino on Halloween, and I don't want to see them this year. You have fun." Mic waved and hurried away off stage.

Chapter Notes

Hello! Good day! How are you!
Whelp, the last chapter of Bendy and the Ink Machine came out. I didn't play it since it... wasn't working. *Cough cough* But when it does! I will gladly play. I enjoy the story and though I have had some of it ruined for me (Internet. What can you do?). It won't cause me to stop writing. I already have my plot and ideas. I got some ideas from the game, sure, but it's an AU. It doesn't really matter here. That being said, I will still support themeatly.

On that note. I have finally caught up to the comics. That's it. No more looking ahead. Everything is in my hands now! MWUHAHAHAHA!
You have nothing to worry about...-w-

Mercowe: Heaven help us...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She was rather beautiful from behind. Curvy, soft, with skin like porcelain. Her left arm was marred by two scars. They looked like claw marks. Her hair was short, just above her shoulders. There was something on top her head; it was round in shape. Bendy tilted his head to see if he could make out her face, with no luck. Still, she was a fine dame. His tail tip twitched back and forth like a cat's.

“Bendy, focus!” Felix scolded.

“O-oh sorry.” Bendy scratched the back of his head. Bendy had the decency to look a little ashamed. Felix stepped away from the cave entrance. As the waves crashed against cliffs, Felix didn’t seem too worried about being heard.

“So that’s why that symbol was familiar. It was a ‘high-sea mermaid’! I guess I didn’t recognize it ‘cause she was in her sleeping form,” Felix reasoned to himself. The others turned around to look at him. “But like the boulder spiders, why is she giant?” Felix frowned, raising a hand questioningly.

“Where’s the part?” Bendy asked. “If that’s the guard, then the part should be around here somewhere.”
Boris looked down at the map then up, then down again. He frowned and turned a deadpan look on the mermaid. “I don’t think we’ll need to get around her...She has the part.”

“Where?” Mugs asked.

“In her? She moves, the symbol moves.” Boris looked again. “...In her head?”

The other members of the group stared at Boris and then the giant mermaid, all with frowns. Felix sighed. “Why do we have to kill such a majestic creature?” Felix’ ears and tail drooped.

“The better question is, how’re we doing that stardust?” Cup crossed his arms.

“Well, shooting it would probably do it,” Bendy stated.

Cup turned to Mugs and gave him a thumbs up. “Yeah! You go ahead and shoot! I believe in you, bro!” Mugs scowled at that. The look of annoyance he gave Cuphead was almost heated.

Bendy agreed with him. Cup hadn’t done anything to help since they’d gotten here. He barely did anything on the hike here. What was his deal? Bendy watched the smiling Cup step back further from the cave exit. Was he backing out of his promise to help them? He had been a jerk the way here, but Bendy figured that was just how he was. If he wasn’t being a mook, he was quiet. But now in crunch time, the fella hadn’t fired a single blast. It was almost like he was afraid of...shooting. **Shooting!** He was afraid of shooting! Oh, Cup...

But--why?

Oh, wait! Bendy remembered! What Cup had said back at the hotel. He hated his powers ever since what happened to Mugs! Bendy looked at Mugs and then back at Cuphead. He didn’t know them well enough to tell if anything was off between them, but he could tell they were really close. Maybe as close as he and Boris. Bendy got it.

Bendy smiled.

Cup glanced at him with his one eye. He narrowed his gaze at the demon. “Why you lookin’ at me like that?”

Bendy chuckled. “There’s no need for you to give up on your power, Cup. You’re not going to hurt your brother again if you care so much about him.” From one big brother to another it just made sense.

Cup’s eye widened in surprise. Mugs and Boris behind them also looked at Bendy in amazement. Felix blinked in confusion. Cup’s face darkened with a flush, and he pulled at his coat lapels, trying to duck away. Bendy snickered. Why was he so embarrassed about it?

“Okay!” He straightened up and crossed his arms. His small round nose went into the air. “So maybe that’s the reason, but I can easily shoot anything anytime!” he claimed. It was a nice try at bravado...except he was still flushed.

“Aaaww, Cuppy!” Mugs tackled Cup in a hug.

“Sorry to ruin the moment, but you need to see this, Cuphead,” Felix stated tensely. He was looking out the cave exit. Everyone crowded around him to see what the cat adventurer was talking about.

“Jackpot!” Cup gasped. The little kitten had wandered outside and over to the giant mermaid.
She turned to look at the tiny creature. Her face was beautiful as the rest of her. Small nose, full lips, her hair turned out to be tentacles and the round thing was an octopus sitting on the top of her head. It’s eyes were x’d out like it was...but that wasn’t the part that disturbed Bendy. It was her eyes. They were black pits that seemed over reflective, like a dark mirror attempting to steal your soul.

The monstrous mermaid reached for the little kitten. Cup jumped out of the cave and chucked a rock, hitting the mermaid’s hand. She flinched back. “Jackpot!” The kitten turned to look at Cup. “Come here, little guy!” Cup waved his hand in a beckening fashion. Felix reached into his bag, and a splash of stars shot out of it. Jackpot ran over and hopped into Cuphead’s awaiting arms...only for the sea monster woman to screech angrily, showing off her sharp fangs, and lunge for them. Cup’s straw turned into an exclamation point.

Felix jumped in and thrust down, stabbing the mermaid’s hand with a dagger. The mermaid hissed. One of her tentacle locks whipped down and wrapped around Felix, pinning the arm that held the dagger. Her horrible black eyes were wide with hatred.

Bendy acted without thinking. He grabbed a boulder and threw it. It nailed her in the side of her face. She screeched that high-pitched, unearthly scream again and dropped his idol. Felix smiled and gave Bendy a quick thumbs up.

Bendy rested a hand on his knee and returned the gesture. He panted for breath. He was winded? But why? He just threw a big rock! Also, he felt too hot. It was like he was standing in the middle of a sweltering summer, not a cold fall day next to the ocean! What was wrong with him now? He brushed a sheen of sweat off his brow.

In the meantime, Mugs climbed out of the cave and stepped in front of Cup and Jackpot. He lifted a glowing finger, ready to fire. “Back off monster!” he ordered. He fired. The mermaid lifted her arms to protect her face from the blue blast. They looked odd, like the texture of stone. Had she turned her arms to stone? How? And--

Bendy fell back against the cave entrance next to Boris. His head spun, it was getting too hot. His throat suddenly constricted. He gasped for breath. Oh for the cussing love of everything above! Now! He tried to swallow as nausea turned his stomach. He brushed at his brow again and found his glove stained with ink. Cuss. Oh, come the cuss on! Not now! He wanted to help! He... had to help! The now familiar acidic taste infiltrated his mouth as his chest twisted in fiery pain, threatening to drop him to his knees. His body trembled with the effort to keep him up.

He panted for breath even as his lungs started to fill. His vision started to swim, blue flashes, blurs of motion. No! He couldn’t screw this up! Everyone was fighting, trying to help! He couldn’t just do nothing while everyone was fighting for their lives! He couldn’t let her hurt his brother...his friends...his idol! He--he had to do something!

He blinked ink and tears out of his eyes. He swallowed to urge to cough. What could he do? Wh-what about his shadows! But that took focus and Oddswell’s warning...but Holly had said he could reach in places one normally couldn’t, right? What if he focused his powers on the ink, on his body and made it move? Focus on controlling it? Strengthen himself or something? What the hell did he have to lose? He was getting worse and worse by the moment. He blinked and looked up. The mermaid was lunging again.

He--he had too. He grit his teeth, clenched his fists and reached out for his power, but instead of pushing them out he tried to draw them in. Ink ran over his eye, partly blinding him, but he had to focus.

The feeling that rushed inside him was amazing. Fire, but less pain, strength and heat. He felt more
energized than he had in years. It was amazing, suddenly his heavy body was as light as a feather. He felt invincible. He could do anything! Have anything! Nothing was beyond his reach. He could think again. But...he wasn’t sure...his gloves were ripped. How did that happen? And that acidic taste, not disgusting anymore, but not gone either. And his vision...sharper and...was everything tinted red?

“Oh no! Bendy! Are you alright?” Boris asked in such concern. Bendy looked over at him. Boris gasped and fell back a look of horror on his face. “B-B-B-Bendy?” he choked.

What was wrong with Boris? Bendy felt great! He could take on anything! It was a dream come true!.. A dream? This probably was a dream. His clothes were feeling weird...what was he doing again? He couldn’t really remember...He wanted to break something. He wanted to fight something and rip it apart. He wanted...

Cup watched with wide eyes. This was nuts. She looked just like Cala Maria...If Cala had come from the sixth level of hell! For all Cup knew, she had! It’s not like he and Mugs knew what happened to everyone after they lost to the Devil. Hell, he still wasn’t completely sure what had happened to him and Mugs.

“Keep it up, Mugman!” Felix called out as he lifted his dagger. Suddenly, something blurred past the cat and leapt into the air. Cup blinked his uncovered eye and tried to focus on it. Cala, if that was her, gasped and swung one of her stone arms out to hit it. The blur landed on her arm instead. She screamed at it.

It growled back. Wait...was that Bendy! He brought his fist down on her arm and shattered it. She shrieked in pain, and he fell with the stone hand, landing next to Felix. Holy cuss, that couldn’t be the pipsqueak! He towered over the cat. His hands...claws that could crush Felix’ head. His fangs were bigger. He was dripping with ink and there was a weird red tinge around him. His eyes were empty black pits. Even from here, Cup felt a chill from him. He looked...terrifying.

“That’s...so...” Mugs muttered. “Berries!” Mugs said and brought up his clenched fists. Cup felt his good eye twitch. He and Mugs had been around demons, probably more than the normal schmuck, and most of them were at least bad news. After a while though, Cup and Mugs had just grown used to the chill they had, but there were a few that came off as simply evil. The boss was one such example.

But this was the first time that Cup had actually seen Bendy as a demon, despite the evidence from before. He had just been a normal pipsqueak to Cup. But now, this...he wasn’t sure what was about to happen. Would Bendy even recognize them? What if he had just snapped and was going to attack anything that moved? Cup had seen it before. There was nothing like a demon’s rage. Mugs seemed to think that it was still their pal in there.

“I didn’t know you could do this!” Mugs looked up at the demon. His face was covered in ink. The chill was terrible. Cup felt a shudder of fear creep down his spine. Bendy turned to face Mugs with his solid black eyes. Mugs flinched back. “Golly, you’re kinda spooky-lookin’!” a hint of nervousness finally showed itself in Mugs voice. If this was going to get bad, Mugs wouldn’t be on the front line of things.

Cup lifted an arm in front of Mugs and stepped up. He hugged Jackpot closer to him with his other hand. Mustering up the scraps of bravery he had left, he looked the demon in the eye. “B-Bendy? Is that really you?” Bendy reached for him. He flinched. Then, Bendy was messing up his hair with one of his huge claws.
“Aaww!” Bendy’s voice was deep and distorted. “Look at you down there!” He sounded gleeful. He pulled his hand back. “I guess that would explain your short temper!” He laughed. Cup blinked. He blinked again. The once empty blackness that were Bendy’s eyes now had red irises in the seas of darkness. It was still disturbing, but at least it brought a little life back to him. And...wait. Was he making short puns at Cup? *Him!* The shortest guy on the team? Well...he had been at least...Now he towered over all of them. What was he? About half a head taller than Cup now? Mugs chuckled next to him. Jeez.

But...it seemed like it was still Bendy, despite the creepy, inky makeover and the deep voice. Bendy turned and wiped away the ink from his face. His body still glistened and dripped though. Didn’t that hurt? He didn’t act like it. “Man, I wish this was real?” Bendy muttered.

“What?” Cup asked. He didn’t think this was real or something?

“Sorry, ladies.” Bendy straightened up, face mostly clear of the ink, thought his fangs and black and red eyes were still terrifying to behold. He rolled a shoulder. “I’d love to stay and chat, but I gotta show this fish who’s boss.”

Cup looked over the open space to eye Felix asking Boris something. The pup shook his head to whatever it was. They were both watching Bendy with worried eyes. Cup turned back to see Bendy in a stare down with Cala. Cup honestly didn’t know which one was more scary. Fangs and black eyes with mirror reflections or burn red hell-fire, claws, and power. One Cala’s tentacles moved, but it wasn’t a tentacle anymore. A fanged snake head inched toward Bendy from behind. Every single one of the tentacles turned into a hissing snake, giving her a medusa look with her blacked out eyes. Hopefully that meant they wouldn’t have to worry about her turning them into stone.

“Bendy, look out!” Cup called out without a thought.

“Bendy, duck!” Mugs aimed his peashooter blast at the snake and fired. Bendy ducked just in time. The blue blast flew over Bendy and nailed the snake in the face. The snake went limp, Mugs’ blast either killing it or knocking it out. Cup let out a sigh of relief.

C-cuss. The hell was that about, Cuphead? He didn’t care! Remember! He couldn’t--He didn’t care! He thumbed his hand against the bandaged chip, hoping the stinging pain would snap him out of it. That the twist of worry and relief in his chest would just disappear.

It didn’t. Before he could worry anymore about it, Mugs suddenly shoved him away. “Cups! Look out!” Cup landed on his back. He groaned and sat up. It felt like the earth was shaking.

He opened his eyes to see the mermaid had lunged out of the water. She lay on the land, belly down, her mouth full of rocks from the hole she made with her fangs...right where Mugs had been. There was a blue glow coming from her face as Mugs fought to get out. Holy cussing stars! Did Mugs just do that! Was he insane! What the cuss! Cup grit his teeth. No way! The blue light faded. Cussing no way! Cup wasn’t going to go through *that* again! Cuss no! **CUSS NO!**

Bendy leapt onto her head, wrapping his claws around the throat of one of her snakes. Two others turned to hiss at him angrily. She looked up at the demon on her head. Cup took the chance to blast her in the face, rage making his blasts brighter and hotter. He set Jackpot down behind him, not wanting the kitten to be endangered. The monster hissed in pain, blood gushing, and stuck out her forked tongue. Mouth empty. Oh stars above no.

“*Spit my brother out, you scrap of sushi!*” Cup demanded. He refused to accept it. Face bloody, the mermaid collapsed. Cup didn’t hesitate. He went to try and pry her jaws open. His arms struggled with it, shaking with the strain. Tears came to his eyes. One staining his bandage and the other
running freely. C’mon! C’mon! He had to be okay! H-he promised he’d never leave again. After that hospital visit they promised to stick together. Watch out for each. No matter what. They would face it together! He couldn’t break that promise! Mugs wouldn’t! Please don’t do this Mugs...Please…

Please.

Mugs swallowed. He couldn’t see anything! He felt the ground around him. It...wasn’t slimy or wet. It was actually flat, smooth...It felt like a floor. A cool, flat floor. What? He lifted a finger and lit it with his peashooter bullet. Soft blue light filled the place around him. “What is this place?” he muttered. It was pitch black outside of the ring of his light. Golly, it was creepy. This couldn’t be her stomach. Was the mermaid like Werner Werman’s cat or Dr. Kahl’s robot? Was he in a robot? There weren’t any pipes above him. He didn’t hear any machinery whirling. This was weird.

“Wh-who are you?” A small female voice asked. Mugs turned around.

“Who’s there?” Mugs said tensely. A figure cringed away from him. She was about up to Mugs waist in height, and was raising her arm to block her eyes from the light. She lowered her arm and blinked at Mugs. The octopus on her head did the same. One of it’s tentacles covered one of her eyes and a side of her face. The other eye widened. It was--

“Hey! You look like that giant monster that’s trying to kill us!” Mugs snapped. The bullet in his finger brightened with his agitation.

“N-no please! I’ve got nothing to do with--Wait! Y-you came from outside, right?” she gasped. She brought her hand to her chest. Her eyes brightened, cheeks hinted with a blush. Suddenly, her hand tightened into a fist, and she sniffed. Her large eye became watery. “P-please tell me th-that you’re here to save me! I-I can’t take th-this place anymore!” Her body shook as she began to weep. Mugs hesitated for a second, Cup’s warning about trusting people going through his head.

He dropped to his knee in front of her so they were eye level. “Oh gee, no no no. I’m sorry. You don’t seem involved in any of this,” Mugs found himself saying. He lifted the hand he wasn’t using for light and rested it on her shoulder. “Don’t fret. I’ll figure out a way to you ya outta her,” Mugs promised and smiled. She glanced up at him. “Alright?” he winked.

Her weeping stopped. Her face darkened in a blush. “A...alright.” Did her eyes seem brighter? Meh, was probably just the tears.

Mugs stood back up and looked around. “Let’s see.”

“There’s some sort of device that’s running this whole ‘place’. I can’t see it now, and I can’t go look for it,” the girl said.

“Thanks,” Mugs said. Something tickled the back of his mind. Her name. Mugs had a guess at who this was, but he wasn’t sure if he was right. If he was, then things just had gotten a whole lot more confusing. “Golly! I didn’t even ask you your name!” He turned a smile on her.

“Oh!” Her face lit up. “It’s Maria, Cala Maria!”

So, it was her! But...she didn’t look a day older than when he had seen her as a child. And she was normal sized! The monster ‘out there’ looked a bit more like the Cala Maria Mugman knew. What did it all mean? She looked at him expectantly.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Mugman,” Mugs introduced himself. Yep, definitely weird. Mugs gave her a
quick once over but stopped. Her tail. “Whoa! Hold on! I didn’t notice that!” Cup would have
smacked him for being so unobservant. “Are you stuck or something?” It was strange. It was like the
floor became scales that had attached themselves to her tail. The large floor-scales covering her own.

She heaved a heavy sigh. “Yeah, I sure am.”

“Here, let me help you out of there.” Mugs rested his hands under her arms. His light went out since
he didn’t want to burn her.

“I don’t think you can.” Cala’s resigned voice came to him from the dark. Mugs braced himself and
pulled. He pulled and pulled and nothing happened. He tried harder when his chest stung with pain,
and he had to stop. Ah cuss. Did he mess up another stitch? He really hoped not. Cup and that scary
nurse were already going to rip him up and down for the three he had already messed up.

“Phew! I thought this was gonna be easier,” Mugs admitted.

“Told you,” Cala sighed, sounding unsurprised. Mugs swallowed and fought the urge to rub or
scratch his old injury. What a pain. He would admit defeat for now. Something suddenly lit up
behind him, chasing away the shadows. A bright gold and pink light.

“Wow!” Mugs said and turned around.

“It’s the gear. It glows every time this place needs power.” Cala explained. Power? Mugs narrowed
his eyes to see better. It was large, wider than his chest and as thick as his upper arm. It was fixed to
the wall at Mugs’ shoulder height. It had a few simple shapes carved into its face, but otherwise it
looked like a normal gear. The place it was fixed to seemed to have something like veins running
away from it. Sparks of magic drifted from it’s golden, glowing surface. Blue, gold, and pink drifted
around it like little dust mots caught in the sunlight.

Mugs approached it cautiously. “This is the piece we need?” It seemed magical enough to be. Bendy
and Boris said the map symbol thingy looked like a cog. “Maybe I can take it off,” Mugs reasoned.
He reached up and touched the teeth of the gear.

“Don’t bother.” Again with that resigned tone! “It’s as stuck as I am.” Mugs’d had enough of this.

He looked back at her. “A little bit of hope wouldn’t hurt, ya know?”

Cala startled and looked up at him again. “I-I’m sorry,” she said softly. “It’s just that I’m tired of
hoping for nothing.”

Mugs turned back to the gear. “I’m sure it was the gutters everytime.” He grunted as he strained his
arms, trying to turn it. “But there’s always another chance!” Otherwise, he and Cup would’ve been
up a creek without a paddle a long time ago. He braced his feet and fought to turn it, arms shaking
and condensation dripped down the side of his face.

“I promised you we’ll ge-get out!” Mugs grunted with effort. This thing was stubborn. His chest
burned, but he wasn’t going to give up! Not this time! She couldn’t either. “So hope for me!” He
felt it shift. Then slowly, so, so slowly it started to turn.

Cala gasped. “Oh! Oh my! I do! I do believe in you!” She sucked in an excited breath. Her voice was
high and chirping like a birds. “My hero!”
some of her snakes were unconscious or dead. Still, she refused to go down.

Cup ripped off the bandage and glared up at the monster. She lunged. He jumped back, firing shot after shot. She quickly pulled back and hissed at him. He got ready to attack again when he heard footsteps behind him. Cup half glanced back. Boris was racing by him. He had tears in his eyes, a wrench in his hand, and a determined look in his eye. “Mugman! I’ll save you!” Cup couldn’t let this happen! Not only had Mugs already risked his life (idiot!) for this pup, but that demon would flip if he saw any harm come to him.

Cup quickly threw out an arm to stop him. “And where do you think you’re goin’?” Boris skidded to a halt just before getting clothes-lined by Cup’s arm.

“I have—” He grabbed Cup’s raised arm with his shaking free hand. He turned huge watery eyes on Cup, ears drooping to the sides of his head. He looked like a lost puppy. Holy cuss. Cup felt something twist in his chest. “I ha-have to save my friend!” Boris whimpered. The twist tightened in his chest into something warm. Cup frowned.

“Listen kid,” Cup lifted the hand on his upraised arm and petted the wolf like he would Jackpot. “My brother likes you, so until I save him, you’re under my protection.” The pup rested his head on Cup’s arm, staining his sleeve with his tear. Gee, this kid really cared about Mugs that much. He was this worried about him. When was the last time someone had worried about Cup and Mugs this much? Boris was still staring at him with those way-too-big-to-be-fair eyes. “You saw how strong he is. He’s fine! I’ll make sure of that.” Cup tried to reassure the pup.

It seemed to work. Boris calmed down, and though his eyes didn’t go back to the size Cup was used to seeing them, the pup smiled and backed off a step. Cup dropped his arm. Boris folded his arms behind himself, tail now wagging. What the cuss?

Cup faced away from the arguably adorable image of Boris. Cup felt embarrassment rear its ugly head. “D-don’t go telling the others about...this side of me, capiche?” He saw Boris nod from the corner on his eye, tail still going and eyes way too big.

Man. That just isn’t fair. How the hell did Bendy ever saw no to this kid?

“Saw it all fluff-heart!” the demon himself called out. Cup choked. “No, you didn’t!” he snapped back. Bendy cackled at his defensiveness while he was struggling with another one of the monster’s snakes. He was almost casual about it. The monster didn’t take it so lightly. She hissed, but before she tried to strike again, the creature and her snakes shrieked and thrashed back. The monster screamed and threw her head back. She grabbed at her head with her only hand. Bendy was thrown around, still clinging to the snake he had in his claws. Her body began cracking and chipping.

“She seems to be weakening!” Felix called out. What the hell was happening? Guess it didn’t matter. As long as they turned out okay Cup didn’t care.

Bendy rode around the thrashing creature like a pro. Then, he suddenly went rigid. Before Cup could figure it out, Bendy was falling.

“BENDY!” Boris shouted. Felix reacted with lightning reflexes. He unstrapped his bag and chucked it out into the water. It inflated and turned into a rubber raft. Bendy landed in it with a splash. He looked more...liquid than usual. “Bendy!” Boris raced to the water’s edge. The waves pushed the raft back to them. Cup watched from where he stood. He shared a worried look with Felix. He couldn’t have...could he?
Cup shifted uneasily. Boris pulled the raft onto land and quickly reached into the glob of ink inside. They all held their breaths. Boris pulled back, holding a limp form completely covered in ink. He wiped his hand over the figure and revealed Bendy’s pale face. He was back to his small self and seemed unconscious. Cup let out a held breath.

He was alive. Thank the stars.

Oh man. So much for not caring. Stars above, he was in trouble.

Bendy didn’t know where he was. He was holding someone’s hand. It was a big hand, warm and comforting. He saw the sleeve of his raincoat from the corner of his eye. Where…

Something caught his eye. He looked down. The ground is really close. Was he smaller? Yeah, tiny, even. It wasn’t bad. Puddles were everywhere. Had it been raining? He stopped. One puddle was black. He looked down into it. He could see his reflection. Wow. He looked like he was five or something. His little rain boots shifted to the edge of the black puddle. He crouched down. Why was this one different? He heard shifting and looked up. It was misty. Had it always been misty? There were demons in the fog, going this way and that. They were all different shapes and sizes. Some were tall with spikes, others small imps. Some with claws, some with scales, some with slime, tails, wings. Several were watching him.

Bendy couldn’t see the details on them. It was like they were part of the fog. Shifting, hard to focus on. One came close. It had large, downward curving horns that came from the sides of its head. Its eyes were two bright white lights. It offered a large claw to Bendy. He wasn’t afraid. He felt like...he should know this demon. Who was it? He couldn’t remember, but that was okay. He was okay, safe. It was okay. He reached out to take the huge claw with his own little hand.

Something tickled his throat. He coughed. It got worse. He coughed again. The fog disappeared, the demons did too. Everything was going white. No...don’t leave him. Come back! He didn’t want to be alone!

He coughed and coughed, trying to breathe. Something smelled awful.

Bendy opened his eyes. Someone was holding his hand. “B-Boris?” Bendy asked weakly. What happened? Suddenly he was being hugged. Not by one person, but two. Boris was sitting to his side, holding him up and nuzzling the top of Bendy’s head with his muzzle. The other was Felix, to Bendy’s shock. The two clung to him with relieved smiles.

Seriously. What was going on here? One minute Bendy had been throwing a boulder, the next he was on the ground with these two acting weird. And the monster--Wait! Where were the Cupbros!

Bendy tried to sit up. “Cuphead, Mugman, where--”

“Rise and shine, bud!” Cup smiled at him from over his shoulder. “We’ve got one more soul to save!”

“Cups!” Bendy smiled in relief. Wait, one more soul? Did he needed to be saved? And the other had to be Mugs right? Where was he?

Cup turned around and gestured to Bendy. “Why did you change back so soon? You were really cool in your other form!”

Bendy blinked. “Uh?” Other form? What was he talking about? This all was happening too fast. Someone needed to explain.

The *floating head* of the mermaid glared at Cup with her freaky black eyes and—*Did her tentacle hair turn into snakes!* When had that happened! What the hell was going on! What did Bendy miss! “When did that happen?” Bendy shook his head. How long was he out? And halt--his clothes were missing! Where were his goggles? His gloves, his shoes, stars, even his belt was gone. As soon as they were done here, he needed an explanation. The head hissed, as did the...snakes. Bendy blinked. Man, that was freaky. Floating heads were a no go to Bendy, this was going to haunt his nightmares.

“Alright, fang face! Let’s go!” Cup shouted.

Mugs grit his teeth. His face was dripping with sweat, and his chest had gone numb, which probably was a bad thing. Cala cheered him on from behind. He was getting closer. The gear was giving, little by little. One turn after another loosened it further and further from the wall. Mugs grunted.

Suddenly, he heard a loud *crack* behind him. He turned in time to see Cala begin to fall as the ground around her splintered. She cried out. Mugs dove and caught her arm in his hand. “I gotcha!” he said and yanked her up.

“Mugman!” her eyes widened as she was pulled up almost as quickly as she fell. She wrapped her arms around Mugs’ neck and lay her tail across his lap. “Oh! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” she said over and over. Mugs blushed. Gee, he wasn’t used to something like this. A cute girl was hugging him. He had kinda returned the hug without thinking. This was...nice. He felt his face heat up.

She seemed to realize what she was doing and pulled back. Mugs immediately wrapped his arms around her waist and back so she didn’t fall into the hole behind her. They made eye contact, both eyes wide with surprise and uncertainty, faces flushed and close. “O-oh,” she murmured softly in her high pitched little voice. She gave him a shy smile. Something fluttered in Mugs chest. He returned the smile. She relaxed and rested a hand against his arm and the side of her head against his shoulder. Mugs swallowed. She smelled like a fresh ocean breeze. Clean and a little salty.

Mugs was a light as a feather.

Then he saw movement from the hole, bringing him back down to reality. Cala seemed to pick up on this, because she shifted to sit beside him. He kept a hand wrapped around her shoulders. Mugs peered into the hole. Light came from it and, from what he could see, there were rocks and sand. “Looks like the place we were fighting that creature in!” Mugs said. “I’m gonna take a closer look.”

“Be careful,” Cala said as he shifted closer to the edge and stuck his head down. The upside down view of his team greeted him.

“Bro!” Mugs grinned. They were beneath him and off to the side, staring at Mugs oddly. “You fellas are small from up here!” Mugs chuckled.

“Mugman!” Felix called with a smile spreading across his face.

Mugs looked around to see Bendy and Boris behind them. Bendy was small again. He held up his pants like he had lost his belt or something. Golly, he was even missing his vest and goggles. He looked odd without them. Boris was also holding the small demon back with a hand that the wolf was clung to with a worried expression. If Mugs strained his hearing, he could just make out what they were saying.
“Please Bendy, you have to rest,” Boris begged.

“I’m fine Boris! Just let me help them,” Bendy argued.

“Aren’t you at least gonna tell me what that weird form of yours was all about? You really scared me back there,” Boris said.

Bendy paused and looked at him with furrowed brows. “What are you talking about? You and Cuphead are weirding me out here.”

Before Mugs could think much on that, Cup and Felix were taking action. “How are we gettin’ him down from there?” Cup asked.

“I got it!” Felix touched his bag and in a splash of stars, it turned into a grappling hook. Oh boy. “Mugman! Make sure to stay away!” Felix called out and aimed for the hole that Mugs was hanging his head out of. That was his cue to move! Mugs lunged back. He scooted away, pulling Cala with him. He heard the shot of the gun and then the hook and rope zoomed into their room. It crashed into the wall and broke through! The room shook.

“Wh-what’s happening?” Cala asked, clinging to Mugs arm.

“I think this place is falling apart.” Mugs looked up at the cracking walls and ceiling. “We need to climb down this rope and get out of here.”

“Okay!” Cala said. Mugs picked up Cala and stepped carefully to the rope.

“You’re good to go, Mugman!” Felix called. Mugs paused when something sparked out of the corner of his eye. The gear! Starfallen—! He had almost forgotten! They needed that, and this place wasn’t going to last much longer. But he couldn’t take Cala down and the gear! What was he supposed to do?

“Mugman?” Cala asked. Mugs grit his teeth. He had to just hope that thing survived. Cala didn’t deserve to die. Mugs grabbed the rope and started down. Cala clung to him, her arms around his shoulders and her tail wrapped around his waist and leg.

“Hang on tight!” Mugs said. He moved quickly, working his way down to the ground between Cup and Felix.

“Bro!...Who’s—”

“It’s Cala Maria,” Mugs gasped and helped her sit on a stone after his feet hit the ground. Boy

“Good to see you’re okay.” Felix patted him on the back.

“Yeah!” Cup wrapped an arm around his shoulders. “I was worried there for a moment.”

Mugs smiled. Before he could say anything, Cala screamed and pointed. Mugs turned to see what frightened her. He gasped. They had climbed out of the monsters head! It was bloody and terrifying, it’s mouth open in a silent scream as it crumbled to stone. It started to fall as chunks of stone hit the cliff shore and water. It withered as it fell, heading toward the waves.

“We have to stop it!” Mugs said.

“What?” Boris asked.

“The gear! The part! It’s still in there!” Mugs pointed to the head. Felix, Cup, and Mugs grabbed the
rope and tried to pull the falling head back toward the shore. It started to drag them toward the water instead.

“C’mon!” Cup grunted. The three put everything they had into the rope, but still they were dragged, their feet making lines in the sand. Bendy rushed up and grabbed the rope. He yanked, and suddenly Mugs was hanging an inch in the air as the rope went taut between the demon and the head. The head tilted back toward the shore. Bendy took one step back, then two, then three. He grunted as he pulled.

“Keep going, Bendy!” Cup cheered. “We’re getting it!”

The got another foot when the rope went slack, and they all fell back. Mugs groaned and sat up. “Oh no!” Felix said. The hook had been pulled free. The stones that were left crashed into the waves.

“Ahh cuss,” Cup frowned. “Well, at least we don’t have to deal with a monster anymore.” Bendy nodded.

“I guess we’re going swimming,” Felix said.

Boris stepped up with the map. “It’s in there,” he confirmed. He still looked pale and kept giving Bendy concerned looks.

“Great. Let’s get this over with.” Bendy rolled up his sleeves.

“Not you.” Felix put a hand on his shoulder.

“B-but.” Bendy blinked.

“Cuphead, Mugman, and I will get it,” Felix said. “Please, Bendy. You’ve done enough today.” Bendy pouted but nodded.

Mugs got up and walked back to Cala. She was crying. “Cala? Are you okay?”

“It looked like me! What was that? Why were we in it’s head! Why did it look like me? Oh stars, I was in that thing for so long! I didn’t know!” she sobbed.

“It’s okay.” Mugs winced. That probably wasn’t the right thing to say. “It’s gone now, and you’re free.”

“It was so scary!” Cala said.

“And it’s gone! It won’t ever come back,” Mugs promised and rested a hand on her shoulder.

“Oh, Mugman! Promise it won’t!” She turned and buried her face in his shirt.

“I, uh, promise.” Mugs smiled feeling his face heat up.

“Thank you!” she said and hugged him again.

“Are you helping!” Cup called. Mugs looked over to see Cup and Felix taking off their shoes and jackets. Felix put his hat on Bendy’s head, who stopped pouting. Boris rolled his eyes, but he was smirking.

“Yeah, sorry!” Mugs called back.

“What about you, mermaid?” Cup asked.
Cala’s eyes grew huge, and she shook her head violently. The octopus on her head seemed equally startled. “I don’t want to be anywhere near that thing again!”

“That’s okay, Cala,” Mugs said. “I’ll be right back.”

“Be safe,” Cala said with big eyes. Mugs winked and went to join his brother and the cat adventurer. He pulled off his shoes and stepped up to the water’s edge.

“It’s ahead of you three and a little to the left,” Boris directed. Cup gave him a thumbs up and stepped into the water.

“Cold!” he yelped. Bendy laughed and Cup frowned at him. Bendy winked. Cup rolled his eyes.

Felix and Mugs followed him. Mugs felt goosebumps rise on his skin instantly. It was freezing. The water splashed against them in salty waves. It wasn’t long until they were neck deep. Then, it seemed the ground just dropped off. Felix reached into his bag and pulled out a water mask. He put it on and dove under. In a couple seconds, he was back above the surface. “It’s about ten feet down. I can make out the stone, but I didn’t see the gear.”

“Alright, let’s go before we freeze!” Cup said. They dove down into the water. The rocks were in a pile. They were darker than the ones that had been there for a while. Cup didn’t waste any time trying to move them aside and look for the machine piece. Felix circled the rocks, trying to spot it before grabbing rocks to move. Some were too big to move. Mugs tried to see if there was anything that hinted at where the gear had been. A familiar piece of wall or something. They would go up, catch their breath and dive down again and again. Mugs’ hands and feet were going numb. They wouldn’t be able to do this for much longer.

Mugs pushed a stone the size of his head away and spotted the teeth of the gear. He waved at the others and pointed. They swam over and together they started to work on uncovering it.

A moment later, Mugs had to go up for air. He gasped and coughed. Yuk! Salt water! “We found it!” he called. Bendy and Boris cheered. They were standing by Cala, who was closer to the water’s edge now. She waved at him.

Mugs grinned and dove back down. Cup and Felix had it half free. Felix went up and Cup and Mugs were able to finish working on it. They tried to lift it together, but it was too heavy in the water. Cup had to go up for air, and Felix came back with a rope. They looped it through the gear’s center and tied it. They swam to the shore and all three of them collapsed on the rocky beach.

“Wh-when I h-have a va-va-vacation, I d-d-d-don’t want to go t-t-t-to the beach!” Cup proclaimed with chattering teeth.

“M-maybe ne-next summer, b-b-b-but I’m good for the re-rest of this year!” Felix agreed with a chuckle.

It was pretty straight forward after that. Bendy pulled the gear onto the beach. Felix pulled out a hairdryer (of all things) and dried them all off. Mugs was relieved to be warm and dry. Cup and Felix redressed themselves in their jackets. Felix retrieved his hat from Bendy.

“We got it.” Bendy sighed and patted the gear. “Holy cussing stars and moon, we got it.”

“Is it always this difficult to get a machine piece?” Felix asked.

“Yes,” Bendy, Boris, Mugman, and Cuphead said together in varying levels of exasperation. Mugs was sure all of them were thinking of the crazy Voodoo lady that nearly cursed them all. Felix raised
a brow at their responses.

“Well, now we just have to get it and us back to Toon Town,” Boris said.

“I might be able to help with that,” Cala offered shyly. “As a...thank you for saving me.”

Cup eyed her neutrally. Bendy smirked. Felix smiled and answered her. “Thank you. We’d appreciate it.” She nodded and glanced at Mugs.

She gasped. “Mugman! You’re bleeding!”

Uh? Mugs looked down and saw that there was indeed a couple spots of blood on his shirt. Ah man, his stitches! He should probably be worried that he didn’t feel any pain, but he was more worried about how Cup would react. He glanced at his big brother to see his bro’s eyes widen. “Uh..Oops?”

Chapter End Notes

Wow! They’ve finally gotten the part!!! Yey, now they just need to get back to Toon Town and...How exactly are they going to hide a giant cog? This is going to get interesting. :D
How did this happen? Felix looked over the ripped and bleeding stitches of the large, jagged scars on Mugman’s front and back. The wounds were fresh and swollen, it couldn’t have happened a long time ago. This boy was running around and fighting with these? He was as bad as Bendy!

“How did this happen?” he demanded again. Mugs winced and shrugged, the jerk of his shoulder causing him to flinch. “Don’t move!” Mugs had tried to brush it off, but Cuphead had snapped and grabbed his shirt. It took Bendy and Felix to stop him. Mugs had promised to take care of it if Cup backed off. Cup only calmed down when Felix promised he’d take care of the younger brother. Now, here the two of them were, back in the cave, Felix cleaning up Mugs’ wounds in the cave’s river.

“You know, you’re worrying everyone,” Felix said wringing out his cloth. It wasn’t a bad wound. There was just some light bleeding. Mugs ducked. “Why didn’t you say anything?” Bendy and Boris were trying to calm down Cuphead and Cala.

“I didn’t want to worry Cups. He has enough on his shoulders. We needed to move, right? I don’t want to hold anyone back,” Mugs said.

“Good intentions or not, Mugman, what if something had happened while we were fighting? While you were climbing down the rope? While you were ten feet under the water in the ocean?” Mugs
sunk lower and lower. Felix sighed. “Look, Mugman. The reason we are angry is that we care about you that much.”

Mugman glanced up at him with wide eyes. “Boris and Bendy are your friends, Cuphead is your brother, Cala seems very fond of you, and I consider you a friend as well. If you don’t rely on us...Well, imagine if Cuphead had done this to you,” Felix explained.

Mugs paled and looked back down. “You don’t have to explain anything to me, but please rely on me. I want to help,” Felix said.

“Okay,” Mugs muttered. They sat in silence for a while. Felix sighed. He couldn’t force Mugman to talk. The wound appeared to be some kind of bullet wound. Whatever bullet could do this had to pack a punch. Just as Felix was bandaging it up, Mugs spoke. “It was an accident,” he said. “And Cup blames himself.”

Ah. That would explain his strong reaction. Poor brothers. Felix wanted to ask but felt he didn’t need to push. Mugs and Cup would talk if they wanted to. They proved themselves reliable. Felix wasn’t worried about their teamwork. These things, he really believed, would work out themselves. It was obvious how much they cared for each other. “But you don’t.”

“Of course not!” Mugs frowned.


“Thanks,” Mugs said and stood up. They came out to see the others sitting on the shore. Cala wasn’t there anymore. “Where did Cala go?” Mugs asked.

“She went to get us a ride! She said she could get us back to the city fast,” Boris answered. “How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine. For some reason, it doesn’t really hurt,” Mugs said. “A sting once in a while, but that’s it.” Cup glanced at him, then glared at the waves. Oh dear. Mugs huffed and puffed out his cheeks. He lifted his nose in the air and went to sit by Boris. Oh, double dear. Bendy glanced at Felix. The cat adventurer shrugged. He understood the least out of everyone here on what was going on. At least Bendy seemed to be doing better. He wasn’t pale anymore, he was moving with the energy he had before. He could recover quickly, but it seemed that he couldn’t recall anything of his ‘episode.’ Why was that? Was it an ink illness problem or a demon situation?

Felix sat down next to said demon and ruffled his hair. Bendy smiled. Sadly, Felix didn’t know as much as he’d like about demon culture. Reliable sources were scarce on the Surface and often mingled with superstition. Ancient histories were just as obscure and mythical. The best history was in the angel’s archives in their city above the clouds, the Upper. Again, they had a bias, painting all demons as creatures not to be trusted. Felix couldn’t blame them. The Angel-Demon War, though ancient, was the biggest loss of angel life in known history. It was still a ‘sore spot’ for their people.

Felix looked at Bendy. He was trying to get Cup to talk to him with mixed results. It seemed that Jackpot was helping though, wanting to swat at Bendy’s tail spike and being playful. Cup smiled as Bendy teased the kitten with his tail.

Felix couldn’t see the records he had studied in the Upper being applicable to Bendy. He was raised on the Surface, which was odd. But according to angels, it was their very natures that were evil, not their culture. Bendy was proof of the contradiction. And yet…
That ‘other form,’ as the others have started to call it, was powerful. Bendy had been so strong that he fought the giant snakes of the mermaid with ease. He had been able to leap two stories in the air. He had even looked like he was having fun. And...it unnerved Felix, just a touch. Felix figured it was more due to natural instincts, though. With enough exposure and with Bendy still being Bendy regardless of how he looked, Felix was certain they could all adjust...if it ever happened again.

Felix felt his tail twitch. It was a mystery, and he ached to solve mysteries, especially ancient ones. Not that Bendy was some sort of old ruin lost in the jungles, he was a person. But Bendy could answer so many questions about his people. Questions that have been around for centuries.

“I’m back! And I found you a ride!” Cala splashed out of the surf and onto the rocky shore. “Mugman! Are you feeling better?” She lit up upon seeing him.

“Yeah, I’m good. Uh, what ride?” Mugman asked.

“Why, Bertha the Blue Whale, of course!” Cala grinned and waved a hand toward the ocean. A huge whale suddenly burst up and flipped half it’s huge body above the water gracefully before crashing back into the water. Felix believed everyone’s jaw dropped then.

“That’s our ride!” Boris exclaimed.

“She isn’t thrilled to take people with her after something that happened in a park or something, but I told her you saved me, so she’s making an exception,” Cala explained.

Felix blinked. A park?

“Alright, let’s go,” Bendy said like this was normal. Cuphead nodded. Bendy picked up the gear and the whale leveled out a few feet from the shore.

“That’s as close as she can get,” Cala said.

“Cuss, you’re saying I’m getting wet again,” Cuphead grumbled. Cala shrunk apologetically. Mugman frowned at Cuphead who scowled back at him darkly. Oh dear…

Bendy rolled his eyes and took a step forward before he suddenly dropped the gear with a hiss. Everyone jumped at the loud clang of the metal hitting the rock.

“Bendy!” Boris exclaimed worriedly. Bendy was hopping up and down.

“Ow! Ow! Ow! Burning! Burning!” he said and swatted at his side. “Hot! Hot!” Before any of them could say or do anything, Bendy threw himself into the water and, to Felix’ surprise, smoke rose from the demon. He sighed in relief.

“Bendy, what the hell is going on?” Cuphead demanded.

“I was burning!” Bendy growled and pulled up his shirt. He gingerly came back to the shore. Boris was there in an instant. Felix came closer to look. Sure enough, the demon’s side was burning, fur singed and a few blisters forming.

“What the cuss!” Cuphead hissed.

“I have no idea,” Bendy said.

“Are you okay?” Boris asked worriedly.

“Well, whatever that was has stopped now.” Bendy frowned.
“We better bandage that so it doesn’t get infected,” Felix said. What was going on? This was part of the illness? Was it from his change to that form? But that had been a while ago. Weren’t demon suppose to be immune to fire or was that just another rumor? It seemed to be a rumor.

“Do it on the whale. The bandage will just get wet,” Bendy said and gingerly went to get the gear again.

Cuphead passed him up and grabbed it. “Back off and just get on the fish! I got this.” He gave Bendy a challenging glare, daring the demon to fight him. Bendy frowned and returned the glare easily.

“C’mon Bendy,” Boris gently coaxed.

Bendy glanced over to him and then to Felix. The cat smiled and started to walk. Bendy sighed and followed. It was cold, salty, and the waves had gotten stronger. Felix had to admit he was a touch worried that Cup wouldn’t be able to swim with the large metal gear, but to his surprise, Cala helped him stay afloat. The mermaid had avoided the part ever since Mugman carried her out of the sea monster’s head. She seemed almost afraid of it. They reached the whale and managed to get on her rubbery back. Boris slipped twice and fell back into the water. The third time, Mugman and Bendy caught him and planted him in between the two of them. Felix and Cup worked on hoisting the gear up. They got it up without a problem. Cala took a sit on the other side of Mugman. Felix sat next to Bendy. That left a space for Cuphead between Cala and Felix. He eyed it for a weary second before sitting with a huff. The cog lay in the center of the circle. Cala patted the creature and with a shift, they started to move. The wind, freezing against wet skin and fur, quickly dried everyone. The whale kept her back up high enough from the water that the sea spray didn’t reach them.

They watched the cliffs disappeared from view for a few silent moments before Cala decided to speak up. “It’ll be a few hours. Bertha will swim you up to the city docks to drop you all off.”

“We can’t thank you enough, Cala.” Felix smiled. It was rare for a mermaid to help land folk. Actually, it was rare to see a mermaid, let alone get help from them.

She blushed. “It was no problem.”

“No, it’s a great help with Bendy and Mugs hurt,” Boris said. “I wouldn’t want them climbing the mountains like this.” Mugs frowned and Bendy scowled. Boris noticed and looked between them. “You’re both terrible! Red and Oddswell would be disappointed.” He shook a finger at Bendy. “And you remember that nurse.” He turned to Mugman. They both ducked and didn’t look the wolf in the eye.

“Yeah? Well, what about you? That’s a bit more than a scratch you got there,” Bendy muttered. “And Cup still has a busted eye. The guy would walk right off a cliff.” Cuphead raised a brow at being pulled into the conversation.


“You’re one to talk,” Cuphead muttered. “You don’t have a scratch.”

Felix chuckled. “I think part of it was luck this time.” That mermaid would have been worse than the Fire Tiger if Felix had been alone.

“So, hey, what was with that transformation, Bendy? Why didn’t ya do that in New Orleans?” Mugman asked the demon. Bendy’s face twisted into a scowl.
“Not you too. What the hell are all of you talking about?” Bendy moved to cross his arms. Felix grabbed one to stop him and gave him a pointed look. “Sorry.” Bendy apologized and relaxed. Felix went back to wrapping his chest while he held onto his vest and shirt.

“You don’t remember?” Cuphead asked.

“No! And you all are creepin’ me out!” Bendy hissed. Mugman flinched. Boris’ ears dropped.

“You changed into a giant...fighting machine, Bendy,” Felix tried to explain. “You were about seven feet tall and you had huge claws and fangs.”

“Yeah, your eyes were all black and red,” Mugman said. “It was a little freaky lookin’ but awesome too.”

“You were also dripping ink, but it didn’t seem to bother you like it usually does. At least, not until the end,” Cuphead threw in. Bendy looked between them all, dumbfounded, his mouth hanging open a little. Felix finished the bandages and patted him on the shoulder. Bendy jumped. “You jumped on top of that sea monster like it was nothing and broken her arm off, man.”

“I-I did?” Bendy swallowed. “But I don’t remember any of that!”

“That’s what happened,” Cuphead said slowly. “Isn’t it normal for demons to change into something big and scary lookin’?”

“Yeah, I always thought so.” Mugman shrugged. Felix frowned and put a hand on his chin. Was it? They sure sounded certain of themselves.

“Bendy’s never done anything like that before,” Boris said and looked over at the demon. Bendy just pulled on his vest and glanced at the wolf. He shook his head, looking just as mystified as the wolf.

“I wish I could get some sure answers.” Bendy sighed. “I’m as clueless as all of you. I...wasn’t weird, was I?”

“Besides looking like you could be from under a kid’s bed? Nah, you were still the annoying pipsqueak we all know,” Cuphead said. Bendy scowled at him.

“Maybe there’s somethin’ at that fancy university?” Mugman suggested.

“And maybe cop pigs fly,” Bendy muttered.

“No kidding,” Cup muttered and crossed his arms. His jacket squirmed. “Oops, sorry Jackpot.” He opened the coat to reveal the little kitten tucked into a pocket. It stuck its head out and hissed. “What? It’s like the whale insulted your mother.” Cuphead chuckled.

“You’d think it’s ridden a whale before.” Mugman laughed.

“Yeah, and got seasick.” Cuphead agreed. The kitten dug itself deeper into Cuphead’s inner pocket and refused to move. “Fine, stay in there.”

“I never took you for an animal lover, Cups,” Bendy said and leaned back on his arms.

“Oh gee, he was terrible growing up! Every other week there was a bird or a squirrel or a rabbit that he was trying to bring in,” Mugman said with a smile.

“Shush you.” Cup scowled at Mugs.
“Oh no, please share!” Cala sudden spoke up. “We have the time. We might as well share stories.”

“Stories?” Cuphead asked.

“Y-yes? Like childhood stories?” Cala asked.

“I bet you two were real troublemakers,” Bendy smirked. “Ever spent the night in a jail cell?”

Cup smirked dangerously. “Yeah, once.” Bendy gestured for him to share.

Mugman groaned. “You don’t mean when we stole the honey.”

“Yes!” Cup chirped. Mugman smirked and rolled his eyes. “So, when we were kids, we ducked into the city once and snuck into the Queen Bee’s Hotel. She had a stash of her worker’s honey there, and everyone knew that it was the best honey on the planet.” Cuphead’s voice took on an excited hushed tone as he told his story.

“So Mugs here distracted the workers, and I snuck behind the employee door and found the liquid gold.” Cup smirked. “I got as much as I could—”

“He even filled his head with it!” Mugman laughed.

“And then we booked it. The Queen Bee was so mad. It was hilarious until the cop bee caught us.” Cup chuckled.

“We had to wait in the cell to get picked up.” Mugman shook his head.

“And they wanted the honey in my head back too,” Cup said. “It took forever to explain I couldn’t give it back.”

“Why not?” Felix asked.

“It was already in his system by then,” Mugman said. Felix opened his mouth to ask what that meant, but Mugman kept talking. “And they tried a couple of things, like holding him upside down.”

“And that stick thing they use on honey.” Cup shuddered. “I fought when they went after me with it.” Mugman laughed. Cup scowled at him.

Bendy raised a brow. “I have a number of questions, but I have a feeling neither of you will answer me.”

The cup brothers smirked. Now, Felix was frowning too. It was that kind of attitude that left things unlearned, unsolved, and annoyingly mysterious. He felt his ear twitch.

“Well, what about you two? Did you fellas get into trouble growing up?” Mugman asked.

“Growing up? All the time,” Bendy said.

“Well, we shared a story.” Cuphead gestured to Bendy. Bendy scoffed.

“How about the time you burned the orphanage’s kitchen, Bendy?” Boris suggested.

“Or how about that Gideon kid?” Bendy said.

“Yeah! Oh, I remember Gideon. He was awful,” Boris said. “He was this huge kid we had to deal with the second to last time we went to the orphanage.”
“Orphans?” Cala muttered. Everyone glanced at her. Felix was actually with her. He hadn’t seen the trial but had heard bits and pieces about it from Sheba.

“Yeah, Bendy and I never had parents. We would get caught by the police once in a while and wind up in the local orphanage,” Boris explained.

“We didn’t stick around for long though,” Bendy said with a frown.

“Why not?” Felix asked.

“The people there weren’t nice to Bendy,” Boris said simply. Felix frowned. He wasn’t surprised, simply disappointed.

“So anyway, Gideon. This brat thought he was big stuff. He took over the place, and the other kids didn’t fight him,” Bendy said.

Boris nodded. “He was big and strong and an idiot.”

Mugs chuckled.

“So, when Boris and I showed up again most of the kids there knew how we worked. They could say whatever the cuss they wanted about me, but they had to leave Boris alone. Simple. They knew we’d get sick of the adults and slip away again in a month or so,” Bendy said with a shrug, like it was business as usual. How often had he and Boris done that? Was that the cycle of their lives until they got to this point? When they got work or when Bendy reached eighteen?

“But this brat had it in his head that since I had a rule, and all the other brats knew to follow that rule, I was a threat to his throne or whatever.” Bendy rolled his eyes. “So he had to test it.”

“He messed with me when we were outside and in class.” Boris shook his head. “It wasn’t a big deal.”

“He threw a rock,” Bendy growled. He looked like he would still fight this person if he had a chance. “Anyway, I was determined to put an end to that nonsense real quick, but every time I was about to say or do anything, one of the two adults was there.”

“Ms. Sarah and Lady Tremaine,” Boris said. Both of them shuddered. “Bendy couldn’t approach the other kids without one of them saying something.”

Felix raised a brow. “How old were you two?”

They frowned and shared a look. Bendy took a deep breath. “You were what? About nine?”

“I think so, you were thirteen,” Boris said.

“And you weren’t allowed to even walk up to other kids in that place?” Cup asked with a wrinkle of his nose.

“Nah.” Bendy shrugged. “They were afraid I’d try to do somethin’ to them.”

“Like what?” Mugman tilted his head, his straw moving with the action.

“Curse them? Possess them? Turn them into little monsters and take over the orphanage.” Bendy glanced at Boris and smirked.

“I don’t get it. What’s funny?” Cuphead asked.
Boris snorted. “They thought Bendy was doing all that junk to me.”

“Why?” Cala raised a concerned hand to her chin and deeping her head down.

“Because he was such a sweet little pup that they couldn’t understand why he didn’t want to be adopted,” Bendy said with a scoff.

“Both of the ladies of the orphanage and the adoptive parents would be fine with me, but I wouldn’t leave Bendy behind. I told them that it was both of us or neither,” Boris said. “Then, one time a fella tried to force me because his wife thought I’d be perfect.” Boris rolled his eyes.

“What’d you do?” Cup asked.

“Bit his hand when he grabbed my wrist,” Boris said. “Then, I promised to break everything in their house and run away if they tried to take me.”

Cup snorted a laugh.

“And that made them think Bendy turned you into some sorta demon follower or somethin’?” Mugman asked.

Boris shrugged. “Pretty much.”

Felix blinked. What kinda of place were these boys forced to deal with? “No one was willing to try and adopt Bendy?”

“I had kinda gotten a reputation around town of being a thief and a terror.” Bendy smirked, like he was proud of the fact. “Anyway, so this Gideon kid planned his attacks just before one of the ladies was about to show up, so I couldn’t touch him.”

“But that didn’t stop you,” Cuphead said.

“Well, it did until bed. We were all in this large room with cots lined up next to each other. Everyone had to be in bed when Ms. Sarah came to turn off the light. So, I come up to Gid and tell him to lay off Boris. He scoffed at me. Ya know, the whole ‘yeah then want chu gonna do about it?’ and all that junk.”

Cuphead was nodding along. Cala looked concerned.

Boris huffed. “I could’ve handled it.”

“Yeah, but then everyone woulda wanted to test ya,” Bendy said to him before turning back to the rest of them. “So, I tell him that if he doesn’t back off, he’ll regret it, and he laughs. I tell the schmuck that it’s his one and only warning. The other kids are all shocked and scared, lookin’ like it’s a big deal.”

Cup snorted.

“So, I think that’s it for the night. The fella tried to trip me, but that was an easy dodge,” Bendy said.

“Yeah, but just before Ms. Sarah came down the hall, Gideon came to my bed and pulled me out by my tail. I didn’t even see him until I was on the floor,” Boris said and winced. “That had hurt.”

“So, I snap,” Bendy said.

“Did ya thrash him?” Cup smirked.
“I cussing wanted to!” Bendy snapped. “I had just grabbed the starfallen idiot well Ms. Sarah opened the door. Kids were screaming, Gid was trying to push me away, but that wasn’t working out well for him. I was about to break the brat’s arm for doing that to Boris.”

“Bendy!” Felix gasped. With his strength, it probably wouldn’t have been hard.

“I didn’t,” Bendy said defensively. He crossed his arms and lifted his chin.

“So, Ms. Sarah caught him and ordered him to spend the night in the lock box.” Boris sighed.

“The lock box?” Felix asked.

“Yeah, it was this big chest that they had in the front room. Bad kids were locked in it for a time as one of the punishments,” Boris said.

“How long?” Cala asked.

“Hours usually,” Bendy muttered. “It was practically my room there.” Felix frowned. It sounded like these women needed to be reported to him.

“You could lay flat and be fine. Most other kids were cramped and real sore after,” Boris explained. Bendy scowled. Cup and Mugs smirked.

“So, it was a full private room for him,” Cup teased.


“So, what happened after that, Bendy?” Mugman asked.

“Allright, while I’m being led away by Ms. Sarah, the brat has the gull to wink at me,” Bendy said. “And that was the moment I decided we were leaving. I signal for Boris to pack a bag and leave.”

“It was our shortest stay. Only three days,” Boris said. “And after that was the time they tried to seperate us by sending Bendy away. It was the last time we dealt with the orphanage.”

“One story at a time, bro,” Bendy said. “Ms. Sarah locked me in the box. I waited until everything was quiet, then I waited a bit longer. I think it was a hour or something. Then, I pushed on the lid until the dumb thing broke.”

“I slipped out and went back to the room. I woke Boris up and told him to head to our escape bush,” Bendy said in a staged whisper.

“Escape bush?” Cala asked.

“It was this bush that hid a hole in the fence that Bendy and I made,” Boris explained.

“As soon as he’s gone, I go to Gideon’s bed. The fella must have felt pretty smug, and I wanted to teach him a lesson before we left,” Bendy said. “I slipped under his bed and pushed up to wake him.”

Cup snickered.

“Then, I used my shadows to drag his blankets off him.” Bendy smirked.

Boris gasped. “You did? Why didn’t you ever tell me that?”
Bendy shrugged, looking embarrassed. “Didn’t think you’d be too happy with me,” he admitted.

“You’re right.” Boris frowned.

“Don’t stop! What did you do after that?” Mugman asked.

“Well, he’s a whimpering mess. Asking things like, ‘Fellas? Who’s doing that? It’s not funny!’ and so on,” Bendy said. “Then, I make this tall shadow appear at the end of his bed. I tried to make it look like a monster, but it was a little shapeless, just this really tall thing with shoulders, a thin neck and a beaky-like head and empty eyes.” Bendy shrugged. “It worked anyway. He started to cry and tell himself it was just a bad dream. I made it get bigger and lean over him, right over him. Then, I think he ducked under his pillow to hide.” Bendy snickered. Cup was grinning, Mugs was too. Boris was shaking his head, but he was smiling.

“So, I make the shadow disappear and wait. The bed moved, and I know the brat is looking around.” Bendy smirked. “I heard him sigh in relief and watched his hand appear to grab his blankets off the floor. He slipped out and right as his head hit his pillow again I turn my red eyes on him and whisper, ‘the demon demands a sacrifice’ with the creepiest grin I can manage,” Bendy said proudly.

“Bendy!” Boris admonished.

“What? The brat deserved it!” Bendy defended. Cuphead and Mugman were cackling with laughter. Felix was covering his smile.

“Stuff like that is the reason you had such a bad reputation!” Boris said.

“Eeeh.” Bendy waved him off. “I was gonna have a bad rep anyway, I figured I might as well have fun with it.”

“Y-you have to prank with me sometime!” Cuphead wheezed. “Stars! We have to!”

Oh dear. This could be bad.

“So, the kid screamed and woke up the others. I darted out of there, trying not to laugh. I reach to bush, and Boris and I book it,” Bendy said. “We ducked the cops for three days before things calmed down a bit.”

“Heard later that Gideon had nightmares after that and couldn’t sleep with the lights off,” Boris said. “I knew you did something but, geez Bendy.” The wolf frowned.

Bendy smirked and shrugged, showing how unapologetic he was.

“Oh dear,” Cala said. She giggled. “Well, I can see why you did it.”

“Have you ever gotten in trouble, Cala?” Mugman asked.

“Me?” Cala asked. He nodded.

“Oh, well.” She brushed one of the tentacles away from her face. “My sister and I once ruined the king’s meal. We added sea slug to the stew,” she giggled. “And somehow it ended up stuck on the wall for two weeks.”

“The king?” Felix asked.
“Yes, King Triton. We were friends with his youngest daughter, so we would go to the castle to play when we were little.” Cala smiled. “We would get into a lot of mischief. Ariel was really adventurous.”

Something pricked at the back of Felix’ mind. “Then, how did you end up around those caverns?” Felix asked.

Cala startled. Her face paled. “I-I-I don’t really remember.” She ducked down. “I’m sorry.” Felix blinked. He didn’t really think she didn’t know, but why lie? Cuphead and Mugman shared a look that he didn’t understand.

“So, why do you have an octopus on your head?” Bendy asked with a raise of his brow.

“Hey pipsqueak, that could be rude!” Cup snapped.

“Don’t call me that!” Bendy snapped back. “And I was just asking!”

“It’s fine. I don’t mind.” Cala smiled. “I’ve had him since I was a little guppy! Paul and I have a mutual symbiotic relationship.” She lifted a hand and tickled one of the tentacles.

“Paul?” Cup asked.

“What? Did you think his name was Otto?” Cala asked. Cuphead blinked.

“What does that mean?” Mugman tilted his head.

“It means that they live in a partnership where they both benefit,” Felix explained.

Cala nodded with a smile.

“I can see another beneficial relationship on the horizon.” Bendy winked. Boris grimaced. Cala blushed, her eyes widening. Mugs frowned and scooted an inch closer to her. It seems Bendy noticed, because his smirk changed, and he chuckled looking between Cala and Mugs. “A very interesting one.”

Cup snorted. “So, you and that guy are partners?”

“Yes, I protect him from his predators, feed him, and he protects me from parasites and sickness,” Cala said.

“Neat,” Mugman said.

“Yep, we are pretty much one and the same now,” Cala said.

“Huh,” Bendy muttered.

“So, what about you, Mr. Felix?” Boris suddenly asked. “Were you adventurous growing up?”

“Or a troublemaker?” Cuphead added with a smirk.

Felix blinked at suddenly being put on the spot. “Me? Oh well, no. Actually, I was a scaredy-cat growing up.”

Everyone’s face reflected their disbelief. “You, Mr. Felix?” Bendy asked. Felix laughed.

“Yes. Sheba stood up and fought for me more than I fought for myself.” Felix chuckled. “But then,
she would turn around and bully me too. I was a small kitten back then, a real marshmallow. It wasn’t until I was thirteen or fourteen that I did something about it. I fought back, and she was just grinning when I pinned her for the first time.” Felix shook his head at the memory. She would push his face down into his food, trip him, mess up his fur with her noogies. “She said something like, ‘Finally! Now I don’t have to worry about you anymore!’ and then, we stayed on pretty equal footing until I went to college.”

“She was your friend but also a bully?” Mugman asked.

“She was trying to teach me to stick up for myself. I was as bad as a welcome mat back then. Anyone could walk all over me,” Felix admitted with a sweep of his arm.

“I just can’t see it,” Bendy said. Felix grinned.

“It was a good thing she did. I’ve had to fight some crazy fights since then,” Felix said. “Some were brawls but others were with arguments and facts. I wouldn’t have been able to do any of it without her help.” He smiled. “And Professor Wiseton.”

That brought Bendy and Boris up short. “You knew Wilson?”

Felix nodded. “He was the reason I got into archeology, and he convinced me to write my first book.”

“Small world,” Boris said.

Felix glanced around the circle. Everyone seemed lost in thought and even a little depressed. Had he said something wrong? “He was a great man. I’m happy that you were there for him, Bendy.”

The demon jumped and looked at Felix. Bendy’s eyes were large. It seemed like something was bothering him. Felix waited, but he just smiled. “It was nothing.”

They spent the rest of the ride sharing childhood stories and pranks. It was nice. Felix felt like everyone relaxed and were open with each other. That wasn’t saying that there weren’t still things that needed explanation: Cala having the gear, Mugman talking to his brother about his scars, Bendy’s transformation. They were all concerns, but for now, they just enjoyed the company. They enjoyed laughing and feeling the salty breeze and the shift of the great whale as they skimmed over the ocean, the sun warming them from the fall chill.

It was one of those moments that Felix was so grateful to be alive and experiencing the amazement and simpleness of the world around him, how the fantastical somehow was so awe inspiring and so peaceful.

It didn’t seem long before the shore appeared, seemingly from nowhere. Cala was telling a story about how her, Ariel, and Ebi, her sister, had their first run in with sharks that were hostile. “And then Ebi dove between these two corals, and the shark snapped at her tail and missed, barely. It got stuck in the coral,” Cala said. Felix looked up and suddenly, there was the city. It seemed to rear up out of the sea itself.

“Seems we’re back,” Felix said.


“Golly, that was fast,” Mugs said. “It doesn’t feel like we were riding for that long.”

“I think we were on this whale for most of the day,” Cup muttered. Boris shrugged.
Bertha pulled up to the nearest dock. It didn’t seem like a crowded day at the docks. The cool weather had kept most away. Felix pulled out a rope from his bag and looped it over one of the dock pillars. He pulled it tight. Cup got up and climbed off first. He had a hard time seeing the rope and missed it the first time he reached for it. Seemed his eye was still bothering him, though he hadn’t said anything about it. He got up with little trouble after that.

Bendy hoisted the gear on his back. He winced. “You sure you got that, Bendy?” Boris asked.

“I’m fine,” Bendy said and reached for the rope. Cup helped him over the edge with the gear. Boris then climbed up with their bags. Mugs after that. Felix followed last with a smile toward Cala. The whale dipped under the water after the group was on the dock. Cala used her tail and jumped up on the dock from the water with a rather graceful splash.

“Bye Bertha! Thanks for the ride!” Boris waved to the disappearing whale.


“Man, I’m tired. What a day.” Cup sighed.

“It’s not over yet. We need to get this gear to Dr. Oddswell’s house and find a place to stash it,” Bendy said.

“But where are you gonna hide it? A closet?” Mugman asked.

“We’ll have to find somewhere.” Bendy shrugged. “Then, we can all take a break before the next part shows itself.”

“Do you have any idea when that might be?” Felix asked.

“No, the map seems to do it at random,” Boris said. That was a bother.

“What a pain,” Cuphead muttered, sticking his hand in his jacket pockets.

“How many more do we gotta find?” Mugman raised a finger to his chin.

“Three more...we think,” Boris said with an uncertain smile.

“And that starfallen machine itself.” Bendy sighed.

“You don’t know where it is?” Cup asked in surprise.

“No clue. You?” Bendy asked. Cup shook his head.

“So, you fellas are after a machine that you aren’t sure still exists?” Cuphead said.

“Well, the parts do, and they seem to still be chalk full of magic, so we’ll get to the machine when we get to the machine,” Bendy said like it was simple. Felix smiled. That was the right spirit to have.


“Right,” Felix agreed.

“You two!” A female voice shouted. Everyone jumped and looked down the docks toward the shore. A curvy rabbit came marching up to their group. She had on a pair of dark glasses, a hat, and a tasteful dress that barely brushed her knees. There was a deep scowl on her face. “Just what do you numskulls think you’re doing?” She marched past Boris, Bendy, Felix, and right up to Cuphead.
Cup and Mugs’ straws turned into exclamation points before Cup raised his hands in a placating manner. Mugs ducked behind him. “Nurse Fanny!” Mugman gasped. She knew them? Felix blinked. She was a nurse.

“Playing around in the ocean when you have stitches isn’t keeping them dry or clean. You’re going to get an infection!” She glared at Mugs from around Cuphead’s shoulder. “Why are you letting him do such insane things?” She turned the glare on Cuphead. “And you! What is that? A chip? Your eye is swollen!” Cup blushed and ducked when she lifted a hand to his face.

“B-back off lady,” Cup muttered.

“Where did you even come from?” Mug asked accusingly, like she was waiting for them.

“Shush, you two to the hospital!” She pointed behind her. Her other hand was on her hip. Two other women were coming up to the group. One was a little bird woman with a nervous energy. She came up beside Fanny.

“Fanny, we aren’t on duty,” she chirped.

“I don’t care! These idiots are proving they can’t take care of themselves,” Fanny said. “And I wouldn’t stand for my patients not recovering after I’ve taken care of them.” She somehow made it sound like a threat.

Bendy chuckled and winced when the gear shifted on his back.

The other girl gingerly approached Bendy and Boris while Fanny continued her assault on the Cup brothers. “Hi...” she said. She sounded dazed. She paused. “How was the trip?” Her attention was only half there, eyes staring in the direction of Fanny and the Cup brothers.

“Holly!” Their faces lit up. They must be friends with her then. She seemed familiar somehow.

“What are you doing here?” Bendy asked with a confused blink.

“Looking for something.”

“It was...well a trip, but we got the part!” Boris said with a toothy smile. His tail wagging.

Her head snapped towards them. “You did? That’s amazing!” They grinned at her praise. Cala, in the meantime, was watching this all with a mix of confusion and alarm. It seemed that in all this she and Felix had been forgotten. She looked to him for help. Felix shrugged. He was just as lost.

“And you,” Fanny pointed at Bendy. He startled and looked over to her. She sashayed away from Cup and Mugs to stand in front of him. “Don’t think I missed that. You’re coming too!”

“Uh?” Bendy blinked. Suddenly her hands came down on either side of his torso. “Ewwouch!” Bendy barked and jumped back like her hands were made of hot irons. “What’s your problem lady?”

“You’re also injured.” She stated it like it was the ultimate fact of their stupidity. She turned her hidden glare on Boris.

He paled and raised his hands like he was afraid she’d rush him. “I’m bandaged!”

“You too then!” she growled and looked at Felix. Golly, she was intimidating.

Felix smiled nervously. “I’m fine.” He scratched the back of his head, wondering if she was going to
force him to come anyway.

She then looked to Cala. The mermaid shook her head so fast that swirls entered Paul’s eyes. She crossed her arms in front of her to make an ‘x.’ “Completely healthy!” she squeaked quickly.

Fanny scoffed. “Alright then. You injured idiots start marching!” she ordered.

“But we have to go to Oddswell’s.” Bendy frowned. Fanny turned a look on him that showed her opinion of that idea very clearly.

“I-I guess I’ll take it for you Bendy,” Felix offered.

“U-um, will I see you again soon, Mugman?” Cala asked a bit alarmed sounding.

“Uh? Oh, um, I-I don’t really know.” Mugs winced and turned away from Fanny to focus on the mermaid girl. He knelt to be eye level with her.

“Well, are you going to work near a beach or around the ocean?” Cala asked. “I could find you again after your trip to the hospital.”

“I don’t really know where we’ll end up next, Cala,” Mugs said. She frowned and dropped her head. “But I do wanna see you again.”

Her pout seemed to turn thoughtful. She reached behind her and pulled a pearl out. Felix had no idea where she had it hidden. Paul…? “When you want to find me, throw this pearl into the water. I’ll try and find a way onto land but until then this can work.”

Mugs blinked and took the beautiful jewel. “You don’t have to do that, Cala.”

Cala shook her head with a sad smile. “There really isn’t much left for me in the seas. I’d rather be on land with you.” Mugs blushed.

“W-well, if you really want to,” Mugs mumbled. Cala bit her lip and nodded. “So, until then I’ll see you later.”

Her eyes widened. “Y-yeah.” Mugs went to stand up. “Oh and Mugman.” He stopped. She grabbed the front of his shirt and pulled his down. She kissed his cheek. “Be safe,” she said and jumped back. She fell back into the water with a wave. Mugs’ face darkened into a deep blush.

The bird nurse squealed. “That was so cute!”

“Gag me. Why does this happen with you two weirdos everytime I see you?” Fanny grumbled. “Okay, enough! Let’s go!” Fanny waved her hands. Cup had to pull Mugs back up. He seemed a little dazed, a hand against his cheek. Bendy elbowed his side playfully.

“Nice.” Bendy winked. Bendy passed the heavy gear off to Felix. “Will we see you at Oddswell’s place?” Bendy asked.

Felix thought. Sheba would be expecting him, but he didn’t need to rush. “Probably. If not, I think I’ll be at Sheba’s shop.”

Bendy nodded. “See you then, Mr. Felix.”

“Bye Mr. Felix!” Boris waved. Cups nodded to him. Mugs...Mugs was still gone. With that the rabbit nurse herded the rest of the questers away. The nerve bird by her side. Felix was left standing there was a rather large and heavy magical gear on the docks.
“Aren’t those two trying to kill them?” A rather dumbfounded voice spoke up from next to him. “What in Yen Sid’s name is going on?”

Felix blinked. Oh. He had forgotten about the Holly girl. Wait…“Kill them? What?”

She looked at him. “Is that...the item?” Her eyes had sparkles in them. Twinkling sparkles. She at least seemed informed. Maybe she could explain a few things to him.

“Let’s talk and walk. This thing is a little heavy,” Felix suggested. Hopefully things would be able to calm down now.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys. Here's the link to Subtle_Shenanigans' video. It's awesome! It's about the whole journey! You should check it out. [Here](#)

Also, we had an amazing art of some of the girls done by fantastickingdomus on Tumblr! [Here](#) is the link, and here it is!
Also-also! ViraSol drew an amazing picture of Xedo and Wiston...with Wiston's new friend. :D
This was not how Bendy was imagining his return to Toon Town. He thought they would be having a victory dinner served by the gorgeous Red Hood and cooked by Granny’s amazing skills.

Not sitting here. On a cot. Have a male nurse wrapping bandages around his chest after spreading a burn cream over his side. No. This wasn’t his idea of a good time. Sadly, the gorgeous nurses weren’t working, so they just shoved them into the building. Though, Bendy wasn’t sure if they had left or if the hot bunny with the amazing gams didn’t stay to chew out the Cup brothers some more.

Boris was in the room next to his, getting looked at. He finished first and came to visit Bendy. He didn’t need stitches, thank the stars and moon, but they did give him some stuff so he wouldn’t get an infection. Bendy wasn’t too bad either and was free fifteen minutes after that. They went to find the Cupbros. Cup was having his eye examined. The hot bunny, sadly, wasn’t there. Cuphead seemed annoyed at the cream they gave him to put over the crack and the eyepatch they insisted he wear for the next three days. He grumbled curses before they let him leave.

“Argh captain, permission to join your crew?” Bendy quipped.

Cuphead narrow his one uncovered. “You can go jump off a plank, Bendy.” He frowned. Bendy laughed.

“Why so grumpy?” Bendy asked.

“She took Jackpot. Something about taking the little fella home.” Cup...Was he pouting! “Left with her friend and this real obnoxious wolf guy that came out of nowhere.” Wolf guy?

“Well...I’m glad there’s someone that was worried about the little lost thing,” Boris said. Cup huffed but nodded.

“She nearly bit my head off when she saw the kitten,” Cup muttered.
“She really is scary,” Boris admitted.

“And hot.” Bendy smirked. Cup scowled at him.

It was Mugs that took the longest. They had to fix his stitches, and he had gotten some infection or other. They waited through the procedure out in the waiting room. Mugs came out looking disconcerted.

Boris stood and asked, “Are you okay?”

Mugs frowned. “They numbed me up, but I told them that I still hadn’t felt any pain. They couldn’t find anything wrong.”

Cup stepped up to Mugs. “You think something’s wrong?”

“Something’s weird, but I don’t think it’s bad.” Mugs shrugged away and started for the exit. “I just feel off.”

“Tell me if anything changes, okay?” Cup said with sincere concern. Mugs nodded. Bendy squirmed at the tension between the two. They needed to talk about that elephant in the room. Cup had been miffed when he found out Mugs’ was bleeding at the cliffs. Bendy figured it was that injury from the misfire. Cup seemed like he wasn’t forgiving himself, even though he had used his blasts on the mermaid monster.

After they got back to Granny’s and took care of that cog, Bendy was going to shove those two into a room and force them to talk before letting them out again. Boris glanced at Bendy, sharing his silent worry. Bendy nodded and followed Mugs out, Cup trailing behind. They walked back to Bakers Street and headed to the door. Everyone was too tired to really hold a conversation.

All Bendy wanted was a meal and bed, needs he seems to have been chasing his whole life. He opened the door to a surprisingly quiet house. “Hello?”

“Bendy! We’re in the kitchen!” Felix called out. Bendy, Boris, Mugs and Cup headed in. If any of them were more awake, they would have realized that this wasn’t the best plan. Sadly, they weren’t. The exhausted questers were working on a minimal amount of energy, and thus, not one of them thought about the consequences of having the Cup brothers just walk in.

“Hey everyone,” Boris greeted as they entered the kitchen. Oddswell and Red froze on the spot like the wolf had them at gunpoint. Bendy blinked at the reaction.

“Hello, Boris. Seems you all got out of the hospital alright,” Felix smiled.

“Define alright,” Cup muttered. His one eye went around the room, seeing Xedo, Holly, and then stopping on the lizard and assistant. “Ah cuss.” Bendy looked between the two. It took his tired mind a minute to connect the dots.

“Ooooh.” Bendy turned to the doctor. “Let us explain.” He lifted his hand in a stopping motion. Red looked like she was ready for murder. How could he forget! The last time these two saw the Cupbros, they were shooting at them!”

Dr. Oddswell adjusted this glasses and turned his cold, buggy eyes on Bendy. “I think that would be for the best.”

Felix looked at the doctor and back at the questers. He seemed confused at the tension. “Um, what’s the matter?”
“The matter? The matter!” Red snapped. She pointed at the Cupbros accusingly with a stirring spoon. “Those two attacked me and left me for dead! They shot at all of us! What are they doing here!”

Felix blinked and looked back at Cup and Mugs in surprise. Mugs ducked his head, looking at the floor. Cup frowned. “Not for dead,” he muttered.

“Shush, you aren’t helping.” Bendy elbowed him. He turned back to the room. But then, he didn’t really know how to explain either. The stuff that went down, that led up to the two joining Bendy and Boris, it all seemed a little personal to just out and share. Still, he had to be honest. Bendy wasn’t gonna lie to the people that helped them so much up to this point. Still, he could see the trust crumbling before him.

“They saved our skins,” Cup said. Bendy scowled at the schmuck, ignoring him and talking anyway. “A couple of times. Even though we were after them.” Cup turned his face down. Both he and Mugs looked guilty.

“We couldn’t just--We wanted to...” Mugs struggled for words, hunching his shoulders.

“We wanted to pay them back,” Cup said simply.

Bendy rolled his eyes. “You already did that.”

Boris nodded. “Yeah, you saved me from that mugger!”

Cup sighed and shook his head like that wasn’t enough. Bendy frowned. Oh, now he and Cup would also need a talk after this. Mugs spoke up. “We decided we could help on their quest. It was really dangerous before, so we figured it would be just as bad next time.”

“And they let us tag along,” Cup tacked on like he wanted the room to be sure that the two hadn’t forced themselves on Bendy and Boris.

Felix’ eyes were the size of saucers. The room was silent for a breath.

“Bendy.” Dr. Oddswell didn’t sound happy. Red still looked like she was ready to beat the two into the floor.

“Look doc. These fellas went to the mountains and saved our skins three times over. We wouldn’t have survived without them. You got a problem with that, we’ll leave,” Bendy said. Xedo seemed taken aback by the claim, as did Mugs and Cup. Boris didn’t. He knew that Bendy didn’t leave friends out in the cold...and Bendy had to admit that somehow they had become friends. This was him practically admitting it.

“Then, what about your connection with the mobsters that have been trying to kill us all for the last week? The ones that just burned down Xedo’s apartment?” Holly had spoken up. She looked at the Cup brothers with frank suspicion.

“They did what!” Bendy and Boris exclaimed together. Burned it down!

She blinked, turning to them, looking a little apologetic. “The mob burned down Xedo’s apartment this morning, along with trying to blow up Featherworth and Ringtail a few days before that,” she said quietly.

Cup frowned. “Do you know who?” Bendy glanced up at him.
She looked back at him and scowled a little. “The Sykes brothers.”

“Oh golly! Those guys are bad news!” Mugs blinked. Cup sighed and rubbed the side of his head like he was getting a headache.

“You’re saying,” she muttered. “They’re terrified of you two.”

Cup snorted and smirked. “Good.”

“Friends of yours?” Red snarled.

Cup turned an unimpressed look at her. Even with one eye, his deadpan was impressive. “Is that a thug comparison? Don’t put me on the same level as them. I might not be a good schmuck, but I’m not scum.” He stuck his hands in his pockets.

“Oh really,” she growled. “So tying up and beating a woman is what you would consider chivalrous?”

Cup slowly raised the brow they could see. “You’re breathing, walking, and still able to talk. In the work we were doing before, yeah lady, that’s kind.” Bendy felt a chill go down his spine. Gee, what the hell had they been doing besides chasing him and Boris around? Did he even want to know? That was cold as hell. Bendy glanced from him to the woman. Red paled and took a small step back.

Boris spoke up. “They really are trying to do good now. Doesn’t that count for anything?”

Dr. Oddswell’s tongue flicked out. “Forgive us for our hesitance, young wolf. There is a lot at stake here, and caution is necessary.” Boris frowned.

“Ugh,” Cup groaned. “Forget it! We’ll just go.” Cup went to turn. Bendy grabbed his sleeve.

“Not so fast man,” Bendy said. “We’re talking this out.”

“Why? They won’t listen,” Cup shot back.

Bendy turned his head. He knew that feeling. It was Sillyvision, the streets, the orphanage, his childhood all over again. He gave Cup a bitter smile. “If they aren’t going to give you a chance after being a thug, they won’t give me one for being a demon.” Boris’ ears dropped, his eyes widened. “If you leave, I do too.”

Mugs scrunched up his nose in confusion. “But you haven’t done anything wrong.”

Bendy shrugged. “But I was scary, right?”

“No! You—” Boris started.

“Bro, you gonna tell me that you weren’t scared of me for even a moment?” Bendy asked. He had ignored it, but when he had woken up, after the relief, he had seen it. The hint of fear. He knew something had scared them. At first, he thought it could have been the mermaid. But after hearing everything, he knew it was him.

Bendy looked at Cup. Then Mugs. “Or you two?”

Bendy turned to Felix, who had stayed silent and impassive this since his question. “Or you?” None of them could look him in the eye.

“We got over it,” Cup grumbled.
“Yeah, it was berries after the first shock,” Mugs agreed weakly.

“But people attack what scares them. Most don’t take the time to ‘get over it’.” Bendy pointed out. Boris ducked his head.

Felix suddenly stood up. He had a determined glint in his eyes. It was like he was facing that sea monster again. “Look, I don’t fully understand everything going on here. I might not have a right to speak up since I am so new to this situation, but I went on a quest with you four. I saw you all risk your lives for each other. Regardless of your pasts,” Felix looked at Mugs and Cups, “or your species,” he looked at Bendy and Boris, “I can vouch for your characters. I would be honored to go on another adventure with any of you. This team is one of the best I have worked with, and I think we can do even better if we stick together. If there are problems, I say we face them together.” He smiled and looked at them expectantly.

Boris and Bendy smiled and nodded. “Yeah!”

“So?” Bendy looked at Cup and Mugs. “Cuphead, Mugman, you are the ones that wanted to be friends, you’re not going to be able to shake us so easy now.”

Cup smirked and scoff. He looked at Mugs. Mugs took a moment to smile. “Yeah, alright. We’re in. We’ll stick together,” Cup said. Mugs grinned.

“Good, because any other answer would have been denied!” Bendy lifted his chin. “Now.” He turned to Oddswell again. He and Red didn’t seem pleased at all. Holly and Xedo both appeared conflicted. It hurt. “Are we welcome here or should we go?”

Holly unfolded her arms slowly, not looking happy but also looking resigned. “If it matters to you that much, I’ll accept it,” she said with a sigh.

Xedo glanced at her before looking back at Bendy. “We won’t be able to finish the machine without you and Boris. I also accept your condition, Bendy, but I suggest you be careful.”

Bendy took a deep breath before turning to Oddswell. The lizard had narrowed his eyes. He was so still he looked like a statue.

“Professor Oddswell?” Felix prompted.

Oddswell glanced at him. “Even you Felix?”

Felix nodded, wearing the same determined look. Oddswell sighed. “Very well, but it will take more than that for me to trust them.”

“Ryan!” Red barked. Bendy jumped. He had never seen her so angry.

“Ms. Hood, this is bigger than us, and as Bendy, Boris and Felix have said, they saved their lives. They returned because of their help. I may have problems with this situation, and I may be offended on my and your behalf, but three people I have trusted with all my subject’s lives and have earned my respect are vouching for them. I cannot ignore that.”

Red’s face darkened, and she set down the pan and spoon down with a slam. She marched out the back door without a word. Oddswell sighed and went to follow her. “We will talk more when I return.” The kitchen was left in an awkward silence.

“We screwed up,” Mugs muttered. Boris patted his shoulder.
Holly got up, still frowning. “Well, we just finished cooking...If anyone’s hungry.” She glanced at Xedo and Felix.

“Starving.” Bendy barely held back a whine.

That made her smile, and she started to grab plates from a cupboard.

“You sure it’s okay?” Mugs asked.

“It’s fine,” Bendy said and planted himself in the dining room. Felix chuckled and followed. The questers sat around the dining table. Xedo trailed behind with watchful eyes.

“So,” Felix asked. “Mind explaining yourselves?” he asked Cup and Mugs. Cup glanced at him and let out a heavy sigh. The two paused in filling their plates with rolls, potatoes, mixed vegetables, and roast.

Cup slouched. “They saved me from a bad choice, reunited me with Mugs, and we decided to help them out. We...got out of our situation as best we could and tracked them down to ask to join them.”

“That was just before you joined,” Mugs threw in.

“Huh,” Felix said. “Thought you all knew each other before that.”

“We did. They were chasing us,” Boris said. Mugs and Cup winced. “But we did team up with Mugs once in New Orleans to save Cup from an evil voodoo lady.” The wolf didn’t even look up from his slice of roast.

“Ah.” Felix blinked.

“Evil voodoo lady?” Holly said with interest from her position next to Xedo.

“Yeah, you saw her kid at the trial,” Bendy explained. “Turned Cups into a little normal teacup.” Bendy puckered his lips like he was talking to a little kid.

Cup scowled. “Watch it.” Bendy snickered.

Holly’s eyes widened to saucers. She stared at Cups. “What was that like?”

“Horrible.” Cup cringed. “I couldn’t talk, couldn’t see, couldn’t cussing move. That nutty woman would taint me every meal time and every time she wanted tea.” He shook his head. “I will never be able to take enough showers.” Mugs winced in sympathy.

Holly continued to stare at Cups, but now there was a string of just barely inaudible muttering coming from her mouth. It sounded like...questions? Cup and Mugs seemed to share a knowing look.

“So, you two won’t explain more on why you were after Bendy and Boris in the first place?” Xedo suddenly asked.

Bendy glanced at them. They both tensed. “We...can’t,” Mugs admitted. Bendy watched Xedo, Felix, and Holly frown with discontent.

“We don’t really know why our boss wanted to stop them,” Cup admitted.

“And...you still work for him? Who is he?” Xedo asked.

Cup shrugged, giving the fox a sharp look. “I can’t really answer those. Mugs and I are trying to go
straight, but there are some things we just can’t talk about. None-o-ya need to worry about us, we won’t cause ya trouble.” He glanced at Bendy and smirked. “Pranks and jokes off the table of course.”

Bendy narrowed his eyes. “You start something, I will finish it, dishware.”

“Is that a threat?” Cuphead narrowed his eye at the challenge.

“It’s a cussing promise,” Bendy returned with a smirk.

“Oh no, Bendy don’t!” Boris moaned, trying not to smile.

“Don’t break anything boys,” Felix said simply. They both huffed and turned back to their food.

Benedict crossed his arms and glanced at Holly. She shrugged at him in a ‘This is madness, what am I supposed to do about it’ way.

“By the way. I learned our little trip took us eight days,” Felix said like he was commenting on the weather. Mugs choked and coughed. Cup spurted his drink. Boris patted Mugs back with a concerned look.

“What! Eight days!” Cup managed to bark after he wiped his face.

“But we were only gone for three!” Mugs said with wide eyes.

Boris blinked in confusion. Bendy frowned. Felix sighed. “I know, but according to the calendar, it’s been eight.” Mugs shook his head.

“And according to the eight days everyone else has lived through,” Holly added, her chin upon her hand.

“Bendy, didn’t that happen to us?” Boris asked.

“Uh?” Bendy tilted his head.


“Oh yeah!” Bendy dropped a fist into his open palm. “That’s right! We thought we were in that swamp temple for a night, but then it turned out to be several days later!”

“You didn’t think to warn us!” Cup growled.

Bendy shrugged. “I didn’t really think about it. Between the voodoo lady and the giant snake, a little time jump didn’t seem like a big deal.”

“So, this happened at the last temple too,” Felix hummed thoughtfully. His ears perked with interest. “I wonder how they do it.” Bendy shrugged. It was annoying to him. He didn’t have time for...time nonsense. Nope! That was already getting weird and confusing. Bendy didn’t want to think about it.

“So.” Holly’s voice was a bit soft and nervous. “There’s something the rest of us...forgot to mention in all the chaos that went on when you arrived.”

Boris perked up. “That’s right!” He turned to Xedo. “Is Wiston okay? You said your place was burned down!” Oh, that’s right! How could he forget?

Xedo smiled. “He’s fine, but there is a problem.” He exchanged a look with Holly.
“The doll is missing,” Holly finished. “It disappeared during the fire. Wiston tried to find it when he escaped the building...but it was just gone.”

“Wha--” Boris dropped his fork with a loud clatter.

“Ah, cussing stars!” Bendy hissed. “Can’t we keep ahold of that cussing thing for longer than a month without it trying to kill me!” No wonder he had burns!

“We don’t think the mob has it,” Holly said in a placating tone. “It was...moving itself at times after we left it at Xedo’s. We think it might have moved right out of danger.” She looked at Xedo.

“Not completely,” Bendy sneered and lifted his shirt to show the bandages. “The sucker got nicked, at least.” Xedo’s eyes widened. Holly put a hand over her mouth.

“But where is it now?” Boris asked with wide eyes.

Felix lifted a hand. His face turned serious. “Wait, you’re saying that you got burned because--”

“Because the cussing doll got burned! Yeah, that’s how it works.” Bendy grumbled and dropped the shirt. Felix frowned, his brows knit in concern.

Xedo stepped up. “Bendy I am sor--”

“Don’t bother. It’s not like you tossed the thing into a stove. That thing has it out for me, I swear,” Bendy muttered. “You don’t have to apologize, Xedo.”

“That’s kinda freaky Bendy,” Cup muttered.

“About as freaky as a giant black-eyed sea monster,” Bendy said simply. Boris had pulled out the map and unfolded it. Bendy leaned over to see it.

The map showed that the city, streets, and buildings were labeled. Nothing else. Boris frowned. “There has to be a way to find it again.”

“Can you...sense it or something, Bendy?” Mugs asked. Bendy raised a brow at him and shook his head.

“Gee, you get one piece only to lose the other,” Cup muttered with a frown.

“Well, it’s okay right now,” Bendy said. “Since I am.” Cup hummed.

“Where would it go?” Cup asked.

“What do you mean?” Bendy looked at him.

Cup shrugged. “Well, they said it moved around, right?” He waved at hand at Holly and Xedo, who both blinked. “Where would it go?”

Xedo blinked. “I would usually find it next to the door or on the desk.”

Holly’s brow crinkled. “And maybe...we could use Snowball.” She looked at Bendy. “I’ve realized she’s very sensitive to magic. Especially strong magic.”

“That little flying hedgehog thing?” Bendy asked with a raised brow. He remembered it. It could sense magic?
“It’s why she didn’t like when I altered the map.” Holly nodded. Weird, but if it worked, who was Bendy to judge?

“So, she might be able to sense it,” Boris said.

“Well, no point just talking about it, let’s do this,” Cup said and put down his fork.

Holly nodded slowly, blinking. Reaching down into her pocket, she pulled out a small round ball of white. For a moment it didn’t move, then a small head raised and it blinked.

“Meep.” The animal saw Bendy and Boris and started to chitter happily. Bendy couldn’t help smiling. Apparently, it remembered him.

Then it saw Cuphead and Mugman. It froze.

Snowball’s tiny paw twitched.

That was the only warning they got. Holly’s eyes widened in concern a half second before the animal launched itself like a cannonball towards them. “Meeeeeeeeeeeep!” Both of them stiffened, but didn’t do anything beyond that.

Snowball landed on Mugman’s lapel. “Meep, meep, meep!” she said happily, scampering up his shoulder and sniffing at his head. She tugged at his scarf, then leapt for Cuphead, little paws catching the handle of his head. Holly stared in absolute horror.

“Um, I’m guessing that’s Snowball?” Mugs asked with wide eyes.

“What is it?” Cup turned his head to see it, but only swung it around in the air. “It floats.” Holly made ‘come back’ motions to the animal, her mouth still half open. It didn’t seem to notice.

“Meeeeeeee,” Snowball said as she swung. She scrambled her way up the handle and finally perched on the rim of his head.


“How?” Mugs asked.

Bendy snickered at how ridiculous Cup looked with the little creature dancing around him. “Maaaaaaagic.” Bendy gave him jazz hands as an answer. Both of them looked unimpressed.

“I made it,” Holly grumbled. She scooted around the table, moving nervously towards Cuphead.

“Yeah?” Cup asked. He lifted a hand to the little dandehog. Snowball chittered cheerfully, nibbling softly at his fingers. He scratched her head softly.

“What is with you and little animals?” Bendy couldn’t help but ask.

Cup shrugged and smirked. “They have good instincts.” Bendy rolled his eyes.

That was the moment that Snowball dove headlong into Cup’s head.

Cup made a sound of surprise. It sounded like a squawk. He jumped. Bendy burst with laughter at the expression he made. Eye wide and mouth twisted up.

“I-” Holly choked on a snort of laughter. “I’m so sorry!”
“Uh, Cup it’s--”

“I know Mugs,” Cup growled.

“Do...you need some help?” Felix asked uncertainly.

Cup sighed and grumbled. “I’m fine. Little thing just surprised me.”

Mugs raised his brows. “You’re not getting it out?”

“Why should I?” Cup asked.

“Because you bit my head off when I had that squirrel in my head as a joke!” Mugs frowned.

“That was a filthy wild animal! This is a pet! That’s different!” Cup snapped. Said pet peeked her head over the rim of Cup’s hairline and gave Mugs a little white grin. Mugs frowned, seeming to disagree.

“You put a squirrel in your head?” Boris asked with a little half smile.

Xedo cleared his throat. “We’re looking for the doll,” he reminded everyone. Bendy’s smile dropped. Right.

Just then, Holly plucked Snowball from Cups’ head. Snowball gave a half-hearted ‘meep’ of protest, but seemed mostly happy.

“So, how are we doing this?” Mugs asked.

“If the doll is still near the apartment, I was thinking Snowball could sense it,” Holly suggested, sitting back down and gently petting the dandehog.

“But if it left, that’ll be a waste of time,” Cup said.

Bendy frowned. “Then what do you suggest?”

“Stick it on the map,” Cup said.

“The map? What will that do?” Bendy frowned.

“That thing is connected to the parts, right? So, maybe she’ll sense it through that thing,” Cup said with a shrug.

“That’s a dumb plan.” Bendy shook his head.

Cup shrugged. “Magic’s dumb sometimes, alright!”

Holly scowled at him, but pressed her lips together. “Actually, that sort of makes sense. Snowball was made when I was adding runes to the spell that works the map. She could have a direct connection to the map and the other items since she was made with the same runes.”

Cup smirked at Bendy in a ‘See? I’m right,’ sort of way. Bendy gave him a annoyed half-mast glare. “Fine,” Bendy said. “It won’t take long anyway, so when Snowball doesn’t do anything, we can go to the apartment.”

Holly frowned at both of them and set the small animal on the map. Snowball sniffed at it for a minute. She scuttled around for a another and then sat down, looking up expectantly. Bendy and
Boris leaned forward to see what was in front of her.

“It’s, uh...” Bendy blinked. “That can’t be right.”

“What?” Cup frowned.

“Here,” Boris said. “She stopped at this address.”

“Maybe it’s the cog?” Felix suggested.

“That’s a possibility,” Xedo replied.

Boris turned back to Snowball. “Can you tell if there’s another one? We already have the cog here.” Snowball gave him an annoyed look and didn’t move.

“So what? You’re saying it’s here?” Bendy frowned. The little critter tilted her like that was exactly what she was implying.

Cup and Mugs stood up. “Alright then, better start looking.”

“B-but how would it get here?” Xedo asked. “That doesn’t seem to make much sense.”

Cup glanced at the fox with a bored, almost annoyed gaze. “When it comes to these things, it doesn’t seem ‘sense’ applies.”

Holly lifted Snowball from the map. “Can you show us where?” she said to the animal. The dandehog looked sideways.

“Meep.”

Holly frowned. “Okay?” She opened her hands and the immediately the flying hedgehog leapt for Cups. This time she landed on his nose.

“Meep!” she greeted happily. Cup didn’t look pleased but also didn’t stop the fluffball. Snowball hopped up on his head and quickly dove into his hair again. Holly looked like she might want to strangle the small animal.

“Alright then.” Cup shrugged and started to head into the front room.

Boris leaned closer to Bendy. “So...we’re doing this?” he asked.

“We have an invisible map only we can see. This isn’t the weirdest thing we’ve ever done,” Bendy stated.

“True...I guess.” Boris sighed. “I miss things making sense.”

“You’re telling me,” Bendy agreed and followed the others.

They passed through the first floor with only the cog being anything that the little creature reacted to. Felix watched with the same level of interest as he had for the map or the Cupbros’ blasters. He liked magic stuff, didn’t he?

Cup casually walked up the stairs. The dandehog squeaked, little paws up over the left side of Cup’s rim. Cup headed down that hall. Mugs followed like this was normal. Bendy stuck his hands in his pockets as he Boris and Felix followed the dish brothers. They entered the last door at the end. Cup walked into the lab. He glanced around it before moving on. Finally, they entered the study that was
attached to the lab. Bendy perked up and looked at Boris. That was where they had hidden the thing before.

Snowball leapt from Cuphead’s head and landed on the floor with a little bounce. Without a moment of hesitation, she squeezed between two books in the bookshelf and disappeared.

“Um,” Mugs spoke up.

Bendy stared in awe.

“How!” Boris gasped.

“What is it?” Felix asked. Bendy and Boris rushed to the bookshelf and started pulling the books away.

“This is where we hid it the first time we brought it here!” Boris said.

“Oh, then maybe Snowball is just tracking the old place it used to be?” Mugs guessed.

“Maybe,” Felix muttered and stepped closer. Bendy took out another book when he spotted something. He reached back, felt it, and pulled it out with wide eyes. There it was. The cussing thing grinned up at him, its torso burned where he was injured. “Or maybe not.”

“But how did it get here?” Xedo sounded stunned. Bendy glared at it. The doll almost seemed to mock him with its black, button eyes. He turned it around and hissed when he brushed a scorched area.

“Bendy! Are you okay?” Boris looked at him with alarm.

“Yeah, just brushed a burned spot,” Bendy said with a strained voice.

“Oh stars, are we gonna have ta bandage a cussing doll? How much weirder can it get!” Cup complained.

“We’ll do whatever we’ll have to,” Felix said. “Bendy, may I see it?”

Bendy brought the doll closer to himself. “Probably shouldn’t, Mr. Felix.” The cat’s brows furrowed.

“It has a nasty habit of biting people it wants to bond with,” Xedo explained from the back of the room. “We’ll need a pair of gloves to handle it.”

Cuphead lifted a finger to point at the ceiling, a deadpan look on his face. “I’ve said it before, but ‘freaky’.” Mugs nodded with wide eyes as he stared at the doll. Snowball squeaked at him. She was back on the floor. She looked up before jumping and landing on his head.

“Good job, Snow.” Boris smiled at her. She gave him a cheerful reply. Bendy and Boris got up, and the group headed back downstairs. There, Dr. Oddswell had just come in and was shutting the front door. He raised brow in question. Bendy wordlessly showed him the doll.

Dr. Oddswell blinked. “I believe it’s time for all of us to talk.”

Chapter End Notes
So, just a note. It's sort of funny, I got to go visit Tap last weekend, and we literally spent an entire day *just* writing. I mean it. We sat at a table, ate cheese and crackers, talked occasionally, and wrote. I love that Tap is a friend that can happen with. It's awesome. XD
Chapter Summary

"Cuphead and Mugman have things they need to get done. Being late is never a good thing when you're expected after all," Mic said grimly. He sighed and shook his head.

Chapter Notes

Hello!
Not much to say about this chapter. I find myself mourning for Stan Lee. He lived a good long life. He was ninety-five. He and I had a lot on common. Our favorite hero is Spiderman, we love jokes, and we love making characters and telling stories. It's an addictive thing to make a story and have people love it. I'm going to miss him. I really looked up to that funny old man.

I heard someone suggest something clever. They said someone needs to make a short. One where several heroes have to turn down doing something that day because they need to go to a funeral. Some say that their mailman died, or a neighbor, or their bus driver, or that man at the grocery store, that guy that bought them a coffee once, their librarian, that man that was always nice to talk to at the park. And then all the heroes will be shocked when they come to a funeral...and everyone else is there. That he was the same man. Just to show how many heroes he touched. Anyway, you have a chapter to get to. Enjoy.

Cup collapsed on the bed with a sigh. They had actually allowed him and Mugs to stay the night...Somehow. He had been completely prepared to go find a hotel, but no, Bendy spoke up for them again. They had to explain themselves again and again and again. First with the doc, then with that fox and cat from Warnerburg that cussing showed up out of nowhere, then those three zany kids they had beaten in an actual fight! That little girl had pulled out a tiny box. When it opened, suddenly there had been tentacles and spikes and claws and roars coming from it! She called it her 'pet,' and Cup was pretty sure that they were the menu for it.

The last time Cup had gotten so many glares with pointed, individual reasons he had been a kid collecting contracts.

“Think someone will try something during the night?” Mugs asked, eyeing the door.

“I wouldn’t put it past them,” Cup grumbled.

“When are we going to go report? The boss isn’t gonna be happy we’re late again, and we were supposed to go to that meeting.” Mugs locked the door, put a chair under it, and sat on the other bed.

“Tonight, after everyone is asleep. I know, and yeah, we were,” Cup stated flatly. He stared at the
ceiling. His face itched. Stupid cream. He couldn’t scratch it with the eyepatch. “Since they screwed up a number of times, I don’t think they’ll be miffed that we’re running late.”

“But what are we going to tell the boss?” Mugs fiddled with his scarf. It was clean and fixed, thankfully.

“The truth, I guess. The stupid caves did some weird time thing.” Cup frowned.

“He isn’t gonna like that,” Mugs muttered.

“What do you want me to do about it?” Cup snapped. Mugs didn’t answer him. Cup sighed and went to turn off the lights. “Get some sleep. We’ll be heading out in a couple of hours. Mugs took off his scarf. Cup went under the covers and turned his back to his younger brother. There was a breath of silence.

“You’re still angry with me,” Mugs stated. Cup half turned to see Mugs sitting cross-legged on the other bed.

“What did you expect? You didn’t tell me you were hurt,” Cup said.

Mugs scowled. “Because I didn’t want to hold anyone back! And--” He cut himself off.

“And what?” Cup demanded coldly as he sat up.

“And I didn’t want you to blame yourself,” Mugman said, looking down.

Cup frowned. “Yeah? Well, instead you made me pretty cussing worried. How in the seven levels of hell am I supposed to trust you when you don’t speak up about important things like that, Mugs? Forget my starfallen feelings! You could have died today.”

Mugs’ head dropped lower. “I’m sorry, bro. I won’t do that again.”

“You better cussing not! I won’t bring you with me if ya do!” Cup threatened. Mugs head came up, and his eyes widened. “I’m serious. I will leave you in town, and the questers and I will go finish up with the items. Don’t think I won’t!” Even if the thought left an empty pit in his stomach.

“I promise! You can trust me! I swear, Cuppy! I won’t hide anything from you again!” Mugs said quickly.

Cup narrowed his eyes. “Good. You’re the only one, Mugs. Remember that.” Mugs nodded slowly, almost hesitantly. “Now, get to sleep.” Cup fell back down on his own mattress.

Stars, a real mattress. He was in heaven.

“Bendy and Boris were pretty berries today, uh bro?” Mugs’ voice came to him from the other bed.

“Uh?” Cup turned his head to see Mugs with the covers to his chin, staring at the ceiling.

“They really stuck their necks out for us...even against their friends,” Mugs said.

“Yeah, so?” Cup asked wearily.

Mugs didn’t answer him for a long moment. Cup thought maybe he had drifted off to sleep. Then, so quietly Cup almost didn’t hear, Mugs admitted, “I don’t want to hurt them.”

Cup clenched his fists. There was a moment of tense silence. Then, it passed. Cup should get up and
rip him up one side and down the other. He should be pounding it into his head that it was *us* or *them*.

But…

He didn’t. He couldn’t. He would be a hypocrite. Because, no matter how angry he got at Mugs, no matter how hard he tried to deny it, Cup cared too. He didn’t want to hurt these overly trusting idiots. He really wanted to help them on this quest and just let them be heroes.

Cussing sun-blazing dammit.

A few hours later, Cup awoke to a quiet house. The temptation to stay under the warm sheets and go back to sleep was overwhelming. Then, reality crashed in, and he remembered his job. He rolled out of the comfort and into the cold air. He kicked Mugs’ bed. His brother shot up with finger ready. Cup snorted. It didn’t take them long to dress and slip out of the house. The fall air was biting cold, but Cup was grateful. It helped wake him up.

“The bar?” Mugs asked.

“This late, any cussing alley will work,” Cup muttered and pulled his jacket closer to himself. They walked down the deserted streets. It was so late that even the night owls had gone to bed.

“Remember what they did?” Mugs asked. “I was a little distracted.”

“They failed to blow up those female detectives,” Cup said. “And they burned down that fox’s apartment.”

Mugs whistled. “Awful.”

“Yep,” Cup agreed. The boss didn’t mind flashy things once in a while. Stars, he even preferred it sometimes, but not during a coverup. It only turned the pile of stardust into a cussing pile of moon rocks. Cup wouldn’t be surprised if the boss just ordered him and Mugs to finish them. This screw up was almost boarding legendary…But, it wasn’t like it was Pompeii or that library of Alex-something-or-other that Cup had heard rumors the boss had destroyed to cover his tracks. No, he wasn’t going to burn down Toon Town...yet. Cup hoped not, at least. He had a bad feeling that his and Mugs’ mission was one of the few reasons the boss hadn’t tried to. They were all on thin ice.

“Think they’ll be surprised to see us?” Mugs asked.

“Knowing that loud mouth right hand, probably not,” Cup said.

Just then, out of nowhere, something small and white came flying out of the darkness and smacked Mugman in the face. “Wha!” Mug jumped.

It blinked. “Meep?” it said with confusion. It turned and looked at Cups. “Meep!” it said in delight, bouncing off Mugs’ nose towards Cuphead.

“Snowball?” Mugs asked. “What are you doing here?” Cup lifted a hand and caught the little creature. The fluffball struggled a little, reaching for his hair. Cup huffed and brushed its odd, plant-like fluff to calm it down. Cup looked around. If this critter was here, that girl should be around too, right?

“You might as well come out,” Cup said.

Silence.
He sighed. “Well then, finders-keepers.” He shrugged and lifted the little fluffball. “I’m renaming you Puff. Wanna stay with me, little fella?”

“Hey!” The girl suddenly moved from behind a tree. “Give her back here,” she demanded.

Cup snorted a laugh. That had worked. “Oh look, so you were here.”

She scowled, hand open. “Yes. I was here,” she said quietly. “I’ll leave, so just pass me Snowball.” Mugs was glancing nervously between him and Holly. Now, Cup knew he had to be careful here. He couldn’t just do whatever he wanted.

“Sure, but what in the world are you doing out so late?” Cup asked. He tickled Snowball’s belly, and the critter let a squeal of...glee? What was this distracting thing? Cup was tempted to simply walk away with it and see what other cute noises it would make. Sure, Mugs would be confused and try to remind him that the little fluff wasn’t his...but part of him really didn’t care.

Holly gave Snowball an incredulous look. She put a hand over her face and sighed.

“You weren’t trying to follow us by any chance, were you?” Cup asked with a smirk. He had to focus! Dangerous stuff this night! Life or death fight. Head in the game!

“Meep!” Snowball squeaked happily.

Holly blinked. This time she did glare at the critter. “I...was...heading home. I saw you two and wanted to ask you a question.”

Cup paused. He could take this two ways. He could either go with the lie or call her out on it. He smirked. He was curious to see what she was going to come up with. So, with a casual step, he approached the nervous girl. She blinked, shifting back a little as he moved forward. Funny that she reminded him of a little animal while he was actually holding one. “Oh yeah? What question?” Mugs watched with wide eyes. Poor little bro didn’t know if he was serious or messing with her.

Her brow furrowed. “What question?” She sounded insulted. There was a slight pause. “Well, what about where did you come from? How are you here? Are there more of you? Why are you shaped like a dish? How do those cracks heal? Doesn’t being ceramic cause you problems when you fight?” The words practically gushed out of her mouth, and her eyes lit up with excitement and curiosity that simply erased the fear that had been there only a moment ago. She blinked again. “But...that’s not what I meant to ask you...I just wanted to know where you were going...this late.”

Cup blinked twice. Golly, she was one of those. A hundred and five questions about them.

She ducked her head, looking conflicted. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to be rude.”

He set the little critter in her hands. It scampered onto her shoulder. “Do you really want to know?” he asked. He set hands on either side of her arms with a clap. She flinched, eyes going wide. He smiled at her. She was about as excited and bubbly as her pet underneath that reserve, wasn’t she?

“Oh,” she squeaked. “Yes?”

He grinned and lift her up in the air like she was a little child. She let out a small shriek. The back of her jacket hooked perfectly on the branch. He let go, took a couple steps back, and admired his work. “Not bad.”

The girl thrashed, legs kicking at the empty air. Her hands grasped at the back of her jacket, holding onto the branch. “Hey!! What do you think you’re doing!!” she yelled.
“Punishment.” Cup grinned. “If you’re going to stalk someone, don’t get caught.” He shook a finger at her. This was great. The look of shock on her face was priceless.

“I--” She blinked. “What? But--”

“Besides, there are a lot of scary people out at this time of night, not nearly as nice as Mugs and I.” Cup stuck his hands in his pockets.

“Uuuuh.” Mugs looked up at Holly with conflict. He looked like he wanted to be amused but was worried he would get in trouble.

“You can’t just leave me here! I-” She looked at the ground and balked. “I don’t know how to get down!”

“You can hang out and think about your choices. We’ll get you down if you can’t figure it out!” Cup said and turned on his heel to walk away. “Good night!” He waved without looking back.

“Hey!” she called out. “Hey!”

“I’m sorry!” Mugs called back as he raced to catch up to Cup. “We’ll be back!”

“Don’t bother, you cracked-headed, trenchcoat wearing, dirty dishes!!!”

“I think she’s mad, Cups,” Mugs muttered.

“She’ll live,” Cup said. They walked further, until they couldn’t hear her yelling anymore, and turned into the first alley they found. Cup walked into the shadows and quickly drew the summons on the wall. The fun over, it was time to get to work.

The hole opened up, and Cup stopped breathing when he saw who it would be. Long curved horns appeared; black fur, darker than the night; claws and fangs that glinted with malice. The temperature dropped as glowing yellow eyes zeroed in on the brothers. A spiked tail lashed around his clawed feet, and he grinned.

Ah, cuss.

“Heya boss,” Cup greeted. Mugs gulped next to him.

“You’re late,” the demon said in a deep hiss that scraped a chill down his spine.

“We were getting one of the machine parts,” Cup said. “The temple screwed up our time. We thought we were only gone for three days.”

The boss raised a brow. “Where’s the part?” he growled.

“Back at the house,” Cup said. The boss narrowed glowing eyes.

“Bring it to me.” His tail lashed.

Mugs sucked in a breath. Cup cleared his throat to cover it. “Sure, but are you sure you don’t want the rest of them?”

The boss paused. “The rest?”

Cup shrugged. “That’s what they’re planning to do, and they have a way to do it. We can’t use it either, and once we disappear with the part, we won’t be able to go back.” The demon paused. Cup
hoped that the temptation of the parts would buy them time. He frowned. ‘Mon furball, be greedy!

“I know what you’re doing,” he said. Cup froze. “But, you’re lucky I want those parts more than I want to punish you for trying to manipulate me.” Cup felt his heart stutter for a beat in pure fear. “Be grateful.”

“Y-y-yes boss.” Cup cursed himself as his voice cracked. The alley was ten degrees colder.

“Now, go get me the Sykes’ contracts and take care of anyone else involved in this pathetic excuse of a coverup,” the boss ordered.

“You want them all dead, boss?” Mugs asked.

“I don’t care! Do whatever the hell you want. Just be sure they’re done,” the demon growled. “I want those contracts before the sun comes up.”

“Yes sir,” the brothers said together. Stars, he was in bad mood. What had happened? Did Dice eat the last bowl of his hell-o’s or something? Cup wasn’t brave enough to ask.

“Then go!” he hissed, his eyes flaring. “They should already be waiting for you morons!” Mugs and Cup ran back down the alley. Neither of them looked back. They didn’t stop until the chill turned into the natural cold again. They didn’t say anything as they headed toward the docks. Mugs paused when he saw the water. They passed by the docks they’d arrived at earlier. Once bright and energetic, now they were dark, dismissal, and solemn.

That wasn’t what bothered Cup. This was the world he was used to, after all. No, what disturbed him was the worry...and the anticipation. He was looking forward to getting back. Back to that house full of people that hated him. Back to those two annoying idiots who had treated them like friends. There was somewhere he wanted to get back to, soon. And that was...a little scary.

He took a steadying breath. He needed to focus on the now. These schmucks were causing problems. These scums were threatening the lives of Bendy’s pals. Cup didn’t usually enjoy taking contracts, not after learning what happened to the debtors. But tonight...he found that it didn’t bother him much.

The warehouse door was easy to open. Cup and Mugs walked in and weaved past the machinery and crates. The light was annoyingly dim. Mugs stuck close to Cup’s side as they rounded the corner. There was a square table with chairs set up. A number of people sat around the table. Cup narrowed his eye. The problem with the boss being in a bad mood was that he had neglected to give them details. That meant that he and Mugs didn’t know what sort of circumstances they were walking into. Cup doubted that the demon would flat out tell them that Cup and Mugs were here to silence them, so now they had to keep up an act without a script.

It was easy enough to spot the Sykes brothers. One was a taller, thicker set, balding with a pair of small glasses on his nose. The other was younger looking, a wide charming smile on his face. They both had fat cigars in their mouths. Cigars were usually for celebration.

Stars. Now Cup was itching for a cigarette.

They sat on either side of the head of the table. Then there was that sleazy lawyer, Mr. Winky, and his far-too-toothy smile. Sitting on the table in a small chair was a rat in a suit, Ratigan. He glanced around at the empty seats.

“Oh, the Cup brothers!” Bill Sykes grinned. “Welcome!” Mugs pulled his scarf up to his round nose.
Cup stepped up to the table. Mugs stayed next to him. “Is this it then? Where are the others?”

“Ah, well, we got your little warning with Medusa.” Robert chuckled. “Loud and clear. That was brutal.”

Cup scoffed. What these two did was brutal. Cup only did what he was told.

“And that Fairfax fellow went and got himself arrested,” Ratigan said with a smirk.

“He wasn’t the brightest bulb,” Mr. Winky said.

“Then we learned the commissioner was trying to pull a fast one on us,” Robert jumped in. “He was planning to nab us and make himself look like a real hero.”

Bill laughed. “He’s visiting the fishes now with his spiffy new shoes.”

Cup hummed. “So, this is really it then.”

“Yes,” Robert said. “So, pull up a chair, and let’s talk. We’ll figure out how to finish off those meddlers and talk about those rewards.”

Ah, that was it, then. The boss had promised that he and Mugs would take care of the problem and reward them for the work they had managed to complete. An old trick. Like the boss would accept anything but the complete job done.

“Of course,” Cuphead said. He sat. Mugs didn’t. He stayed standing with his arms crossed. If anyone tried something, Mugs would deal with it before they could blink. Cup wasn’t going to stretch this out for long, but he did need to figure out if they had already set up anything he would have to dismantle. “I’ve heard about your attempts so far.”

“Ah, yeah.” Robert scratched the back of his head with a frown. “A real string of bad luck. First the car bomb and then the apartment fire.” He snapped his fingers. “I was sure, but they slipped by somehow.”

Cup hummed. “We know how that is.”

“Those Bbros, right?” Mr. Winky grinned. “They are proving to be quite the handful.”

“Too true, but that is our business, isn’t it,” Cup said with a small warning in his voice. “So gentlemen, what are your goals for the next month or so?” Cup asked with a smirk.

“Well, after those pests are gone, I was thinking of starting up a different newspaper and taking down Toon Town Times economically,” Robert said.

“Well, I think I will be withdrawing from law for a time and go back to simply owning my bars. I don’t need more bad publicity, and those cases didn’t give me the best of names.” Mr. Winky grinned.

“And your still going to be trading firearms under the table?” Bill asked.

“Why of course!” Mr. Winky said. “I am still a businessman.”

“I’ll have to disappear for a while.” Ratigan said. “Basil, curse him to hell, has caught scent of me, and knowing that mouse, he won’t stop until he finds me. Once I have managed him, I’ll be back.”

Bill hummed. “That’s too bad. You were doing a fantastic job at that house.”
Ratigan shook his head. “It got too dangerous after we took that sample. Basil lives right next door, after all.”

“And what about you, Bill?” Cup leaned back. “You gonna calm down and get to work on your trade?”

Bill chuckled. “Nah, I’ve never been one for the calm life. I’m thinking of getting back at that sleaze that fired Rob.”

“Mr. Foxworth?” Robert asked.

“Yeah, I heard he has a little girl. Maybe an accident should happen or a scare.” Bill shrugged his broad shoulders with a twisted grin. His brother laughed.

“Count me in if you do. I think the brat’s name is Jenny or Jeanie,” Robert said. “Something like that.”

Medusa’s wife and kid flashed through Cuphead’s mind. Their startled and scared faces. They’d have no idea what was coming. He noticed Mugs shift next to him. He was giving the mobsters icy looks. Luckily, the rest of his face was hidden. Mugs and Cup had done some pretty despicable things since working for the Devil. There were things that Cup still didn’t think he would ever be able to let go, but going after a kid to get back at their parents? Hell no.

Cup forced a chuckled. “A kid? That’s it, Sykes? I expected more.”

“Hold on there!” Bill chuckled and lifted a hand in a stopping motion. “I’m not done! I think I also want to pay Black Hat a visit.”

A shock went through Cup. He knew it showed on his face because Bill’s smile widened. “Hat?”

“Yeah, the cops showed up. Someone tried to get Rob arrested. I think I have an idea on who, but I want to be sure. If you’re not busy, you two can come. You’re old pals with Mr. Hat, aren’t ya?” Bill said pleasantly. Cup narrowed his eye. He was mocking them. The debtors in the city knew that the Cups had ties to Hat, even if they didn’t completely know how.

“Who do you think called?” Cup asked.

“See, there was this little lady Ratigan saw. Cute thing, really. I think she had a friend at the casino. I want to be sure.” Bill winked. “So, what do you say?”

Cup frowned. He’d had enough. It didn’t sound like anything was in motion right now. They all must have relaxed when they got the news the Cup brothers were going to ‘handle it.’ So, without further delay, Cuphead stood up. “Okay, I think I’ve heard enough.”

“Excuse me?” Bill asked.

“Hand over your contracts. You’re done,” Cup stated coldly. Silent tension filled the room like flood waters in a cage. No one moved. He didn’t think any of them breathed. He turned his eye from the frozen Sykes to the two mooks. “And you two, you’re going to leave this warehouse and never speak of the work you’ve done here. You won’t ask for favors or threaten to talk. You never saw us, you never knew anything about us or the boss, you’d rather die than see me again on the job, got it?”

Mr. Winky and Ratigan both stood.

“Don’t you two dare move!” Bill snapped. Robert pulled out a gun, but Mugs was next to him in a
instant, knocking it to the ground. Robert growled and went to deck Mugs. Mugs dodged to the side, grabbed his wrist and smoothly twisted it behind his back. Mugman pinned Robert’s arm between his shoulder blades and slammed him down on the floor face first. It took all of ten seconds. Robert grunted and moved to struggle. Mugs put pressure on his wrist, silently threatening to pop his arm out of its socket.

Bill was on his feet but froze when Cup leveled a glowing finger at him. Cup looked at the other two and, in the same tone he used before, said, “Now, go if you want to live. And don’t ever look back.” Mr. Winky straightened and nodded before turning on his heel. Ratigan grabbed his coat and hopped off the table.

“You cowards!” Bill shouted after them. His neck muscles tensed. Cup thought he might actually go after them.

“Hey, the contracts. Now,” Cup demanded. Bill turned back to him. His eyes went from his blue bullet, to him, and then to his brother and Mugs on the floor. “Don’t do anything funny. I’m faster than you.”

Bill straightened up. “Yeah, I guess you’re right. Let me get them.” He smiled and walked to the office door. Cuphead narrowed his eye. “They’re locked in my office.” He pulled out a key and inserted it into the door. “Right--now!” He opened the door and two growling dogs lunged out and charged at Cup and Mugs.

Mugs jumped back to dodge the doberman’s teeth. Cup fired and hit the other one. It yelped and hit the floor with a whimper. The other one barked loudly and lunged for Cup. Cup jumped back and hit the table. Then, it went for his face, jumping in the air. Cup lifted an arm to protect himself. Mugs landed a kick on its side and knocked the dog away so forcefully that it broke the crate it landed on.

“You cussing scum!” Robert barked. Oh look, he had the gun again. Cup grabbed the table and tipped it. He and Mugs dove behind it just in time to dodge a rain of bullets. “Go around!” Bill shouted.

“Hey Mugs,” Cup said. His bro glanced at him. “Charging Taurus!” Mugs nodded and they both got ready to pick up the table. They lifted and rushed Robert, throwing the table at him with everything they had. It crashed against him and into a pile of boxes and machinery. The bullets stopped. The former news man groaned.

“No, but I can at least get the attack dogs off our tails!” Bill’s grin looked insane.
“Oh, and how’s that?” Cup mocked.

Bill took a small step closer. “Hand over your contracts.”

Mugs’ eyes widened. Cup stiffed. “What makes you think we would have something like that on
us?”

Bill narrowed his eyes and chuckled. “Because you two are too smart to just leave them in a lock
box somewhere for any old soul or soulless to find.”

Cup felt his throat go dry. This schmuck was good. “You said we’re his pets. He has them.”

“Ha!” Bill barked a laugh. “No debtor would be calm with his soul in the boss’ hands.”

Cup snorted. “Aren’t we all?”

“Not ‘til I let it go,” Bill growled. The gun’s barrel was jabbed in his face. Cup didn’t flinch. “And
you’ll have to try it from my cold dead hands.”

“Okay.” Cup shrugged. “Remember that you asked for it.”

Bill narrowed his eyes. His twisted smile became a disgusted sneer. “The contracts.”

“Alright.” Cup slowly, oh so slowly reached into his jacket. He stopped. Mugs tensed. “I’ll show
you ours if you show me yours,” Cup taunted.

Bill sneered and reached to rip his coat open. Just as he did, Cup grabbed his wrist to jerk up and
hooked his heel behind his knee to knock him off balance. Bill pulled the trigger. The gun went off
next to his head. The sound was deafening and almost made him lose his grip. Bill didn’t let go of
Cup’s jacket, so he pulled Cup forward as he fell back.杯 let him. Mugs lunged for the gun. They
landed in a twisted heap of limbs. Cup heard the clatter of the gun getting knocked away. They
wrestled across the floor until finally Mugs and Cup pinned him. Cuss this guy was strong. He
growled and cursed.

Cup scoffed and pressed his heel against the scum’s neck to shut him up. His other foot pinned his
arm to the ground. Mugs had his other arms and legs locked. “And what was it you were saying?
Not dumb enough to keep contracts locked up?” Bill froze for a breath before he bucked. “Hey
now!” Cup’s pointed a glowing finger at his face. “None of that.” He stopped. Mugs pointed too as
Cup went to searching his pockets then his shoes. He finally found the suckers. In the schmucks tie
of all places.

“Well, you have points for creativity,” Cup admitted. Bill went to grab Cup, but Mugs brighted his
bullet enough to warn him. Bill froze a breath before he bucked. “Hey
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of all places.

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bullet enough to warn him. Bill froze with a hand half tensed to rip free of Cup’s foot. Cup stood up,
putting extra pressure on his wrist, enough to break it with a crack. Bill cried out in pain as Cup
stepped off him. He walked toward the exit, stuffing the contracts into his jacket pocket.

Mugs used his dodge move to appear next to Cups at the other end of the room.

“So, that’s it! You’re dooming us to hell with a blink of an eye then!” Bill called after them.

Cup paused. He looked over his shoulder coldly. Bill was sitting up, cradling his wrist. “The only
ones that doomed you were yourselves. I’m not going to lose any sleep over this.”

Bill growled. Cup didn’t give him a chance to speak up. He opened the door and called behind him.
“You have until sunrise!” And slammed it behind them. They walked away in silence for a few
moments. A pair of cars passed them by. Cup noted their black color and tinted windows.

Trouble?

“We better hand these over the next alley we find,” Mugs muttered. Cup nodded. His hand stayed wrapped around the thick, rich paper. It felt heavy. Soul contracts always felt heavy.

They ducked into the next dark alley they found. Cup reluctantly wrote out the summons and waited with Mugs. The space chilled again. A report was one thing, a finished job was another. The hole in the ground opened wide and for the second time that night, Cup faced the boss.

He seemed to have calmed down, because when he spotted Cup and Mugs he grinned with...well, just less malice. He didn’t say anything, he held out his clawed hand. Cup swallowed and pulled out the contracts. He handed them over to the demon. The sharp smile spread further.

Cup felt the weight that had been in his hand and pocket rush over to his heart and stomach. The boss unfolded the official documents and looked them over. The shadows seemed to darken and wither around them in excitement. The boss’ dark form disappeared in the darkness, only showing his glowing eyes like spotlights. He turned them on the brothers.

“Well done,” he said and rolled the contracts back up. Without another word he disappeared back to the netherworld.

A bit slower, the two left the alley. That was it. They could consider the Sykes brothers as good as gone. Just like that. They would disappear and never be heard from again.

Cup and Mugs walked back toward the house that they were supposed to have slept in all night. Cup noticed two black cars pass by the them in timed synchronization. Oh boy, trouble. Cup didn’t want anymore trouble.

The first hint of light was showing on the horizon. They had spent all night out. Great. He was so cussing tired.

“Mugs, check the street back there,” Cup said. Mugs nodded and backtracked. Cup didn’t want to lead trouble back to the house.

Then, there was a glimmer of joy that appeared before him. There, in the small tree he had left her, was Holly. She seemed to have fallen asleep. Her arms were folded, head hanging down, and the Puff was sleeping on her hair.

Cup couldn’t help but snicker.

“Whelp, seems your up a tree without a ladder there,” Cuphead said.

She groaned and opened her eyes. When her eyes focused on Cup they turned into a glare. She seemed to struggle for words for moment. When she finally did remember how to talk she snapped, “Go blow bubbles with your straw, dish face.”

“Ooooh, I hope you don’t kiss your mother with that mouth,” Cup snickered. She was like an angry puppy. He rested his hands on his hips. “You want some help down?”

“No,” she said too quickly. “Go away.”

He shrugged. “Alright. See you later.” He turned to walk away with an evil, easy-going smile, waiting to see if she would call him back. Sadly, Mugs was coming back. He wouldn’t let Cup get
away with messing with her more.

Leaves shook as she tried to wriggle out, many fell with her attempt.

Cup heard a ‘meep’ from her little pet as it woke up.

“Cup, what are you doing?” Mugs sighed, looking from Holly to him like a disapproving parent.

“What? She didn’t want my help, let’s go home,” Cup said with a jerky shrug. Yeah, Mugs was going to ruin the fun.

“Cuppy, I’m not leaving that girl up there again.” Mugs frowned. The shaking behind Cup stopped. Stardust. Oh well, they had soft beds to go back to.

“Why not? It’s funny.” Cup smiled. “Besides, she doesn’t want our help.” Which was true. She was the rude one here. Spying on them, lying to them, and now snapping at him.

“I can’t imagine why,” Mugs muttered and stepped up to the tree. Oh well, there was always tomorrow.

She folded her arms and gave Mugs a death glare when he approached. Cup wondered if she would try to bite him. “I can get down myself,” she snapped. “I told you before. Don’t. Bother.” Stars, she was stubborn. She was moving so stiffly it had to hurt.

“Fine,” Mugs said and reached up to hook his hands under her armpits. “I won’t be bothered by it.” She blinked and looked startled. He set her down like a child and didn’t completely let her go. It was a good thing too because the kid nearly collapsed. “I suggest waiting a second and letting your legs remember how to stand.”

She latched onto Mugs’ arm to save herself from landing on the freezing sidewalk. She winced. Then, slowly she lost the fight and sunk down to the ground. She bit her lip.

“Thank you,” she muttered.

“Cup, you killed her legs.” Mugs gave him a disapproving frown over his shoulder. Cup felt a small twinge of regret but quickly smothered it. If she had seen anything from this night she would be in way more trouble than some numb legs and sore shoulders.

Cup shrugged. “She said she could do it herself. It’s her fault for getting caught.” She turned her death glare at him, then at Puff, who had made its way to his head again. This little critter was sly. Cuphead had almost not noticed the little fluffball jump off her and climb his coat.

Mugs rolled his eyes. “You’ll have to forgive him, miss. He’s thoughtless when it comes to others.” Cup frowned. He was so considerate! He’d probably saved her life stopping her from following them! She shook her head like he was the idiot.

Cup snorted. “Can we go now? I’m exhausted.”

“You’re exhausted,” Mugs said.

“If we hurry, we might get another hour or two of sleep,” Cup said. Soft bed. Think of the soft bed.

“Alright, alright.” Mugs sighed. Mugs’ patience was spent after no sleep and getting contracts. Cup wouldn’t hold his snippiness against him.

She started to massage her legs. They were going to be here all night if they waited on her. Cup gave
Mugs a look. Mugs got the signal and picked the girl up princess-style. She let out a squeak of surprise, hands flailing. Oh the drama. They started walking back to the house.

She folded her arms and pouted quietly. “You realize I can walk. In fact, I’d prefer it. You both mystify me to the point of exhaustion.” Or not so quietly.

“Exhaustion is exactly where we’re at,” Cup said flatly. “And Mugs isn’t gonna let you go stumbling into the street at this time of morning. People don’t care about the usual road laws right now.” Idiot.

Mugs huffed. “Let’s just go to bed.” Yep, the fella was done with life right now.

She blinked owlishly. “Okay, that’s it. I’m getting down. You two are nuts.” She struggled. Mugs huffed and restrained her.

“Sorry, couldn’t hear you,” Mugs said, looking off to the side. Cup smirked. Mugs caught his look and tried to hide his only smile. Stars, they were so tired.

She threw her hands up in the air. “Well, I’m going to have to walk eventually! What do you think you’re going to do, carry me in through the back window?”

“Hey, there’s an idea,” Cup mocked. She glared at him. Mugs rolled his eyes and hid another smile.

“Just until we--Cup.” Mugs’ voice suddenly tensed. Cup tensed with him. “Trouble.” Mugs’ eyes turned forward. Ah, he noticed the cars finally. Holly sat up and turned her head back and forth between Mugman and ahead of them.

“What?” she asked with alarm.

“I know. They’ve been following us for an hour,” Cup muttered, he kept his face relaxed though. They didn’t need to scare the girl too much. She tensed anyway.

“Split?” Mugs suggested. They could do that...but they had a civilian with them for once.

“They’ll go after you since you have the dame,” Cup said with a shrug. They couldn’t just ditch her on the street. Those schmucks had already seen her with them.

“Or you could just put me down.” Ha, she was a comedian.

“You won’t let them get close,” Mugs said. “Besides, I can dodge.” Both true. But they were already so tired...Meh. They better just get it over with.


“Ya know how many?” Mugs asked.

“Two cars,” Cup muttered. “They switched halfway down. So, up to eight schmucks?” Maybe. If the cars were full, and mobs didn’t do ‘half empty.’

“Is one of them a nice, sleek-looking black one?” Holly suddenly asked with an intense gaze. What the cuss?

Cup gave her a curious look. Who was she thinking of? “Black, yes. Sleek? I’ve seen better.” Did she know shady people? This marshmallow?

“The bend’s coming,” Mugs said. “Meeting?”
Cup refocused. Meet up spot, right. Where should they meet back up?

“Baker Street is fine,” Cup reasoned. “It’s not like it’s a secret where we’ve been.” They wouldn’t have a lot around all the famous people like the ‘Bbros’ and ‘Felix the Cat’ and so on.

“Alright, see you there,” Mugs said simply. The two shared a glance and then when they reached the end of the street, Cup sprinted left and Mugs dove right. Just as Cup thought, the nearest car raced after Mugs. Cup kept going left until he heard the other car. It appeared in front of him. Trying to force him back to Mugs so they would be boxed in? Tch. He lifted a finger and fired at their tires. He hit after a few misses. Stupid eyepatch! He jumped out of the way as the car swerved and lost control. A touch too close for comfort. Cup felt a breeze go by as the car missed him.

It hit the side of a brick wall with a bang! Cup waited a breath to see if anyone got out. One door opened and a groaning mess of a man fell to the pavement. Cup yanked him up by the collar.

“What’s this about?” Cup demanded.

The guy groaned, only half conscious. Cup shook him a little. “We was gonna off ya for messin’ up with the Sykes and our business.”

“Yeah, well, ya ain’t gonna be dumb enough to do that again, are ya?” Cup pulled the guy up to be nose-to-nose with him.

“N-no sir,” he whimpered.

“Good.” Cup dropped him and rushed away. Mugs was still probably running with that luggage he was carrying.

Listening, he didn’t hear anything nor see anything. He pulled himself up on the roof, hoping to spot something. He rushed down the way Mugs went. There was a squeal of tires and Cup whipped his head toward it. He didn’t slow down, racing toward the sound.

“--brother and I, you fellas were playin’ on a house of cards!” That was Mugman!

“We have you cornered!” some schmuck shouted.

“Oh really?” Mugman mocked. Cup peered over the roof ledge and watched his little brother. He suddenly gave a little hop back and dodged to the other side of a chain linked fence with a puff of his smoke and magic. The mobsters in the car exclaimed and cursed.

“Flying pegasus’ horsefeathers?!” Holly jerked, still in Mugs’ arms. She was clinging to him like a lifeline.

Mugs smirked at the mooks.

“Hey!” Cup shouted down. “Are you schmucks picking on my little brother?”

“Cussing dishware!” The car jumped to ram the fence. Oh, hell no! Cup pointed and a blue, peashooter bullet left his hand and nailed the front of the car. Holly gasped. Mugs raised a finger, shooting through the fence as well.

“You can shoot things with your finger? ” Holly’s jaw was hanging open like a fish.

The blasts hit the engine and the car sputtered to a stop right as it touched the fence. “You bozos sure you wanna tangle with us?” Cup called down. The doors open. Two big brawny guys stepped out of the back. Two more at the front. “I already took out your friends!” Cup continued with a mocking
“Mugs, bail!” he shouted. Mugs was a sitting duck there. His brother dodged again and suddenly, he and Holly were at the end of the alley. Bullets started to fly. Cup scowled and fired at the mooks. He had the advantage, and it didn’t take him long to take care of the thugs. He hopped down from the roof and to the alley. They were groaning and moaning in pain. “You lot try this again, and you won’t see the next sunrise. Got it?” Cup growled at the nearest one.

“Y-y-yes,” he groaned. Cup huffed and walked away. He found the two on Bakers Street. Holly was standing now.

“Hey! What are you two standing around for?” Cup came up behind Mugs.

“Just talkin’ about last night,” Mugs said. “Apologizing for the gun show.” He shrugged.

Cup sighed. “Well, knock it off. We need to hit the hay.” He was done with thinking. Done with work. Done with guns. Just. Done.

“Have fun climbing in through a window,” Holly muttered, turning to walk to the front door. Cup raised a brow at Mugs. Mugs shrugged. Cup stuck his hands in his pockets and followed the crabby damsels toward the house.

“Yeah, no. Thanks,” Cup said right behind her. She paused at the door and looked at it.

“Well, that might be the only option unless Bendy happened to have given either of you a key last night.” She stared cross-eyed at the door in annoyance.

Cup heaved a sigh. “Move,” he said and gently pushed her aside. He knelt in front of the door and pulled out his fit. It took him ten minutes, and the door swung open. “Now we can go to bed,” he said and stood up again.

“Sounds like a plan,” Mugs said and walked in. Cup held the door open for the grumpy girl. She walked in. Puff squeaked from his head. Oh yeah...he had forgotten about the pet. He shut the door silently and gently offered it to Holly.

“Thanks.” She took the small animal and disappeared into the front room. Mugs went upstairs silently. Cup paused at the foot of the stairs. He turned around on his heel and went back outside. He searched his pockets and sighed in relief when he found the little box. He pulled out a smoke and lit it with his finger. He took a breath and let out the smoke slowly.

Stars. This evening was stressful. Why was that? This should be so routine for him and Mugs that they wouldn’t have bat an eye at it last year. Sure, chasing the owl had pulled them out of contract hunts and the more...unsightly parts of their careers, but still. They had been doing this cussing stuff since they were kids. One year off shouldn’t have erased all that.

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Mugs passed him but stopped before rounding the building. “I stuck a chair under the doorknob.”

Cup snorted. “So, you have to go in through the window anyway.”

Mugs frowned at him from over his shoulder. “And I told her we were trying to pull out of the mob world.”
Cup felt a side of mouth quirk up in a half smirk. “Yeah?”

“Just wanted you to know.” Mugs shrugged.

“Think she’ll tattle on us?” Cup asked.

“Dunno,” Mugs answered. “But I think we saved her life tonight.”

Cup snorted and nearly cough. “That’s usually how it goes when you get someone away from bullets.”

“No.” Mugs looked over his shoulder to give Cup an unamused glare. “She admitted that she had been spying on the mob.” Mugs looked at him meaningfully. Cup raised a brow. “She might have been the one to call in the Sykes.”

“Why? What makes you think she has any tie to that casino?” Cup narrowed his eye.

Mugs shrugged. “Dunno, it’s just a thought. Probably should keep an eye on her.”

“Yeah,” Cup muttered. Mugs turned to leave. “And Mugs,” he paused, “good job tonight.” Mugs waved over his shoulder without looking and disappeared. Cup took another deep breath. The smoke curled around the cold air, dancing away from him until it dissipated. It really was getting too cold to just stand around at night anymore. The cold was creeping into his coat.

Cup really hoped the stardust pile that had been building up around them was disappearing too. It seemed like it was but...Mug was starting to argue with him about things. Not asking but arguing. Actually fighting him on things. Mugs hadn’t done that since that fight when they first gambled in that cussing casino and lost.

Cup knew Mugs cared about this. He was invested in these idiots, and he was moody because this night reminded him that there was no way it was going to end well. Hell, if the Devil wasn’t so greedy, Cup would have been strung up for trying to mess with him.

...Didn’t that mean he was just as invested as Mugs? Cup froze, his eye widened. His cig near fell out of his mouth in surprise. Holy stars. He knew that they had gotten to him back at the caves and that he had wanted to get back to this house but...

_Holy cussing stars!_ He had tried to oppose the boss for them! He hadn’t tried that since…

Cup sat on the entrance stairs and dropped his head in his hand. This was a lot worse than he thought. If he and Mugs kept this up, they were dead meat for sure. The Sykes fates would be a cussing holiday compared to what the boss would probably do to them. He wanted that machine. He wanted those parts badly, so badly that he overlooked Cup’s argument. If they stood between him and what he wanted that badly…

Cuphead lifted a shaking hand to his cigarette and took another deep breath, trying to calm himself. “Holy cuss, we are so far up a creek we’re on a cussing mountain.” His voice shook. Fear fluttered in his chest like a caged bird. His first instinct was to run, just grab Mugs and bail on all of this, but he couldn’t.

This was where the boss wanted him. Cup was even able to convince him to let them get all the parts before leaving. Dread dropped his stomach like a lead weight. They were so dead. If they were this attached now, how bad would it be after gathering the rest? Could Cup distance himself? Possibly, but that demon was annoyingly observant and would know something was up. And Mugs? There was no cussing way. “Mugs,” Cup grumbled. “What am I gonna do with ya?”
But...they had time, he reminded himself desperately. They only had two parts and another three to go. And they didn’t even know where the cussing machine was. It had taken them months to just get to where they were at. So yeah, they had time. Plenty of time until the end. Cup could figure something out.

He hoped. The sun suddenly came over the horizon, blinding Cup. He squinted at the glaring light. Sunrise. “Times up,” Cup muttered.

He put out the smoke and went inside.
Dr. Oddswell's Tests

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"The boys are home, things are a little tense," Mic announces. "But things continue as normal as they can." Mic shrugs. "At least until the doctor has a favor to ask."

Chapter Notes

Hello!
How are all of you? Did you have a good week? Mine was great! I got a few days off and I needed them. We are so far ahead! I don't have to worry about Christmas or finals week! Thank heavens! There's not much to say this week. Hope you all enjoy! ^^

Bendy woke up and stretched. It seemed to be a cloudy day. Boris was already up and ready to go, of course. They went downstairs to chaos...again, of course. Any place that served food to the Warners was chaos. Add in their guardian, Dr. Scratchensniff, Finley and Sammy, their pals from Warnerburg, Dr. Boo, Granny who was finally up and about, Dr. Oddswell, Xedo and Wiston, that freaky bird-deer-thing that was sitting on his shoulder, Cuphead, Felix, Holly, and a couple of people Bendy didn’t know and the large place was finally starting to feel crowded.

“Good morning, boys!” Granny greeted.

“Morning Granny! It’s good to see you again,” Boris greeted. Bendy smiled.

“Nothin’ can keep me down for long! Now, go get some food! Go on, before it’s gone!” Granny shooed them to the kitchen. Bendy got a plate--Bacon!--and sat down next to Finley and Sammy. He pointedly ignored Dot’s waving for him to go sit by her.

“Heya fellas.” Finley grinned around his cup coffee. “You both look a hundred times better.”

“Yeah, a night’s sleep will do a man wonders,” Bendy said.

“Yeah? Tell that to your newest buddy. He looks dead on his feet, and I haven’t seen that brother of his.” Finley spoke from behind a hand and pointed with a thumb.

Bendy looked over to see that the fennec fox was right. Cup was nursing a cup of joe like it was his firstborn. He had bags under his eyes, and his shoulders were hunched like he couldn’t bother to hold them up anymore. Snowball stuck her snout out of his hair with a gleeful ‘meep!’ Cup lifted a bit of toast, and the little animal snagged it and disappeared again. Holly glared at both of them from across the table.

“Wonder what’s that about,” Bendy said and bit into the bacon. Crispy, flavorful, amazing--Oh Granny’s cooking!
"No clue, but we think it’s no good," Finley said with narrowed eyes. Bendy frowned. "Now, don’t look at me like that! He shot at me first. I didn’t get the whole life-saving-heart-to-heart-and-now-we’re-all-buddy-buddy part. To me he’s still trouble, but because I respect you two so much, I’m giving him a chance, alright? Don’t ask more from me."

Bendy sighed. That was fair. He had to remember that everyone here was their friends and only wanted what was best for them. “You’re right. Sorry,” Bendy muttered. Finley smiled. Bendy looked back at Cuphead. “Hey, Cups!” Bendy called. Cup jerked and looked over at him. “Where’s Mugman?”

“Probably still asleep.” Cup looked back down at his plate. Granny harrumphed. “Well, get him down here! He’s going to miss breakfast!”

“I’ll get him!” Boris offered and jumped up. Bendy enjoyed a few minutes of jokes and catching up. The Warners apparently had been working out a travel plan for those sick with Ink Illness to get here and instruction events for Oddswell to teach doctors everything he knew. Finley and Sammy were enjoying their time in the city and helping Dr. Boo.

Then, Bendy noticed someone else was missing. “Where’s Red?” he asked.

He noticed Granny’s smile and a number of others disappear. “She went on a little vacation,” Granny told him. “She needed some time to herself.” Granny shot a glance at Cup. If he noticed, he didn’t give a hint to it.

“Bendy, I know this isn’t a good time.” Xedo and Wiston stood. “But we are heading out to find a new apartment, and I wish to ask, what did you mean the other day when you said we wouldn’t accept you as a demon?”

The other conversations died at the table like Xedo had dumped ice water on everyone. Bendy spotted Boris and Mugs frozen on the staircase. There wasn’t any spotlight in the room, but somehow Bendy felt like he was standing in one. A very hot one.

“Oh…” Bendy put down his fork.

“I’m sorry, you don’t have to say anything if you don’t wish to, but it was a statement I found didn’t sit well with me yesterday,” Xedo said and adjusted his glasses. That was all swell and good, but the expectant look from the others at the table didn’t seem to agree with silent treatment.

Bendy sighed. “Well…it’s a bit hard to explain.”

Boris was suddenly beside him. “It wasn’t a bad thing! He was protecting us.”

Bendy blinked and look up at his little brother. Boris was looking around the room pleadingly. Felix spoke up next. “He’s right. No matter what you think, Bendy helped.”

“Woah, woah.” Fin lifted his hands in a stop motion. “Hold the phone there. I don’t think anyone here is questionin’ Bendy’s character. Everyone here knows he’s a standup pain in the tail.”

A few chuckles and nods went around the room.

“Hey.” Bendy frowned.

“So, what’s all this defensiveness about?” Finley asked turning to Bendy. “Why’d we suddenly turn our back on a guy like you Bendy? We come off as shallow or somethin’?”
“What? No Fin! Hell no!” Bendy shook his head. “It just that something happened when we were gettin’ the gear.”

“Not like that was terrifyin’ or anythin’,” Cup muttered into his drink. Mugs sat next to him and nudged his shoulder. “What? That sea monster was horrifying!”

“Guys,” Bendy said. Cup fell quiet with a snort. “Okay, so while we were fighting the sea monster I, uh, had an Ink Attack.” The room was so quiet a pin dropping would have sounded like a gunshot. “And I fought it using my talent.”

“You what!” Dr. Oddswell frowned. “Bendy, I thought I told you--”

“I know! I know doc, but everyone was fighting for their lives!” Bendy glared right back at the lizard sitting at the head of the table. “I couldn’t do nothing!”

The doctor narrowed his eyes but didn’t speak.

Granny did. “Go on dear.”

Bendy took a deep breath. “So, I used my powers and blacked out.”

“Oh no, so you passed out in the fight?” Sammy fidgeted with his tail.

“No, he changed,” Cup said.

“He what?” Yakko asked.

“Weird time for a costume change, isn’t it?” Wakko asked.

“No way! That’s how anime girls do it all the time!” Dot said proudly.

“Ani-what?” Mugs blinked.

“Guys!” Bendy barked.

“Sorry.” Mugs smiled sheepishly.

“What do you mean by change?” Xedo asked.

“The pipsqueak--”

“Stop calling me that!” Bendy snapped at Cuphead.

Cup smirked and didn’t look at him. “Was suddenly seven feet tall with giant claws, sharp fangs, and red and black eyes that could scare a nightmare. He gave off a chill that winter would be jealous of.”

Boris plopped down and frowned at Cuphead. “He was protecting us.”

Cup lifted his hands in a gesture of surrender. “I’m not saying he wasn’t! He cussing saved my skin! I’m just saying it was pretty freaky looking at first.”

“So what? It was the Illness, right?” Finley shrugged.

“I haven’t ever heard of the Ink Illness doing that to someone,” Dr. Oddswell disagreed.

“Could it have been that cog? It did some freaky stuff to Cala and the spiders, right?” Mugs suggested weakly from behind his scarf.
“Then, why didn’t it do anything to us?” Felix asked.

“Maybe it affected each of you in a different way?” Holly spoke up quietly.

“I didn’t notice anything.” Felix rubbed his chin. He looked up at the other questers.

Cuphead shook his head slowly. “Nope, nothing for me.”

“I didn’t feel anything.” Boris’ ears fell. Bendy shrugged. It was all a blur.

“I...went numb,” Mugs said.

“What?” Felix asked.

Mugs blinked. “That’s when my chest went numb. I was touching the gear. I haven’t felt any pain since.”

Cup looked at him with a wide eye. “Are...you okay?”

Mugs frowned. “I think so.” He touched his shirt. “Just a little numb.”

“Huh, interesting,” Dr. Oddswell said, steepling his padded fingers together.

“Indeed.” Dr. Boo’s glasses flashed in the morning light. Mugs gulped and sunk into his scarf. Cup put a hand on his shoulder in a rather comforting way.

“So, what do we do?” Cup looked at the doctor and Bendy.

Bendy shrugged. “No clue man. Honestly, I thought it was a demon thing. But hey, maybe it’s a gear thing. What do I know? I don’t remember anything.”

Felix crossed his arms. “We’ll have to do research. See what the gear’s affects really are, and if there is a way to stop them.”

“I’m all for it, except let’s not make anyone a giant monster, deal?” Bendy asked.

Cup and Mugs snorted.

“Can we trust that research to you, Mr. Cat?” Dr. Oddswell asked. Felix’ ears perked.

“Absolutely!” Felix grinned.


“Actually Bendy, I have a different favor to ask of you,” Dr. Oddswell said slowly. Bendy turned to see a strange glint in Dr. Oddswell’s buggy eyes. His tongue flickered out of his mouth for an instant.

“If you wouldn’t mind, Mr. Felix. I’d like to help with researching the cog as well.” Holly turned towards the cat.

“I’m sorry Miss May, but I will be needing your services as well.” Oddswell turned to her. She blinked. He turned again. “And you, Finley and Wakko, if you don’t mind.”

Wakko looked over and swallowed a huge, truly anyone else would suffocate with that much, mouth-full of food. “‘Kay, what for?”
“A little experiment.” Dr. Oddswell tapped his fingertips together. If Bendy didn’t know any better, he’d say the doctor was...excited?

Finley raised a brow, his huge ears dropped. “Yeah? How long will this take?”

“Anywhere between half an hour to the rest of the day,” Oddswell said. Bendy puckered his lips. All day?

“And what is this experiment?” Yakko asked.

“Do we get to blow something up?” Wakko asked hopefully.

“I certainly hope not.” Oddswell chuckled. “At least not today.”

“It’s about the pain medication. Miss May had some interesting theories. I need each of you to help, but it’s only if you wish.” Dr. Oddswell said.

Bendy rolled his eyes. Like he would tell the doc ‘no’ after everything he’d done. “If it helps, I’m fine for whatever.”

“Sure.” Wakko shrugged. “I could go for some mad sciencing.”

Finley looked between Wakko and Bendy before shrugging. “Alright, I guess.”

“Excellent.” Dr. Oddswell smiled. “When you are done here, meet me upstairs.” The lizard got up and went for the staircase. “I will have things ready for you.”

They waited for the doctor to disappear. “Anyone else feel like they just agreed to be a dissected frog on a table?”

“Is that a promise?” Wakko asked with a cheeky grin.

“If only you’re that lucky,” Holly added, putting her chin in her hand as she looked at where Oddswell had disappeared. She blinked and quickly turned to them. “Not that I would let the professor try any of my more dangerous theories,” she said quickly, waving her hands. She looked sideways at Finley. “I wonder why he asked you to help.”

Finley grinned and shrugged. He leaned his chair back and folded his arms behind his head. The perfect image of relaxation. Uh-huh. Bendy shared a look with Cup. The guy was glancing at the fox with a flat deadpan that proved how much he believed that.

With breakfast winding down, various people began filtering out. The fox brothers went to go hunt down an apartment. The other two Warners and their guardian were going to a hospital on the other side of the city to organize an event at the city center. Felix got Cup, Mugs, and surprisingly Sammy to come with him to the university library and Sheba’s store to go find anything they could on the gear, the doll, Ink Illness, the Ink Machine or the Micco. Holly gave them pointers on the places to skip since she had already tried.

Granny put herself to work cleaning up the dishes and kitchen. Fin and Bendy offered to help, but she shooed them away. Eventually, there was no reason to stay and Bendy, Boris, Wakko, Finley, and Holly headed upstairs to face the doctor.

Bendy was surprised they didn’t go into the lab room but in one of the guest’s rooms. There were three beds set up beside each other. There were three nightstands next to each of the beds. Shiny tools sat on them. There was a wider table on the other side of the room, across from the foot of the
beds. A couple of books, inkwells, paper, beakers, and pens sat on it. Oh boy, it definitely looked somewhere between mad science and evil cult. Finley gulped.

“Ah!” Oddswell popped up into view. Finley and Bendy jumped. Wakko laughed at them. “There you are! Good timing. Dr. Boo will be back in a minute. Miss May, mind preparing the samples?” Holly nodded and started walking towards a desk.

“Woah doc,” Bendy said with a twitch of his tail. “Mind explaining what you’re doing?”

“If you’d like, I can explain what I’ve been doing, Professor.” Holly turned to him. The lizard nodded for her to speak.

She put her hands together, turning to them. “I collected some samples from Wakko’s attack last week. Since then, I’ve been testing runes on them to try and figure out what exactly is the nature of the illness. A few of them have the potential to help during an attack.” She turned to Oddswell. “That is what this is about, right?”

“Correct, Miss May.” Dr. Oddswell pulled on some gloves. “Each of you choose a bed and remove your shirts.” Bendy glanced at Fin and Wakko.

Holly glanced at Oddswell. “Do you think it will affect them, even though there’s no attack?” A bright glint entered his eyes in answer.

“Okay, but remember, I don’t wear pants!” Wakko pulled his long sleeve off.

Bendy rolled his eyes. “Oh, shush.” Wakko laughed. Bendy and Fin also removed their shirts.

“Woah Bends, what’s with the bandages?” Finley asked.

“From the quest, I’m fine.” Bendy brushed it off.

“I’m starting to wonder ‘bout that,” Fin muttered. Tsk, like Bendy was going to explain it all over again. No, the doll could stay a secret mostly. Fin took the far bed by the window, Wakko the middle, and Bendy the last. Boris stood next to him.

“Okay, doc,” Fin said.

“Today, gentlemen, you have agreed to help me with the next step in combating Ink Illness. If you are willing, you will be the test subjects for a new form of treatment.” Dr. Oddswell placed his hands behind his back and looked each of them in the eye. “Rune magic.”

“Magic.” Finley sounded disbelieving.

“Hey man, that’s what the Ink Machine is,” Bendy said. Fin tilted his head and hummed in acknowledgment. “So, you want to magic us. Is it a cure?”

“Not in so many words.” Dr. Oddswell adjusted his glasses. “It’s to help the symptoms, not cure it.” Bendy nodded in understanding.

“Now, I need to warn you three. You each are at different stages of the Illness--”

“Wait.” Boris cut him off. “Finley!”

Bendy and Boris turned shocked faces at the fox. His ears dropped and face fell slack. Wakko seemed unsurprised and pulled out a taco...from somewhere.
“Gee doc, what about patient confidentiality?” Fin muttered.

“You’re a subject, not a patient. You volunteered,” Dr. Oddswell countered.

“How long!” Bendy demanded.

“Only a couple weeks.” Finley frowned. “I’ve only had two attacks.”

“Does Sammy know?” Boris asked with wide puppy eyes.

“No, and I rather it stay that way!” Fin crossed his arms.

“Dr. Boo?” Bendy asked.

“Only him and the people in this room,” Finley huffed.

“He is in the first stage, Wakko in the second and Bendy…” Dr. Oddswell turned to him with narrowed eyes. Bendy fought off the dread that threatened to twist his stomach. He’d come that far along? He didn’t even know the doc had stages assigned! Then again, he might have said something about it, but that had been months ago. He couldn’t remember. Anyway, to be at a point where the doc could give him a look like that. Maybe he did have a reason to have been worried on the mountain after that first one.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, we get the picture,” Bendy said quickly. “And this junk is going to help.” No reason to think about that junk.

“There is a risk. We don’t know what side effects there are,” Dr. Oddswell said.

“Runes are known to be touchy,” Holly added quietly. “I tested on the ink from Wakko’s attack, but that doesn’t guarantee they will have the same effects on you three.”

“So pain, third arms, a chance to turn inside out,” Wakko said licking his lips after finishing his taco. “Sounds swell.” Fin and Bendy gave him alarmed looks.

Dr. Oddswell chuckled. “Most likely not something so dramatic, but yes. We aren’t sure what’s going to happen.” Holly nodded in agreement.

“Oh joy,” Bendy grumbled. Boris’ ears were down, his tail tucked.

“There is also one other risk I should warn you about,” Dr. Oddswell said with a serious gaze turned to each of them. “These experiments could trigger an attack.”

Bendy stiffened. Finley grit his teeth and clenched his fists.

Holly turned toward Oddswell, confusion written across her face.

Wakko’s smile dropped for once. Dr. Oddswell frowned and adjusted his glasses again. “Each of you has your own patterns when it comes to the illness. Finley, your attacks take place once every three weeks roughly, Wakko, once every other, and Bendy, every other day. Each of you are on the cusp of another attack. The shock of these treatments, especially the stronger ones, could very well start an attack.” Oddswell sighed. “This illness isn’t normal. I don’t have to explain it to you. You all know that the ink responds to you and situations oddly.”

Bendy lifted his chin. Well. That’s a load of stardust. His attack triggered? Fine. “Then let’s do this.”

“Wait a second there, pal.” Fin turned sharp eyes on him. “You’re are the worst off here! Aren’t
there only three stages! If you have an attack you could--”

“*I won’t Finley,*” Bendy barked. Finley flinched. “*I have too much to do.*” He crossed his arms. “*Let’s just get started. I’m still willing.*”

The lizard nodded. He looked to Wakko who hesitantly nodded. Finley, ears down and a scowl on his face, growled. “*Fine.*”

“*Bendy.*” Holly put a hand on his arm. She looked at him with a soft expression. “*You know, you don’t need to take the risk. We have Finley and Wakko. Do you think it’s wise to push yourself like this after what happened with the cog?*” There was a taint of worry in her eyes.

Bendy looked up at her, then back at Boris. His brother was giving him the saddest puppy face he had ever seen. Silently begging him to back down, to say no, to not take the risk. Bendy looked down at the sheets.

“*But I’m not the only one sitting in stage three, am I?*” Bendy asked.

“*No, you are not,*” Dr. Oddswell said. Bendy looked to the doctor. His scaly face was unreadable.

“*I appreciate your concern,*” Bendy said slowly. “*But Dr. Oddswell asked me for a reason. Things might be different between the stages, and I’m probably the toughest person he’s got. If I can give the others more time, or even just a little comfort, it’s worth the risk.*”

She sighed and nodded, moving away.

“*Bendy,*” Boris whispered.

“*Bro.*” Bendy smiled back. “*You’d do the same, wouldn’t you?*”

Boris’ shoulders dropped. He nodded sadly. “*Don’t worry, bro. We’ll find some helpful things to add to the pills and be off on another quest in no time.*” Bendy smirked. “*Think of a prank we can pull on Cups and Mugs.*” Boris gave him a small smile and nodded.

“*Well said, Bendy.*” Dr. Oddswell smiled his little smirk. “*Then, let’s begin.*”

The doctor turned to the table. “*Miss May, let us start with the Joy rune.*”

Holly nodded and picked up three strips of cloth. Each had a symbol written on it. Bendy assumed it was the Joy rune. One by one, she approached each of them and tied the cloth around their wrist.

Letting out a deep breath, she stepped back as she finished with him. “*As we’ve said before, we’re not entirely sure what’s going to happen. So, please lay back and try to relax as much as possible.*”

“*Alright sweetie.*” Fin smiled and laid back like he was king of the world. Bendy smirked and laid back.

“*Do I get a kiss after, nurse?*” Wakko winked.

Holly blinked but then shrugged. “*Sure, if you want, Wakko.*”

“*What!*” Finley barked.

Bendy snickered. “*Now, hold on, I already asked her on a date, Wakko.*”

“*Double what!*” Finley barked again. “*Gee! You fellas don’t hold back! I’m missin’ out here!*”
Holly shook her head at them. “Activate the runes, Miss May,” Dr. Oddswell seemed completely unfazed. He had a clipboard in hand ready to take notes.

Holly held out her hand and suddenly all three bracelets lit up with piercing light.

Bendy had to wink one eye shut. Dr. Oddswell stepped up to Wakko. “Do you feel anything?”

“A tinge, but that’s about it, doc.” Wakko shrugged.

“And you two?” Dr. Oddswell glanced at Fin and Bendy.

“It’s a little warm, not uncomfortable, just nice,” Finley added.

“Nothing for me doc. Though, I did almost go blind,” Bendy said. The lizard’s pen blurred across his clipboard.

Holly was frowning, hand on her chin as she thought. She muttered something under her breath.

“Deactivate them, Holly.” The light faded and went out. “Gentleman, I’m going to ask you to leave them on please,” Dr. Oddswell said. Bendy shrugged but did so.

“Next, let’s try the Sun rune, Miss May,” Dr. Oddswell said, stepping back to the table and moving stuff around.

Boris knelt by Bendy’s bed. “You okay?” he asked.

“Doin’ swell.” Bendy gave him a reassuring smile.

Holly returned with another strip of cloth with a different symbol. She spoke quietly as she worked. “So, Joy is a self-explanatory rune. This next one, Sun, was originally meant to harness the strength and energy that the sun gives living things.” She traced the edge of the symbol. “That’s why it was created to look a bit like the sun.”

“The only sunshine I see is standing right next to me.” Bendy smiled.

Finley snorted. “That was horrible.”

“You do better,” Bendy challenged. Finley hummed thoughtfully.

“That was very sweet, Bendy, thank you.” She smiled at him.

“Your smile is the light of my day, the warmth of my heart, and the strength of my soul,” Finley said dramatically. “Without you, I am in a pit of darkness. Your coming and going brings my light near and far—”

“Alright, thank you Shakespeare.” Bendy rolled his eyes and laughed.

Finley grinned. “What? I’m a man of the theater. I have class.”

“I think you were putting it on a bit thick,” Bendy said.

Holly raised a brow at both of them. “I’m glad you both have a sense of humor,” she said wryly. “But if we could get back to the present?” She put a hand on her hip.

“Oh wait, I have one.” Wakko sat up. He cleared his throat.
“Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no; it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth’s unknown, although his height be taken.”

Holly stared at him. She blinked several times. Then she pointed at Wakko. “That one wins.”

“What the hell, man?” Bendy blinked.

“What? I thought we were quotin’ Shakespeare.” Wakko stuck out his tongue with a smile and a shrug.

Finley shook his head on his pillow. “Will you Warners never stop surprising me?”

Bendy went over the lines in his head. “Wait a second, did you comment on height in there? His height be taken...Are you calling me small!” Wakko grinned. “Why you--”

“Gentlemen!” Dr. Oddswell frowned. “May we begin?”

“Sorry, doc.” Wakko flopped back on the bed. Bendy grumbled curses to himself but laid back as well.

Holly repeated the process and the new wristlet lit up, brighter than the last.

“Woah,” Finley said.

“Yes? Explain what you feel,” Oddswell said.

“It tingles, but it’s my whole arm. It’s a bit hot,” Fin said.

“Too hot,” Wakko said. “I’m starting to melt here, doc.” Wakko brushed sweat away from his forehead.

Bendy agreed. It was hot and getting hotter. “It’s like the sun is beatin’ down on me, and it’s only inching closer.” There was also something else. Bendy couldn’t really explain it. “I think I’m getting...dizzy? My head feels funny.”

“Can you explain, Bendy?” Dr. Oddswell approached the side of his bed. “Funny how?”

“Kinda like my head is floating. Like I move it and half goes where I want to and the other takes a moment to catch up. It’s really weird,” Bendy said. Dr. Oddswell frowned and wrote.

The doctor hummed. “Deactivate them, Holly.” He wrote in his notes. “You may remove those, gentlemen.”

The light went out immediately. Holly frowned, looking at the bracelets and then her hand. Dr. Oddswell leaned toward her. “Interesting findings,” he muttered. “We’ll try the Need rune next.
Hopefully, it will focus on the Illness and not on any of their desires for other things. Having a mountain of money or food appear suddenly could be a mess.” The lizard smirked.

Holly smiled but then shook her head at them. “It’s not like it would stay. Need only gives the illusion of what the possessor’s greatest necessity is.”

He nodded. “How are you holding up?”

“I’ve plenty of energy left,” she replied. “I’ll let you know when I start getting tired.” He nodded again.

“Need?” Wakko asked. “I have a need.”

Bendy snorted. “Food.”

Wakko grinned. “How’d you know?” Finley laughed.

Holly gave Wakko half-lidded look. “I believe that’s what’s called a want at this point, Wakko.”

“Alright then, how about a girlfriend?” Finley suggested.

“Oh, I definitely need a girlfriend,” Bendy said.

“No way, what you need is a starfallen vacation.” Finley pointed at him. “And a massage.”

“I’ve actually never had one of those,” Bendy admitted.

“Oh man, you have missed out in life!” Finley said. “We have to do something about that.”

“What’s a massage?” Boris asked meekly. His ears perked.

“Heaven Boris. All those tense muscles relax. You feel like a new person!” Finley told him. Boris tilted his head.

“I think we can begin, Miss May. I doubt they’ll stop.” Dr. Oddswell sighed.

Holly hid a small giggle behind her hand and activated the third bracelet. This time, the light was softer, almost a white-blue color instead of the intense yellow the others had been.

Pain.

Instant pain.

Sharp needles all over him. Bendy tensed and balled his fists into the bed. Wakko or Finley cried out, Bendy couldn’t tell which. Maybe it was both. It was like he was getting pulled in every direction by tiny needles. Taking him apart piece by piece.

The next moment it stopped. Bendy panted for breath. He went limp against the mattress. Boris was leaned over him with wide, concerned eyes. “Bendy! Bendy!”

“I’m okay.” Bendy swallowed. It wasn’t as bad as an attack.

“Ah cuss!” Finley said. Bendy looked over to see the small fox bent over. He was sitting up, hands to his mouth, ink dripping from his mouth and cupped hands. Dr. Oddswell stepped over and handed him a towel as he coughed more ink into it.
“Miss May.” Dr. Oddswell’s voice remained calm and cool, but there a hint more authority in it. “Activate the Joy rune for our subject here.”

She had been staring at Finley in horror but seemed to come to herself at his words. Instantly, the bright light lit up Finley’s bracelet.

His hunched over form relaxed marginally, his shoulders fell. “That...that helps,” he croaked and coughed more ink up with a disgusted look on his face. His lips pulled back from his muzzle, showing ink-stained fangs. “Cussing gross still.”

Oddswell nodded and put a hand on his shoulder. He then stepped back and picked up his clipboard. He turned to Wakko and Bendy. “What did you experience?”

“Pain,” Wakko said.

“Like a million tiny hooks trying to rip me apart,” Bendy grumbled. He looked back at the fox. He leaned back a bit and sighed. He spat at the now ink-stained towel. Seemed the attack ended pretty quick. Boris got up and left. Bendy blinked.

“And you, Finley?” Dr. Oddswell asked.

“That cussing hurt!” he barked. “I felt like my gut and chest was being ripped open!”

Dr. Oddswell narrowed his buggy eyes. “Just your chest?”

“Yeah.” Finley frowned and wiped the towel against his mouth. Boris came back in with a glass of water. He went to Finley and offered it to the fox with a small smile. “Thanks kid.” Finley took some and rinsed his mouth. He spat it on the towel before drinking some and grimacing.

“And the Joy rune during your attack?” Oddswell asked.

Finley blinked and sipped a bit more water. “Hard to say. It wasn’t like it made the pain any less just...” He shook his head. “More bearable? I guess?”

Dr. Oddswell hummed. There went his pen again. He looked happy. Or at least Dr. Oddswell version of happy: a little smirk, a flick of a tongue.

Boris was by his side again. “You still okay?” he asked. Bendy nodded. He was tired, a little sore, but fine.

“What was that?” Bendy asked.

“Not sure,” Dr. Oddswell muttered.

“Great.” Wakko frowned. “Are we done?”

“Not quite.” Dr. Oddswell pointed at him without looking up. “Miss May.”

Holly sighed. “This next one is a combination of two runes. The first is called Day. It connects with your personal timeline, if you will. The second is called Delay. It’s a slowing rune. Essentially, combined with the first, it takes your personal timeline and lengthens out your time. In the past, when people have used this combination on themselves they’ve mentioned almost seeing an aura when something outside their timeline moved. Like a foreshadowing of the movement. So, don’t feel weird if you see something like that.” She quirked her mouth. “Did that make sense?”

Wakko blinked. “Sorry, I was going over my will again. What did you say?” Wakko grinned with
“Shush you.” Bendy frowned.

Wakko chuckled. “I’m not Yu, I’m Wakko, Yu is—”

“Don’t you even try that with me!” Bendy cut him off, which only caused him to laugh harder. Bendy glared. He was not going to ride that carousel of confusion ever again.

“I think we’re good, doll,” Finley said weakly from his bed. He looked a bit worn out. Of course, he would be. Ink Attacks take their toll.

“Should he really still be part of this?” Boris asked with low ears.

“He’ll recover from the attack’s effects, but we won’t need to worry about him having another attack,” Dr. Oddswell said.

“I’m good,” Finley said. “I can keep going.” Bendy sighed. Stubborn fox.

Holly nodded and activated the next one. Bendy didn’t really feel much. Maybe a little heavier, but that was about it. He glanced over at the doctor and nearly jumped. There were two of him. One trailed the other as he moved from one bed to the other.

“What do you feel?” The first asked.

“I feel really cussing confused.” Finley blinked. And blinked.

“What do you feel?” the second Oddswell stepped into the first and asked the same question. Bendy blinked.

“Uh, interesting. Can you elaborate?” one of the Oddswells said.

“I feel really cussing confused,” Finley said again. No, there was a second laying with the first.

“Like everything is an after image or there are two of them?” Finley waved his hand in front of himself. There were three arms for a minute. Oh man. Bendy was going to be sick. This ride was weird as all get out.

“Profesor, can you understand what they’re saying?” Holly asked.

“Uh, interesting. Can you elaborate?” Oddswell said. Bendy needed to block out these double conversations that were blending together.

“I’m not sure, Holly. I think we should deactivate for now,” Dr. Oddswell said. Bendy saw his hands move to cover the sides of his head...before he moved them. Then, he moved them. Then, they did it again.

“Professor, can you understand what they’re saying?”

Suddenly, the worlds sucked back into focus liked he’d just surfaced from deep under the water.

Bendy slowly sat up. He shook his head. No double images. “What just happened?” He looked up to see one Holly and Dr. Oddswell.

“I don’t know, but I don’t think I want to do it again,” Finley said. “My head is spinning.”
“Reminds me of the fourth wall but with addition instead of multiplication.” Wakko shrugged.

“The what?” Dr. Oddswell said.

Wakko smirked. “My talent before it stopped. It was kinda like that.”

“How did you ever get anything done?” Finley looked a little pale. “I think I was on a spinning ride at an amusement park, but the ride was my brain.”

“Practice buddy, worlds of practice.” Wakko grinned.

Bendy frowned. “It’s one of the reasons your insane, isn’t it?”

“I’m insane?” Wakko put a finger on his chin.

Bendy couldn’t tell if he was being serious or not.

“Wakko, since you have some experience, what do you think? Do you believe these runes could help with the Ink Illness?” Dr. Oddswell asked with a raised brow.

Wakko didn’t even hesitate. “Nope.”

“Mind explaining?” Dr. Oddswell asked.

Wakko took a deep breath. Bendy cut in before he could get weird. “In easy to understand terms.”

Wakko released his breath in a puff, like Bendy just stole the wind from his sails...Which he probably had, but he didn’t feel any remorse.

“Fine,” Wakko pouted. “The only way messing with time would help is if ya reverse it, and let me tell you, that never goes over well. That whole ‘butterfly effect’ thingy happens and the next thing ya know, you destroy the personal library of Yin--something-or-other and change history.”

Holly tilted her head in horrified fascination. “You say that as if it was from experience?”

Wakko blinked and tilted his head as well. “Did I?”

Bendy facepalmed. These Warners.

“Regardless, I think we have our results,” Dr. Oddswell said with a tap of his pen.

“Professor, there’s still one more we can try.” Holly was back at the desk, writing.

“Oh yes.” He straightened up and helped her write. “Very good, Miss May.”

“Is the end in sight, at least?” Finley asked.

“This is the last one with positive potential.” Holly gave him a reassuring smile.

“We ain’t testing any of the negative ones, I hope,” he joked.

Dr. Oddswell lifted a paper. “Not today.”

Holly raised a wry brow. “You don’t want to see what Chalice did.”

They both paused and looked at each other. All three of the boys shared a look before gulping. Dr. Oddswell stepped away from the table. “This one is Courage.”
“Does Bendy really need any more of that?” Finley asked with a smirk.

“Me? It’s Wakko that doesn’t have any self-preservation,” Bendy pointed.

“Death really ain’t that bad of a guy,” Wakko mused casually. “He’s terrible at checkers, though.” Bendy blinked but decided it was better not to ask.

Holly smiled at Finley. “You’re right. You all are very brave souls already. However, the reason I chose to test this one was because of the root of this rune. An old meaning of courage is the heart or spirit’s strength. This rune is designed to find the starring quality of the spirit and enhance it. In a sense, it helps you focus on your strengths rather than your fears or weaknesses.”

Bendy thought back on his last attack. How it felt like he was cut off from everything but the pain and how he wasn’t even sure he was dead or alive anymore. “That...might be a good one.” Bendy found himself saying. Boris looked at him curiously, but Bendy focused on Holly.

Dr. Oddswell signaled for her to go.

This time, when the rune lit up it turned an auburn color, barely lighting up the lines.

Bendy felt a rush of energy. He felt like he woke up. Suddenly, the soreness and some sort of dreariness that he didn’t realize he was carrying around with him dropped away like water off a duck’s back. He felt brand new and like he could take on anything.

“Wowza!” Wakko said. “Can I get this in my morning coffee?”

“No kidding.” Finley sat up grinning. “I feel like I could take on a bull and not break a sweat! This thing has some kick!”

Dr. Oddswell’s pen went flying.

Holly grinned, letting out a long breath. “I was hoping.”

Bendy was tempted to get up, go do something, but he had to stay. This was important. He had to stay.

Holly looked at Dr. Oddswell. “This looks like it will be even more useful than joy,” she said with a brightness in her eyes.

“It appears so.” Dr. Oddswell smirked again. “Okay, deactivate it, Miss May.”

As quickly as the rush came, it vanished...Except, it felt less like him growing tired and more like a wall of bricks had been dropped on him.

He heard Wakko grunt in surprise. Bendy’s head spun. If Courage on was a rush, turning it off was a crash. He put his head in his hand to stop the spinning.

“Bendy?” Boris was next to him again. “What happened?”

“That is one bad crash after the ride,” Bendy muttered. “I’m exhausted.”

“Oh?” Oddswell asked.

“Yeah, it’s like I ran a marathon,” Finley whined. He slouched like he was about to fall over. “What the hell? Can’t the rush just be that and go back to normal?”
“Guess it takes energy to make energy,” Wakko chuckled.

“If we could find another source to fuel it though…” Holly muttered. She glanced towards the door, a curious expression on her face.

Then, to Bendy’s horror, a very familiar sensation of burning started. “Starfallen cussing damnit!” he hissed. “Doc! Problem!” Bendy growled just as his stomach twisted and throat closed up.

“Bendy!” Boris was by him in an instant, cloth already ready. When had he gotten that? Bendy didn’t really have time to think about it as the painful fire became a twisted inferno. He hacked and choked, gasping for air.

“Holly! Activate the Joy rune! Don’t touch the Courage one,” Oddswell ordered. The Joy rune lit up as he was still speaking. Bendy heaved a breath and couldn’t hold back the shriek as it felt like icy air cut down his burning throat and into his shriveled lungs. He coughed and ink spilled out in a gush. It didn’t take long for him to go blind from the ink dripping into his face. Everything became fire and ice as it seemed that his senses were turned off one by one. Pain enveloped him completely. He could only make out the burning of his insides, the screams he knew were his own, but seemed far away, the horror of his touch slipping on liquid. Melting. Disappearing.

But this time, there was an awareness, not an out of body experience, but more of a clarity of mind. Even though he was screaming and writhing and suffering, he knew he was. He wasn’t lost in it like every other time. He was alive. There was terror and horror and pain, but it was also an attack. He had his brother here, and the doctor, Holly, Finley, and Wakko. He knew it. He could get through this. He would survive. That’s what he focused on. Through the gushes of ink, the pain and fear, he clung to the clarity that this was an attack, and he would get through it. That people that cared were around him.

And then it finally ebbed, the pain decreased, the feeling of his skin melting and his chest burning began to fade.

“Give him a moment,” Dr. Oddswell said.

Ah. Damp towel. Boris?

“That was terrifying,” Finley said. “He’s going to be okay, right doc?”

“He will be,” Dr. Oddswell said. “Simply give him time to recover.”

“How long has he been like this?” Dr. Oddswell asked.

“This is only the second time it’s been this bad,” Boris answered.

Bendy groaned.

“Bendy,” Boris said. The bed shifted. Bendy reached up for his face. “One minute.” He felt the towel again. He waited for Boris to finish and then blinked his eyes open. It was a circle of concerned faces...and Dr. Oddswell.

“Hey.” Bendy lifted one side of his mouth in a smile. “You all have the dumbest faces.”

“You jerk!” Boris laughed. “We were worried.” His brother relaxed instantly.

“How are you feeling?” Dr. Oddswell asked.
“Like I was hit by a truck,” Bendy admitted. “And then, not allowed to sleep for two days.”

Dr. Oddswell frowned and looked at his clipboard. “I don’t think using the Courage rune is a good idea, Miss May. The side effects are very serious for the subjects. Exhaustion is a dangerous thing for them.”

Finley barked a laugh. “No kidding! I couldn’t tell!” He threw his hands up. “I think I lost three years of my life to fear alone there, doc!”

“Your sarcasm is noted,” was the lizard's only reply. “Did you notice any difference, Bendy?”

“Yeah.” Bendy sighed and tried to sit up. Wakko had an oddly serious look on his face. He put a hand on Bendy’s shoulder and shook his head. Bendy relaxed back, too tired to even feel annoyed. “I could think clearer. I knew I could handle it. The attack didn’t just sweep me away like it usually does. I could actually think for once.”

Dr. Oddswell narrowed his eyes. He nodded. “I believe we are done for today.” He looked toward Holly for confirmation.

She nodded. “The other runes I tested are far too dangerous to use on people.”

“So, that’s it?” Finley asked. “We’re done?”

“Yes, you can dress again,” Oddswell said. Finley quickly scooped up his shirt and pulled it over his head. “Although,” Bendy swore everyone in the room tensed. “There is...one last experiment I have.”

Finley groaned.

“I know young man, but this will most likely help you recover.” Dr. Oddswell lifted a thin beaker that held a clear liquid. Holly blinked and stared. Her eyes narrowed.

“What is it?” Bendy mumbled. The runes had been...well, less than fun. He wasn’t sure he would be able to take anything more.

“Yes professor, what is it?” Holly gave Oddswell a hard look.

The lizard blinked and looked at Holly like she had said something strange. “Why Miss May, you should recognize it. It’s the sample you brought me. Yes, I have been looking it over, and the compound is excellent. This should help rejuvenate anyone after something like rune work or exhaustion.”

Holly put a hand over her face. “But the person I saw use that wasn’t a regular toon, professor. I told you that. We don’t know what exactly that is, whether it’s specific to them. That’s why I asked you to look at it.”

He tilted his head. “And I did, Miss May. It’s exciting to test it. This should help our subjects recover from their exhaustion much faster.” He almost actually sounded excited.

“Look doc, if it’s anything like the Courage rune, I’m good.” Finley shook his head.

“No, no.” The doctor shook his head. “This is a chemical compound made purely with science. You’ll be fine as long as you aren’t allergic, and you haven’t admitted to any allergy.”

Wakko jumped up and snatched one. He had his sweater back on, hat in place, and a childish grin
spread wide. “Sure, why not?” He tilted his head back and gulped. “Ah! Oh, sweet! I like that.” He
smacked his lips. “Can I have another?”

Oddswell raised a brow. “No. These are for testing only, not casual drinking.”

Wakko pouted.

“How do you feel?” Dr. Oddswell asked slowly.

Wakko hopped up and walked toward the door. “Like my old self.” And then he left. Dr. Oddswell
frowned at him leaving.

“Well, if anything happens, he’ll come back,” the doctor reasoned.

“You forget he’s a Warner. He could come back just to mess with everyone.” Holly was still looking
out the door where he’d disappeared.

Finley sighed. “Fine. This is my last sacrifice for science...At least, for today.” The fox took the other
beaker and threw it back like it was a shot. “Oh, wow. Okay.” He put it down and ran his tongue
over his teeth. “Not bad,” Finley said.

“What do you feel?” Dr. Oddswell asked.

“Energized. Not like that spell, just like I had some good sleep.” Finley shrugged and smiled. “This
one has my approval.” Bendy was finally able to sit up. “Hey pal, you should try this. I bet it would help.” Finley offered him the last beaker.

Bendy looked at it and shrugged. Why not? The others were fine. “Sure.” He took it and drank it. It
was sweet, like lemonade, but a touch more mild and a little fruity. “Uh, weird taste,” he said.

“Nice right?” Finley asked. “It’s a bit of a rush but not a crazy one.”

Bendy waited for the apparent ‘rush,’ but instead, his stomach gave a painful twist. “Oh c’mon,” he
groaned and dropped the beaker, curling into himself. His tail twisted around himself as he cringed
and withered.

“Bendy!” Boris had a hand on his shoulder.

“Bendy? What’s happening?” Dr. Oddswell, for once, sounded concerned.

“Oddswell,” Holly snapped. “Get something to get that out of his system!”

The doctor moved quickly. He was gone one moment and back a second later. He pressed
something against his lips and tilted his head back. “Drink this, Bendy.”

Something bittered washed down his mouth. He nearly gagged before swallowing. “Holly, get that
trash can.”

The next moment the can was shoved below his face. His stomach emptied almost instantly. He
gagged on the horrible mix of sweet and bitter that invaded his mouth. Ugh. His poor breakfast.
When he was done, the can disappeared. He was left shaken, just focusing on breathing. “Wh-what
the cu-cuss was in that?” he sadly whimpered. Boris wrapped him in a tight hug. His spiked tail
twisted around the both of them.

“Can he have some water?” Boris asked.
“I’m sorry, Bendy,” Oddswell said. “It was my miscalculation. I didn’t consider you being a demon as a factor.”

“What does that have to do with anything?” Fin demanded. “Did it almost poison him? Did I almost poison him!”

“The responsibility is mine,” Oddswell said, going to the table and bringing back a glass of water. Boris took it and offered it to him. “One of the ingredients is an extraction from a rare flower. The White Egret Flower. It has a purifying and rejuvenating factor.”

“So?” Finley snapped. “What does that have to do with anything?”

“It’s a plant that comes from the Upper and is a remedy made by the angels. Apparently it’s poison to demons.” The doctor sighed. Bendy emptied the glass and just relaxed against his brother. He would think about moving later.

“Well, that’s really swell there, doc,” Finley said in an icy tone.

“Fin don’t,” Bendy mumbled. “He’s just trying to help.”

“Yeah? I don’t like help that nearly kills my friends,” Finley snapped. “You good, Boris?”

“Yes,” Boris said softly. His grip around Bendy tightened a little.

“I’m going for a walk before I do somethin’ I regret. Be back later.” Finley marched out the door. Bendy could imagine steam coming out of his large, downturned ears.

Holly sat on a chair nearby, hand over face. “I should have just stopped him. I should have known better.”

“Don’t.” Bendy swallowed. His throat felt burned.

“We don’t want you to beat yourselves up. You’re trying to help people. None of us knew,” Boris said. Bendy smiled and nodded. He was really tired. A nap was okay, right?

Holly looked up. She smiled weakly, nodding.

“But, um, Dr. Oddswell, where did you get a thing like that?” Boris asked. “From angels?” One of his ears perked. Bendy kept his eyes open, curious despite his exhaustion.

The doctor paused in his note-taking to look up at them. “Holly brought me the sample. I looked it over and was amazed by it. I’m sure their culture has other medicines that are beyond us. Truly, it’s a wonderful elixir, but now I know that there can be side-effects for some individuals.” Holly gave him an exasperated look.

“Holly?” Boris turned his curious eyes on the girl.

She blinked several times, frowning. Then she sighed. “I’m not exactly sure how to explain it,” she said simply. “It’s a long story.”

Bendy shared a deadpan glance with Boris. “I don’t think we’re going anywhere for now,” Boris told her.

She nodded, nose wrinkling. “After you two left to get the part, I went to the Black Hat Casino with the Warners, looking for Alice.”
Alice? Alice! That’s right! She went back! Boris also stiffened with Bendy. “How is she?” Boris asked.

Holly pressed her lips together, looking angry. “Not good. She looked like she’d been stripped to her bare threads. And she wouldn’t tell us what she was doing either. It took us a day to find her in the first place too, because no one at the casino even had realized she’d come back,” Holly fretted.

Oddswell frowned and paused in his cleanup. “Why wouldn’t she tell you what she was doing?”

Boris blinked, his ears falling. Bendy looked down to the floor and thought. He remembered the demon that ran that place. It wasn’t good news. And now, she was being secretive? Sure, Bendy didn’t know Alice well, but the dame had stuck her neck out for them while they were in prison.

“She told me that it would get me in trouble if I knew,” Holly replied. “And I and the Warners really pushed to find out what it was. She just wouldn’t tell.” She paused. “That’s why I decided to try and find out on my own,” she said quietly, looking at her fingers.

Oh, stars. Bendy knew that tone well enough.

Trouble.
“What do you mean it didn’t record the first take?” Mic asked. “Technical difficulties! How do we even get technical difficulties?” Mic sighed and turned to the audience. “Sorry for that ladies and gentlemen! Seems we had some troubles! Please know that TAP is very happy for the kudos and comments. We thank you very much and we hope these problems with posting notes doesn’t happen too often. Enjoy.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Bendy’s tail twitched with nerves. What in the world was going on here? Was Alice in some kinda trouble? He forced himself to sit up and shift a little away from Boris’ warmth. Now wasn’t the time to fall asleep. “What did you find, Holly?”

Holly tapped her finger. “A lab. I followed her to a lab. There, they connected her to a contraption and started draining her of her magic. The problem is that Alice is putting too much into it. She could ruin her soul with what she’s doing. I got that drink because I was worried about what they were giving her after they drained her.”

“Magic?” Boris asked.

“Draining?” Bendy asked at the same time. They shared a worried glance. A ruined soul sounded bad. Bendy had no idea what that really meant, but Holly had a deathly serious tone about it.

Her mouth tightened. She tapped her finger. “I’ve neglected to explain this fully. I’m sorry.” She paused, looking conflicted. “Alice is an angel.”

Bendy jerked. He couldn’t help it. Holly just slapped him with her words. “Um. What?” Had he heard her right? No! That was ridiculous. An angel...

“Alice is an angel,” Holly repeated, giving him a serious look. “And Black Hat stole something very important from her. Without it, she won’t leave. But Bendy...I think you can find it.” Her voice sounded a bit pleading.

Him? Help an-- “Woah, wait.” Bendy held up his hands. They were shaking, he quickly dropped them again. “Why would an angel help us? What can I do? Why is an angel here? What is she doing down here?”

“Bendy, an angel gave me the map,” Boris said with wide eyes. “At the casino!”

“Alice,” Holly confirmed.

“But why?” Bendy strained and frowned at them. “Aren’t angels suppose...to...” Bendy blinked. “Hate demons?” She had, though. When they first met. She had given him the cold shoulder. She had expected the worst from him. Little by little she had changed her attitude until she was joking
and teasing him like a friend. “But why is she here? And helping us?” Bendy just couldn’t wrap his head around it. She didn’t look like an angel. Well, she was gorgeous enough to be one. But weren’t they supposed to have wings and that little ring thing on their heads?

“Right now Alice is like,” Holly seemed to search for the right word, “an angel in training. She’s not fully fledged yet.”

“Training?” Boris tilted his head in a very dog-like motion. “You can work to become an angel?”

Bendy snorted. “No way, they woulda come for you a long time ago.”

Boris rolled his eyes and shook his head. But he couldn’t completely hide his smile. “What? Are you nuts bro? I stole for most of my childhood.”

“Meh, you’re still the saint out of all of us.” Bendy raised his brows.

“You’re ridiculous,” Boris scoffed.

“So.” Bendy turned back to Holly. “What do we need to do? What can I do to help?” Bendy asked. She had saved the doll, and the last time he saw her he was behind bars. He owed her this at least. It’d been weeks since then.

Holly was giving him an intense stare. A finger was on her chin. “According to Alice, angels and demons can sense each other. So, you should be able to sense her halo.”

Boris’ eyes widened, then narrowed. “Did you ever notice anything, bro?”

Bendy frowned. Did he? He tried to think back. “Well.” He licked his lips and hesitated. “I guess it was always a bit warmer with her around. Like a ray of sunshine.” Bendy shrugged.

“And we’re looking for her halo?” Boris asked. “Is that the ring thing they have in art and stuff?”

Holly shrugged. “I have no idea if it really looks like that. All I know is that it’s like a battery. It stores angelic magic. So, it should feel the same as her.”

Bendy opened his mouth to agree but froze. He’d forgotten about Black Hat. “She’s with Black Hat though.” He had gotten a bad feeling last time he had run into that fella. He was mad back then but held back. If they went there again, Bendy wasn’t so sure it would turn out that way. “It’s not like we can just walk in and take it like a shop.”

Boris furrowed his brows. “Why not Bendy?”

“That guy is trouble,” Bendy said seriously.

Holly nodded. “He’s frightening.”

“So what should we do?” Boris asked. Bendy bit his lip.

“When I went in there before, I used a concealing rune,” Holly offered. Then she frowned. “But...if angels and demons can sense each other, can two demons do the same?”

“Absolutely,” Bendy answered. There was no way he wouldn’t know that guy had entered a room.

“Then, it seems the only other option is to make sure he isn’t there when you are,” Holly concluded with a nod.
“How shall we accomplish that, Miss May?” Dr. Oddswell asked. He had stopped cleaning up and was watching them with crossed arms.

Holly blinked. “I’m not sure. But I know that Black Hat cares about his employees. And when the police came once, he got very distracted.”

“So a distraction?” Boris asked with a finger to his chin.

Bendy smirked. “And we know the perfect people for the job.” Boris raised a brow before it clicked, and he widened his eyes.

“Oh boy, this is gonna be as crazy as the basement in Warnerburg, isn’t it?” Boris asked.

“I think it’ll be a little more than that bro.” Bendy chuckled. “Okay, I have a little bit of a plan. Holly, how much of that place do you have memorized?”

“I could map out for you every place I’ve been.” She started to look for a paper. “Just tell me how much detail you need.” Oddswell handed her a paper and pencil, and she started to sketch.

“Perfect,” Bendy said. “We’ll ask the Warners to be a distraction and have a team of us go in, possibly split into two. Our goals are to get Alice out and the halo back.”

“I can make rune bracelets for anyone we think could use one. A group of people showing up would be conspicuous,” Holly said as she drew.

Bendy hummed. How many people would he need to pull this off? If they split, he would have to be in the group that was hunting for the halo. The second team could just go in, grab Alice, and head to an escape point. Though, if Alice fought them, the second team would lose precious time. They also couldn’t just take forever, the longer they were around, the more dangerous it would get.

“Holly, how easy would it be for you to convince Alice to leave?” Bendy asked.

Holly paused in her writing. “It might be a bit difficult, but I think I can do it. She probably will be pretty upset that I told someone her secret.” She returned to writing. “And I’ll have to tell her you’re going after her halo.”

Bendy pursed his lips. That’s right. This was probably a big secret. But...they had to do something to help her. “She can be mad at us both, because there will be more of us involved in this.”

“Who you thinking, bro?” Boris asked with curious eyes.

“You, me, Holly, the Warners, Felix, Mugs, Cups. Finley and Sammy will be at our escape points.” They’d need anyone that was a heavy hitter, just in case they did run into Black Hat. “Anyone else in our group that’s a good fighter?”

Boris frowned. “Not unless we want Wiston to burn it down.”

“What about the detectives? If the halo is stolen, surely they can do something to get it back,” Dr. Oddswell suggested. Oh yeah, they had good cops around for once.

“We’d have to prove it, though. Even though I saw Robert Sykes barely a foot away from me, by the time the police got to that casino, they could do nothing about it.” Holly sounded chagrined.

“And we can’t afford to miss this shot,” Boris said. “Things will only get more difficult. I’m not sure if we’ll be able to do anything if Mr. Hat is on his guard.”
“I agree.” Holly nodded.

“So, the quickest and easiest way will be on our own,” Bendy concluded. “How’s that map coming along?”

“Finished.” Holly handed the paper to him.

“Good, let’s head downstairs and see who’s here,” Bendy said, looking over the map quickly. “We can organize a game plan and the best escape routes.”

“But Bendy, shouldn’t you rest?” Boris asked.

Holly nodded in agreement, looking at him. “Alice doesn’t go to work until sunset.”

“But we don’t know who will be back here when. We’ll need everyone on the same page before nightfall,” Bendy argued. He would feel wrong sleeping in a nice bed while Alice had gone through weeks of this draining thing that Holly made sound really dangerous.

“Bendy.” Boris sighed. “You’ll be no good to anyone exhausted.”

Bendy frowned and sat up straighter. Boris couldn’t make him.

“Look, I’ll stop people from leaving. You sleep for a few hours, and I’ll come to wake you up when we have everyone. Deal?”

Bendy flicked his tail in annoyance. He wasn’t some child that had to be forced to bed! They had stuff they had to do!

“You’re the only one who can find the halo, Bendy. We need you in good shape,” Holly added.

“I’m fine,” Bendy argued with a huff.

“Actually, you are exhausted. As your doctor, I am ordering you to bed rest,” Dr. Oddswell stated. The table that had held all the supplies was now clear.

Bendy turned to snap that technically he wasn’t a patient, but the lizard’s cold stare stopped him. Boris stood up. “Please don’t fight, Bendy. Just get some sleep.” Bendy glanced at him and growled.

The puppy face. Of cussing course.

“Fine! Alright! Wake me in a few hours! Happy?” Bendy barked. Boris’ face immediately lit up.

“Thank you, bro!” Boris said. With that, the pup, doc, and Holly left him to fall back on the bed. He was tired, but his mind buzzed with plans and worries. He didn’t think he would be able to sleep.

Funny enough, he was out in under five minutes.

Cuphead sighed as the house came into view. Cussing five boring hours in the library. At least he had been able to get some more sleep. Felix and that nervous cat had been in loser heaven with all that starfallen fire-starter. They had whispered to each other like annoying buzzing flies any time Cup was awake.

And despite the stupid amount of time they wasted there, they didn’t learn much more. Mugs was able to find a couple of books on demons, but most of it was stories or superstitions that weren’t much help. Though, Cup had to admit, a possessed broom or lamp from across the ocean sounded
“So, we’ll have to ask Sheba. She might know a couple of places we can look,” Felix was saying. “And I know of a few historians that might know a thing or two about demons or the Micco.”

Cup pulled out his box of cigarettes. “You know those are bad for you,” Felix suddenly said.

Cuphead gave him a one-eyed glare. “Prove it. And what do you care, anyway?”

Felix blinked like he just realized he had said anything. “Oh, uh…” He blinked again.

“Don’t worry Mr. Felix! He just gets defensive,” Mugs piped up.

“Shut it, Mugs!” Cup hissed and stuck a smoke in his mouth.

“See?” Mugs gave them a cheeky smile. Cup glared back at him in warning. He lit it with his finger. Felix and Sammy stared.

“I didn’t mean to…nevermind.” Felix looked away.

“What? Tell me what to do?” Cup looked back at him.

Felix shrugged. “Just thought I’d warn you. It’s a pain to quit them but so worth it.”

“What, you used to smoke?” Cup asked disbelievingly.

“A cigar once in a while.” Felix smirked. “I have a few tricks if you ever decide you wanna stop.”

Cup narrowed his eye at the cat. Why did he feel like there was a story there he wasn’t sharing? Well, whatever. By the time Cup was done with his smoke they had gotten to the front door. It burst open, those three zanies jumping out. One hung off Cup’s arm with a strawberry in her mouth.

“Now enough, you three! The rest of the berries are for dessert!” Granny was waving a spoon at them. Cup frowned at the girl. She laughed and ate the fruit.

“Yes Granny,” the three of them chimed together.

Granny turned to Felix and the rest of them. “And welcome back. I hope you had a productive day.”

Felix waved his hand in a so-so gesture. “Well, come in. Dinner will be ready in an hour.

“Oh, I wasn’t planning on staying,” Felix said. “I need to get to She--”

“I think you’ll want to stay, dear. The boys need you for something.” Granny smiled sweetly.

“Oooooh, is it some secret mission?” Dot asked.

“Bet it’s another part,” Wakko said.

“Hey, when are we gonna get in on that action anyway?” Yakko asked.

“When we sneak past Tap somehow,” Dot said. “And find out where the story is going now.”

Wakko and Yakko made sounds of agreement. Story?

Cup rolled his eyes. “Would ya let go?” Cup lifted his arm away from himself to glare at the girl. She blinked and then grinned.

“Hey mister. Do ya lift? I notice you have a pretty snazzy arm here.” Dot wrapped her arms and legs
around his arm. He shook it but to no avail.

“Dot, could you let him go? We have a lot to talk about and not a lot of time.” Boris stuck his head out the doorway.

“What’s going on?” Mugs asked.

“Bendy will want to be here, so let me go get him,” Boris said and disappeared inside without giving them a chance to say more. Cup frowned.

“I wonder what that’s about,” Felix said. Sammy shook his head. They came inside to find it a little less crowded than before, but not by much. Cup swept the place with his eye. It wasn’t like he got a warm welcome, but at least there were less glares.

He and Mugs plumped down on one of the front room couches.

Cup spotted the squealer girl come in from the kitchen with a cup of water. She froze for a half second after spotting them, a book under her arm. Then, her eyes carefully slid past him. She moved to a couch, sitting next to the two fox brothers. She opened the book and started to write something.

Cup felt his mouth twitch. Thanks to whatever she had said to Felix, he had kept an eye on them. It was annoying but kinda funny too. “Anyone have any idea what Bendy wants?” Cup asked the room in general. Sammy stiffened, his fur fluffing out a little. He did that any time Cup spoke to him directly. A number of other people stiffened too. Weenies.

“No idea, but I’m betin’ it’s important,” the peewee fox said. Cup shared a glance with Mugs. Another part maybe?

“I’m sure he’ll be down in a moment,” tree princess added without looking up from her book. As if her words were magic, Bendy and Boris came down the stairs.

“Oh good, everyone’s ready,” Boris said. Cup glanced up and stared. Bendy seemed a bit paler. There were bruise-like circles under his eyes. What the hell happened to him?

“Hey everyone, thanks for waiting. We have a bit of a mission tonight that we’d like to ask your help on,” Bendy said.

Felix’ ears perked. “A mission?”

Bendy shrugged. “Kinda a rescue mission.”

“Rescue? Who we rescuing?” the peewee fox asked.

“Her name is Alice,” Boris said. The two stood in the center of the room next to the coffee table. One of the foxes next to the tree princess jerked.

“Alice is in danger!” he gasped.

“Maybe,” Bendy admitted. “She went back to her old job a while back. It...wasn’t the best situation to be in, so to go back…” Bendy grimaced. Cup frowned. What was she, a ‘show gal’ or something?

“But it’s only gotten worse at this point.” Tree princess’ voice was so soft he almost didn’t hear it. “Yakko, Wakko and Dot saw her too. She looks terrible.”

The fox’s ears dropped. “Do we know why?” Felix asked with a look of concern.
The two looked to the tree princess. Oh? She was the expert here? How very interesting.

The girl took a deep breath. The same look she’d had hanging from the tree entered her eyes. Determination. “Alice is an angel. And the scientist at the casino, Dr. Flug, has been draining her and the other angels there of their magic on a regular basis. I’m still not certain why.”

At the name ‘Dr. Flug,’ Mugs sucked in a surprised breath and started coughing. Cup felt like he had just been punched. A torrent of memories threatened before he focused on Felix.


“The Black Hat Casino,” the girl replied.

“Oh dear,” Felix said with concern.

“What’s wrong Mr. Felix?” Boris asked.

“That’s the place I found the demon script. It was how I learned about the map,” Felix explained.

Bendy blinked. “Hat knows about the map? Why?”

“I don’t know, but he also knows about the Machine. We’ll have to be extra careful,” Felix said with determined gaze.

“What would he want with the Ink Machine?” Boris shook his head.

Mugs elbowed Cup. He leaned over and whispered to him. “Is he talking about the message boss left for Mr. Hat on the wall?”

Holy cuss! “I think so,” Cup murmured back. How had Felix found it? What was he even doing there!

The princess spoke up again. “Black Hat could want the machine or its parts simply because of the power each of those items has. Even individually, each of them could do terrible things. But at this point, I’m more worried about Alice. She’s been pushing herself to dangerous levels. But she won’t stop, because Black Hat stole her halo.”

Yeah, that sounded like Hat. What the hell was he scheming now? He wasn’t still trying to overthrow the boss, was he? Who was Cup kidding, of course he was! That demon never stopped, no matter how pathetic or unattainable his goal was.

“Well great.” Cup put a hand to his head. Starfallen cussing demon was messing things up again!

“What was that, Cuphead?” Felix asked.

“I said that’s terrible,” Cup grumbled. Bendy gave him a look but turned to unfold a map of the casino on the table. Mugs and Cup didn’t need to lean forward to look, though they did keep up appearances. Barely. No, it was just a stroll down memory lane for them.

Holly glanced at them from the corner of her eyes. Why were there so many observant people in this group?

Bendy droned on about a plan to get in, get the girl, get the halo, and get out. The zanies were going to be a distraction. Cup was impressed, he could say that much. There was only one flaw. Hat’s lackies. Dr. Flug, Demencia, and even 5-0-5 would be a problem. At best, they would waste their time, at worst they would attack.
Holly lifted a cloth and place it on the table. “This has a Fade rune on it. If I made more, it could help us move about the casino without being noticed if we’re careful. It’s how I managed to watch what was happening to Alice in the first place. At this point, a big crowd of us would be conspicuous, I think.”

Cup blinked. Sure, but a big wave of magic being used as they walked in would also be obvious to a demon. “We could just go in a couple at a time in increments.”

“But then we could lose time,” Bendy said.

“Move careful enough, and you’ll have all the time you need,” Cup pointed out. Bendy blinked.

“Who’s going with which team?” Cup asked.

Bendy shook himself out of his surprise. “Uh, Holly needs to go to Alice. I’ll go for the halo. The Warners are going to be on the main floor. Sammy and Finley will be in charge of the two escape routes.”

Cup hummed. “Mugs, you go with the tree princess, take Boris with you too. Felix and I will stick with Bendy.” Everyone went quiet. Cup looked up from the map. “What?”

The tree princess was giving him a wide-eyed startled look. “What did you just call me?” she spluttered.

“Tree princess?” Finley asked with a raised brow. “Is there a story there?” He smirked and looked to the girl.

“Finley.” Her voice cracked. “How about we focus on more important things?”

Finley gave Bendy an imploring look. Bendy shrugged and turned to Cup. “What did you do?”

“Me? What makes you think I did anything?” Cup grinned. Mugs elbowed him. He chuckled. Her face! It was all scrunched up, and her brow was twitching.

Bendy rolled his eyes and focused on the map again. “Any questions or concerns?”

“Yeah? We gonna live through this?” Finley asked.

“What are you complaining about? You won’t even be going in!” Cup grumbled.

“He said any concerns.” Finley chuckled.

“Alright, when do we leave?” Felix asked. Bendy glanced at the window. The sun was starting to sink to the horizon.

“We’ll go in an hour,” Bendy said. “Everyone do what you need to prepare.”

Mugs pulled Cup aside and out the back door the moment it wasn’t too obvious that they had to talk. He hoped the others didn’t notice how tense his little brother was. The moment the door closed and no one followed, he turned to Cup.

“Is this a good idea?” Mugs asked. “Maybe we could just tell the boss, and he’ll step in. Make him, I dunno, give them back or something? He doesn’t want to fight angels, and if he found out Hat has several held hostage because of their halos maybe--”

“Mugs!” Cup cut him off and grabbed his hand to shake him a little. “We can’t. It could be just as
likely that the boss would have them killed and cover up the whole thing. Who knows what he has going on with the angels.”

Mugs eyes widened. “But they’ll recognize us! There’s no way we’ll be able to--”

“I know! We’ll figure it out! Hat isn’t dumb enough to mention the boss. None of them are. We’ll be fine, Mugs,” Cup said. Mugs twisted the end of his scarf over and over in his hands. “Take a breath. Calm down.”

“O-okay, yeah. We’ll be fine,” Mugs muttered.

“It might get a little awkward, but we’ll walk out with the fellas and come back here,” Cup said.

Mugs nodded. He pursed his lips. “You don’t want to go back there.”

“No, I really don’t, but I can’t really do anything about that.” Cup dropped his hands.

A flash of pain and pity crossed Mugs eyes. “Sor--”

“Don’t. We better go back inside before anyone gets suspicious...more suspicious.” Cup stuck his hands in his pockets.

Mugs snorted and nodded. “This is gonna get weird,” he said.

“As long as it doesn’t get deadly,” Cup said. They went back in and were greeted by concerned glances from Felix and the Bbros. They knew that he and Mugs were tense. Cuss. Oh well. Might as well soften the blow now. Cup stepped up to Bendy.

“Hey, can I talk you in private?” Cup asked. Mugs’ eyes became comically wide. Bendy tilted his head looking between the two of them.

“Sure?” Bendy said. “We can go to my room.” Cup could feel the eyes following him. He followed Bendy up the stairs. He saw Boris step up next to Mugs out of the corner of his eye.

The moment Bendy closed the door behind them, he turned to Cuphead with his hands on his hips. “What’s this about?”

Cup sighed and sat on the bed. “Alright, so I’m just gonna come out and say it.”

“Look Cup, I’m charmed but you’re not my type.” Bendy smirked.

Cup growled. “Shut it!”

Bendy laughed. Cup scowled. He was gonna cut jokes?

“Fine! Forget it!” See if he said anything! He moved to stand, but Bendy grabbed his arm to stop him.

“Wait, wait.” Bendy chuckled. “I’ll listen!”

Cuphead glared at him for a moment, sitting again. “Alright. So...the thing is Mugs and I kinda have a past with Hat.”

Bendy raised his brows, the smirk disappearing. “So he works with mobs. That’s not a shocker.”

“No...it’s...different.” Cup looked away.
“Cup?”

“So, we kinda...grew up around that guy,” Cup choked out.

Bendy blinked and stared. His light eyes swam with confusion. “Like a neighbor or something?”

“No.” Cup sighed. “Like sorta there. We were there for a bit.”

The muscles around Bendy’s eyes tightened as his mind worked. Cup could see the moment it clicked, though. His eyes grew huge. It would have been funny if he didn’t have to talk about this.

“Black Hat isn’t your da--”

“Don’t even finish that! Not in a million years! Hell no!” Cup growled. Bendy cut himself off, flinching from Cup’s tone.

“But then--”

“Look, I don’t wanna really explain the situation Mugs and I were in, just know that if Black Hat tries to pull anything to not worry,” Cuphead said. “We’re on your side.”

“But Cuphead.” Bendy’s frown had Cup’s stomach twist uncomfortably. He could see the questions swimming around his eyes. “I don’t wanna put ya in a tough spot. Not with someone you know that...was around when you were growing up.” He said it carefully. Cup blinked, surprise replacing discomfort. He wanted to ask. Cup could tell, but he wasn’t. It wasn’t the barrage of questions and explanations. Bendy seemed to actually get it. Of course, he had been an orphan so he probably understood the difficulties others just hadn’t. He was going to respect his privacy and not push for more.

“He put me in a tough spot years ago. Don’t ya worry, just ignore any annoying prattling you hear.” Cup murmured.

“Are you and Mugs really going to be okay with this? We might have to fight him,” Bendy asked.

Cuphead snorted. “I’d love the excuse actually.”

Cup could see the questions again, but Bendy never voiced them. Instead, he got up and smiled. “If that’s all ya wanted to say, we better get back downstairs to the others. We don’t have a lot of time to get ready to go.”

Cup nodded and followed. This guy. Was he really a demon?

They went back down to see most of the group quickly eating or sitting. Mugs gave him an imploring look. Cup shrugged and smiled. Mugs relaxed marginally into his seat. Boris gave them both a curious look before turning to Bendy. He didn’t even need to ask.

“Tell ya later,” Bendy said. Boris raised a brow but gave a nod of acceptance. Before Cup could say he was truly ready, the time came.

They had two cars outside waiting. Apparently, Felix was borrowing one, and the other was a taxi with a ‘reliable dog,’ according to the tree princess.

Cup felt nauseous when the casino came into view. He was sitting next to Bendy and Boris with Mugs and Felix in the front. Bendy had been explaining to Boris everything Cup had said with a comment from Mugs or Cup once in a while. Boris had shared the same concern for the Cupbros. Seriously! What was with these two? Felix tried to ask a few questions, but Bendy stopped him with
a shake of his head.

Somehow, the other car was already there, even though Cup was sure he never saw them pass. He
looked behind them and back again. Nothing. When had it passed? Mugs’ confused glance
confirmed that it wasn’t just him.

They pulled up next to the other car. Bendy rolled down the window and leaned out. “Okay, we go
in groups of five. It shouldn’t be too obvious. Hang around the tables, look for something fun for ten
minutes, then head to your targets. If anything goes wrong, head to your escape point.”

“Okay mom! Can you leave now?” Finley grinned. Bendy stuck out his tongue, and the taxi pulled
in front of them up to the casino. The door opened and Holly, Finley, and the Warners stepped out.
Felix pulled in behind. They all piled out. Finley got behind the wheel of Felix’ borrowed car and
winked.

The two cars disappeared. Bendy, Cups, and Felix went in first. They headed to the second floor.
They didn’t know where the halo could be, so they’d have to wander until Bendy felt something.
Cup would suggest Hat’s vault, but he hated angel magic and wouldn’t have it anywhere near him.
So, it probably wasn’t anywhere in the basement...Probably.

Boris and Mugs’ group should be coming in now. They would be heading to the back room that the
angel lived in.

“Five minutes until the Warners enter,” Cup said.

“We have ten until they are supposed to act,” Felix pointed out.

“I don’t trust that zanies can hold themselves back for that long.” Cuphead shot back. Felix sighed.
Bendy shrugged. They wandered down the halls and lounges.

“What about the rooms?” Bendy asked.

“I doubt it. He wouldn’t want a nosy guest to walk off with it. You never know who has a sense for
magic. He’d be hell bent if someone found what he took.” Cup snickered. Which was exactly what
they were going to do.

They continued looking without much luck. “Should we go up to the next floor?” Felix suggested.

“I guess,” Bendy said.

Cup thought as he followed them, a bit slower. He probably didn’t want the halo far, even if he hated
angel magic. So, it would most likely be on the first floor, but that’s also where most of the guests
were, so it was risky. Cup went back and forth on his thoughts as the cat and demon reached a
staircase.

“Wait.” Cuphead spoke up. They both paused to look back at him. “I think we should check the first
floor. That’s the most likely. If it’s not there, then it’s probably at the top of the building or in the
basement.”

“You think?” Bendy asked.

Cup shrugged. “It’s a guess.”

“But isn’t that the floor where the Warners are causing a distraction?” Felix asked.
“We can avoid them,” Cup said.

Bendy stared at him for a moment before nodding. They headed down and into one of the gambling rooms. The sounds of chips clicking, curses, and laughing filled the room. Cup glanced at the different tables. Craps, blackjack, roulette, if he had some time, he’d love to play a bit. He shook his head. They got through the room, Bendy still didn’t feel anything different. Felix didn’t notice anything either.

The went through one room after another with nothing to show of it. Once in a while, they would get odd looks, but no one tried to stop them yet. Each passing minute seemed to make Bendy more tense. They came across a hall that had food splattered on the walls and a couple of guests covered in...Cup wasn’t sure. Guess the Warners had been here. They also heard screams in the distance once in a while, a sure sign that they were still causing chaos.

He paused at a room with bar and a pool table in the front. A deer stood behind the counter, cleaning the table. Bendy scowled and walked through to another hall.

“This place is like a maze,” Felix commented.

“We’re almost done with the first floor,” Cup said.

“We’re taking too long,” Bendy muttered.

“We can’t go any faster without people noticing.” Cup put his hands in his pockets.

“Is there anywhere more specific that you can think of where he would put it?” Bendy asked.

“Well,” Cup said gruffly. “He wouldn’t want it near him, so it’s not in his vault or his office. He wouldn’t want it ‘tainting’ any of his collection, so it’s not in the usual spots he keeps his junk. He has a messed up sense of humor, so maybe somewhere he thought was funny for the angel girl.”

“Funny?” Felix asked.

“Yeah.” Cup thought back on the one time he took Mugs’ straw. They found it hidden in the bar as a decoration. It was holding smaller straws like a cussing jar. “Where would you put a glowing ring if you wanted to make a cruel joke of it?”

“On an angel statue?” Bendy offered.

“Good guess, but he wouldn’t have something like that around,” Cup said. They stood and thought.

“What about a light? You said it glows, right? What if it’s being used as a light bulb?” Felix said.

“But where?” Bendy asked. Felix shrugged.

“The garden?” He pointed out the window to the tinkling lights amongst the bushes flowers and trees.

“Maybe,” Cup admitted. The two turned to look for the doors leading outside. Using a magical halo as a cussing lightbulb sounded like something Hat would do. “There are also the stage lights and the chandelier in the lobby,” Cup mentioned for the hell of it.

Bendy froze. He whipped around fast enough that Cup thought his tail snapped like an actual whip. “What did you say?” he demanded, his eyes blazing.

Cup blinked. “Just that it could also be in one of lights for one of stages or the chandelier in the front
“What was with the look?”

Bendy’s eyes widened. “I know where it is!”

“What!” Cup gasped.

“C’mon!” Bendy ran down the hall.

“Wait Bendy!” Felix called out. He and Cup sprinted to catch up to the little blur. “How do you know where it is?”

“Because of what happened last time!” Bendy answered. He ducked under a waiter with a platter. The guy swung an arm to keep his balance and gave them a dirty look.

“Sorry!” Felix called over his shoulder.

“What happened?” Cup asked.

“Last time we came here, the doll was stolen. Boris, Alice, and the Warners chased him all over the hotel,” Bendy said. He took a sharp corner and surprised a couple. Twisting, he jumped off a wall to get around them. Huh, nimble little pipsqueak. “They cornered the thief backstage in one of the dance rooms. I noticed a strong feeling was strong in there! It’s probably there!”

A couple more people turned and looked as Bendy burst through the door to a dance room. A jazz band was playing, and a few couples were on the floor. Cup looked over the room to see if there was anything worrisome around. He didn’t see anything, but that didn’t mean trouble wasn’t around.

“Do you feel anything, Bendy?” Cup asked. Bendy looked around with narrowed eyes.

“I...don’t know,” he admitted. He walked close to the stage. He looked up at the lights. Felix followed suit. The spot light changed to a singer girl, a cat girl with a wide smile. Bendy’s tail straightened, and he jumped. “There!” he pointed to the spotlight above her. “It’s there!”

“You’re sure?” Cup asked.

“Without a doubt!” Bendy clenched a determined fist. “I don’t see anything, but it’s just her okay? I can’t really explain it.”

“Alright, so how’re we gonna get it?” Cup asked.

“Leave that to me.” Felix tugged his hat’s brim down. He had a sharp smile. He turned, went up the stage steps and disappeared behind the curtain before anyone noticed. Cup blinked.

“Think we should help?” Bendy asked.

“Standing around here ain’t doin’ us any favors,” Cup replied. They darted behind the curtains. There was no sign of Felix anywhere.

“Where did he go?” Cup asked. Bendy shrugged. They crept further and further back, careful to keep an eye out for any employees.

The curtain did a good job of muffling the noise up front, the music getting further and further away. Bendy went to the end of the hall and peeked around a rack of costumes.

“Mr. Felix?” he whispered.
Cup felt a chill go down his spine. “Bendy!” he hissed and turned around. A huge figure lunged at him. Cup lifted his hand, but he was too slow as his arms were pinned to his sides, and he was lifted into the air. He was pulled against the fuzzy being in a crushing...Wait.

“Cuphead!” Bendy called out.

“5-0-5, let me go!” Cup growled against the fuzzy beast.

“Arrrrwww,” 5-0-5 purred. He cuddled the top of Cup’s head, making his hair go wild.

“Yeah, okay. It’s good to see ya too. You’re crushing me!” Cup tried to shift in the steely grip and felt his spine pop. The bear dropped him with big eyes and his usual dopey smile.

“Uh...” Bendy looked between the bear and Cuphead with his mouth partly hanging open and fists weakly raised to fight. “There’s a flower on its head.”

“It’s fine, Bendy. I know him,” Cup grumbled.

5-0-5 grumbled and tilted his head. “Yeah 5-0-5, he’s a friend of mine.”

The bear muttered with furrowed brows. “No, Mugs isn’t with me.”

The bear pouted and mumbled. “No, we aren’t here to visit.” Cup scowled. “Look, we’re kinda busy.”

The bear perked up. “No, don’t tell Hat!” Cup barked. 5-0-5’s lip trembled and eyes started to water. Cup let out an insufferable sigh. Starfallen moonrocks. This was annoying. “I’m not angry, I just don’t have time to talk to everyone right now. We’re really busy.”

The bear perked up and turned to Bendy. The little demon just watched in bewilderment. “You understand him?” Bendy turned to him.

Cup shrugged. “He starts to make sense after a while.”

Suddenly, there was a scream from up front. The music cut off. Cup and Bendy sent a glance toward each other and ran for the stage. They pulled back the curtain to see Felix hanging upside down. His legs were hooked on railing that held the lights up. He had a screwdriver in his hand and was fiddling with the main light. The singer dame had backed away, jaw hanging open in shock.

“Hey fella! What the sam-hill ya think you’re doing?” one of the band members called out.

Felix glanced down at them...which must have felt like looking up to him. “Oh! Sorry! Slight maintenance problem. Be done in a minute!” He smiled, his tail flicking nervously. He quickly turned back to the light and pulled off the glass cover. He hooked it on the rail. Reaching into his bag, he pulled out a thick glove and pulled it on. He reached into the light, sticking out his tongue. He seemed to be trying to work something out.

There was a growl behind him that had Bendy jump a foot in the air and spin around. It was the bear again. Cup jumped in front of him, his hands raised in a placating manner. “It’s okay 5-0-5! He’s just fixing it. He’ll put it all back!” Several people screamed and ran at the sight of the bear.

“I got it!” Felix shouted. He looked down at them with a triumphant smile. “Woah! What is a bear doing here?”

The ballroom door slammed open. “What is going on here!” a horribly familiar voice growled. Oh
“Get out!” he barked at the guests and employees.

“Wah!” Felix swung his arms, nearly falling. He dropped something bright and grabbed the railing. Bendy jumped forward and grabbed the falling light.

“You! Drop that!” Black Hat marched into the glaring daggers at Bendy. Bendy lifted a bright ring glowing gold. It dimmed in his hands. His eyes were the size of saucers in wonder.

“Wow,” Bendy breathed.

“Bendy, look out!” Felix called. Bendy jumped back to dodge the large claw that slammed on the spot he had stood. Black Hat growled.

“Listen to your elders, budling and hand over the ring,” Hat said.

Bendy blinked and shook his head like he was waking up. “Uh? What did you call me?”

Hat scoffed. “What? Your parents don’t follow tradition? They aren’t one of those ridiculous ‘new age’ demons that don’t want to be ‘scary’ anymore, I hope.”

Bendy furrowed his brow and frowned. The bear behind Cup grumbled in confusion. Hat rolled his visible eye. “5-0-5, grab him!” Cup glared at the bear, who froze when he made eye contact with Cup. Hat came up short in spotting Cuphead. “Well, well, look who came home.”

Cup snorted. “This isn’t home.”


“Don’t call me that! You aren’t anything to me, you hellspawn scum!” Cup barked. Hat cackled.

“We’ll catch up later, boy. Right now I have some pests to deal with.” Hat turned back to face Bendy. Felix had righted himself and jumped down. He flipped and landed next to Bendy.

“This isn’t yours. We’ll just leave with this and return it to its proper owner,” Felix said. His hand was on the bag.

Hat grinned a shark like smile. “Haven’t you ever heard of finders keepers? Besides, she lives here. It doesn’t need to go anywhere.”

“Not anymore,” Bendy said. “So, we’ll be going.” He took a step toward the doors.

Hat tensed. Bendy jumped back and hissed, eyes bright red. Felix looked at him, startled. Cup’s eyes widened. Bendy’s glowing eyes cooled and filled with confusion. Black Hat laughed. “What’s with the look little one? Never faced an elder without daddy to hide behind?”

Bendy growled. His tail lashed. “What are you talking about? Elder? And don’t call me little!”

Black Hat snorted and straightened. His eyes narrowed. “You’re that budling that’s come around lately. I can’t figure out if you’re reckless or stupid.”

“Probably both.” Bendy smirked, but he didn’t seem amused. This was the most tense Bendy had ever appeared to Cup and that included he had gone all big and scary.

“Well, let me spell it out to you child.” Black Hat sneered. “I’ve warned you about coming into my territory and messing with my stuff.”
“Alice isn’t stuff,” Bendy said.

Black Hat laughed. “Of course she is! Anything I claim is mine! And if you want to take what’s mine.” He suddenly grew in size, seven-eight-nine feet tall. His fangs extended, his arms became big and ape-like with three huge, curved claws. He grew a tail that was lined with spikes. The room became freezing cold. “You’ll have to fight me!” His voice was loud, deep, like a cascade of falling rocks.

Felix took several steps back. He pulled out his dagger. “Don’t,” Cup said grimly. Felix looked at him with wide eyes. “You’ll only make him mad.” 5-0-5 cowered behind Cuphead, his paws over his head.

“Then, what do you suggest?” Felix said.

“Running, but we aren’t going to get away,” Cup said. He lifted his hand, peashooter ready. “You might want to get your axe.”

Bendy stared with wide eyes. Hat took a step forward. Bendy jumped back five feet. Eyes flashed again. He hit the curtain. Hat laughed again. “What’s the matter, budling? You act like you’ve never been in a fight with another demon.”

“Well great! ‘Cause I haven’t,” Bendy growled.

Hat paused. His twisted, sharp smile dropped. “Excuse me?” he growled back.

Bendy gulped. “I...haven’t. You’re the first demon I’ve ever met.”

Hat narrowed his eyes. “That’s not possible. What about your parents?”

“Never had any.” Bendy frowned.

“And where in the underworld did you grow up?” Hat demanded, his eyes widening.

“None, I grew up in a small town ca--Wait a minute! Why am I telling you that!” Bendy snapped and raised his fists. “If you’re going to come at me, then come at me!”

Hat paused. He tilted his head and looked at Bendy like he was a difficult math problem. Suddenly, there was a blur of motion. Cup swore he just blinked and missed it. One minute they were at a stand still and the next Bendy was in the air with Hat’s claw around his throat.

“Bendy!” Felix cried.

“Drop him!” Cup demanded, lifting his hand. Hat didn’t seem to even notice them. He just stared at Bendy, who was trying to fight his way out of Black Hat’s grasp.

Some sort of red energy surrounded Bendy. “What are you doing to me!” Bendy shouted. He glared at Hat with black eyes. Cup and Felix shared a wide-eyed look.

Hat let out a sufferable sigh. “And you are fledgling, because of course you are.” He rolled his eyes.

“Let me go, you scaly freak!” Bendy roared, his fangs getting longer. “Stop it!”

“What? Afraid of the rush of power? Never felt this before? Have you even tried?” Hat asked mockingly. Bendy’s eyes widened as the darkness overcame the white, and his irises glowed bright red.
“Cup! Shoot!” Felix told him. Cup hesitated. If he attacked, that would be it. He’d be fighting a demon that he doubted he could beat. Hell, he’d never beaten the schmuck before. And if worse came to worse, the boss would show up. This could all be a right mess. It already was.

Hat hummed, which in his monstrous form sounded more like a growl. “This certainly is a problem. I can’t just have something like you running around up here. No control, no guidance, a wonderful chance for chaos, but a horrible chance for war.”

Bendy’s thrashing was slowing down. The darkness around him seemed to be slowly changing. “So, the choice is yours, budling. Come to hell or die,” Hat offered.

“Cuphead!” Felix shouted. He traded out the dagger for the axe.

Bendy twisted and suddenly bit Hat’s claw. Hat roared and threw the other demon across the room. Bendy hit the wall so hard it cracked. He fell and hit the tables.

“Bendy!” Felix called.

There was a ‘ting’ that rang delicately. Cup turned back to Hat. He was hold his bleeding claw with a look of annoyance on his twisted face. At his feet, the halo bounced. It sparked as it hit the floor again. Hat looked down and sneered. He bent to grab it.

Felix slid by like a he was diving for homebase and nicked it just before the demon touched it. Hat roared and slammed his fist on the stage, cracking the wood into splinters.

He lunged to chase Felix. The cat rolled over the edge of the stage and ran to Bendy. Cup grit his teeth. Whelp. This was a dumb plan anyway. He let loose a stream of peashooter pellets at Black Hat’s back. Hat howled in pain and whirled around to face Cuphead.

“You? You’d dare?” Black Hat shrank down to seven feet tall, he became more slim, but his limbs remained long and spiked.

“I ain’t afraid of you! You noseless freak!” Cup shot at him again. He missed. Stupid eyepatch! Black Hat disappeared into a shadow and, in a flash, was face to face with Cuphead.

“A freak? Well, that’s easy to fix. I’ll just take yours.” Hat grinned. His one showing eye was like Bendy’s; the sclera, black and the iris, red. His monocle glowed the same deadly red. Cup lunged back, but his claws ranked across Cup’s shirt. Pain shot through him. He tumbled into 5-0-5.

“Cuphead!” Felix shouted.

“5-0-5, hold him there!” Hat ordered. The bear whimpered.

There was a sudden blur of movement, and Bendy was in the air. His foot connected with Hat’s face and knocked him behind the curtain. Bendy landed on his feet. He was...scary looking, not dripping...but still tall, clawed, and spiked. Cup sat up, hissing as hot pain shot across his chest.

“Felix,” Bendy’s distorted voice called. “Get that halo and Cup out of here! I’ll hold him off!”

“But Bendy--” Felix tried to protest.

There was a horrible shriek from the backstage. It was a sound Cup felt shake his very soul with fear. Death, pain, madness, horror, it sounded like the tortured souls of hell.

“No time to argue! Go now!” Bendy said. He wasn’t smiling this time.
“Bendy! You can’t take him alone!” Cup shouted. 5-0-5 whimpered again. Cup grabbed his furry arm and pulled himself up. He looked down. His shirt was in ribbons, blood was staining the tattered remains.

“You’re in no shape to fight!” Bendy raced behind the curtain.

“Wait, you idiot!” Cup shouted after him. Felix quickly came back to him.

“Can you stand?” Felix asked.

“Yeah, but Bendy is gonna get himself killed. C’mon.” Cup ran for the curtain. “5-0-5, get Dr. Flug.” The bear whimpered and ran for the door on all fours.

“Do you have a plan?” Felix asked as they pushed the heavy curtain aside.

“Yeah.” Cup swallowed. “Get his attention and then run like hell. You still got the ring?” They ran down the narrow hall and past boxes of props.

Felix frowned, clearly not impressed with the plan. “Yeah.” He patted his bag. “But don’t you thi--”

Bendy slammed into the racks of costumes right in front of them.

“Bendy!” they both shouted. He was pulling himself up before they finished.

Black Hat dove for the younger demon with a roar. Cup aimed for Black Hat’s face as he fired his blasts. They hit his chest but still were able to knock him to the side.

“RUN!” Cup shouted and grabbed Bendy’s arm, dragging him away. He didn’t fight Cup as they raced back out to the broken stage and onto the dancefloor. Shadowy tentacles raced across the ground. They jumped up to lash at the group. Felix swung his axe, slicing the black limbs away. They ducked and dodged the rest.

They almost reached the door when Hat raced up to them and slashed Bendy in the back. Bendy cried out. The force shoved them out into the hall. Bendy landed on top of Felix and Cuphead. They grunted. Bendy rolled off them.

“Are you okay?” Felix asked.

Bendy didn’t have time to answer as Hat appeared above them. A black tentacle wrapped around Cup. It changed into an actual tentacle that connected back to Hat. Cup tried to pull his arms out. He hissed at the suckers cut into his skin. Cussing great!

Felix screamed in pain. A clawed foot pinned Felix down. One of the claws had gone through the arm that held the axe.

“Felix!” Bendy growled. He grunted as Hat slammed him against the floor with his hands.

“Do you really have time to look after others! Now, let me teach you one of the most important rules in the underworld. The weak are always ruled by the strong!” He lifted a clawed hand to strike.

Cuss! Cuss! Cuss! Hat was gonna rip Bendy apart! He had to do something! He had to get out! Felix seemed to have the same thought as he tried to pull the claw out of his arm.

“Stop!” a voice ordered. All of them froze. Cup tilted his head back so he could see down the hall. It was Mugman.

“Mugs!” Cup called. This was going to get so much worse.
“So, the brothers return,” Hat growled, his hand still raised.

“What are you doing, Mr. Hat?” Mugs asked. His face was set in determined glare.

Hat smirked with long fangs flashing grotesquely. “Why, your brother got into trouble again, Mugsy. This is punishment.”

“Don’t call him that!” Cup growled.

“Mr. Hat, sir!” Dr. Flug came running from the other side, 5-0-5 and some oddly dressed dame with long hair behind him. He stopped dead at seeing the situation. Hat chuckled. His tentacle tightened around Cup. Cup hissed at the barbs in the suckers cut into him.

Mugs narrowed his eyes. “Are you sure you want to do that, Mr. Hat? Especially after last time you tried to ‘punish’ Cuphead?” He didn’t even glance at Cup. He didn’t look away from Hat.

Hat paused. He scowled. “You wouldn’t dare.”

“Wouldn’t I?” Mugs said. “You remember what happened. Either let them go or be ready for what comes next.”

“They were caught stealing from me!” Hat growled.

“Don’t waste your time trying to explain yourself to me, Mr. Hat.” Mugs smirked. Black Hat’s eyes narrowed. He hissed angrily. The room temperature dropped to freezing. Cup shivered.

“Fine! Take them!” Hat growled and pulled away from Bendy. Felix cried out as the claw ripped from his arm. Cup hissed again as the barbs scraped away from him. Hat drew back to stand just in front of Dr. Flug and his other lackeys.

“Mr. Felix! Cups!” Bendy sat up.

“Mr. Hat?” Dr. Flug asked.

“I’ll be sure to let the underworld know there’s a rogue budling on the Surface.” He smirked. “Well...I guess you’re a fledgling now, but you’re so pathetic it’s sad.”

“What the hell are you talking about?” Cup grumbled. He pushed himself up with a groan.

Hat glanced at him with a raised brow. “Why, demon culture Cuppy-boy. He’s a demon that has moved from barely having powers to developing his true nature.”

Bendy shook his head. “Nonsense.” He got up on shaky legs. “We’re getting out of here.”

Hat chuckled. “Oh, the wonderful mayhem you’ll bring. I remember my first rampage when I was a fledgling. Lost count of how many I killed.”
“What do you mean?” Felix asked in a strained voice. He was bleeding badly from his arm.

Hat grinned. “Well, when a demon begins to have his or her true nature awaken, they go on a killing spree, of course. Fire, flood, madness, shadows, destruction. Whatever their powers may be, they finally awaken along with the strongest bloodlust.”

“N-n-not happening.” Bendy’s eyes widened.

“Just you wait.” Hat looked to Mugman and Cuphead. “You’re in way over your heads this time, boys.”

“Mr. Hat, should we stop them?” the weird girl asked with a manic grin.

“No, let them leave.” He grinned. “It will be more fun this way.”

Cup shivered. Mugs and Cup helped Felix up. They practically limped away, Black Hat’s mocking laughter following them. When they got to the taxi the scaredy cat’s eyes were the size of saucers. Cup was sure they were a pretty picture of blood and horror. The dog driver raced away like death itself was chasing them.

Chapter End Notes

Oh boy! Me an Tap were expecting this fight to go a little bit better, but Cup, Felix and Bendy barely made it out of there alive. Neither of us realized that Black Hat was truly this terrifying until Tap was there writing it. But Alice is finally free! Wonder what Hat means by Bendy's powers awakening? :-/
Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone!
Happy Holidays! Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukkah! Hope those of you in the cold are keeping warm! Sorry, this is late! I keep distracting Mercowe! We have been scrambling like mad! But it's worth it! Promise! I am wrapping up school and will be heading back to my native mountains for the holidays with my boo. I'm excited to go...just not so much for the snowy roads. T-T Or the final tests.
But otherwise, it's been great! XD I'm in high spirits (ha) and I am so, so, SO excited for the stuff coming your way. Thank you all for your lovely comments, your beautiful art, and your time in reading this. It warms my soul. Enjoy!

“W-w-w-we better go to the hospital!” Sammy fretted.

Bendy frowned. This would be a problem. “No,” he said. “We have to get this to Alice first. She needs her halo.”

“You th-th-three are bleeding! A-a-a-a lot!” Sammy’s eyes widened.

“He’s still following us,” Bendy groaned. He could feel it. The darkness, the heavy presence that was Black Hat. It was right behind them. “If we stop at the hospital, he’ll take it from us. The only way to keep it safe is to give it back to Alice.”

“But Bendy, you all are in bad shape,” Mugs said with wide eyes. Bendy glanced at either side of him. Felix was clutching a nearly soaked rag to his arm, teeth grit. He smiled when he made eye contact with Bendy, that determined glint in his eyes. Cup’s shirt was in tatters, his chest not much better, blood was seeping into his pants and coat. Bendy himself felt drained, jumpy, tired, invaded, and his back stung like no tomorrow. He could feel the stickiness of blood running down it and around his shirt. Black Hat had done a real number on them.

“I know,” Bendy said. “And he’ll do worse if we stop this car anywhere but the house. Once Alice has her halo, then we can go to the hospital.”

“He’s right, Mugs,” Cup grunted. “You know what that schmuck will do. He doesn’t like to ‘lose,’ after all.”

Sammy blinked and looked around nervously. “You call th-that winning!”
“We’re alive, aren’t we?” Cup chuckled. Bendy rolled his eyes.

“I like my bar a little higher than that myself,” Felix said in a strained voice. He smiled. “But if you two think it’s for the best, then I agree.”

“Do you all think you can hold out that long?” Mugs asked.

Cuphead scoffed. “I ain’t plannin’ on bleedin’ to death, if that’s what you’re asking.”

“I’ll be okay,” Felix said with a small nod. There were two of him? No wait, double vision.

Bendy blinked a couple of times. His head felt funny.

“Bendy?”

“Huh?” Bendy looked up to see a concerned Mugman.

“Will you be okay for that long?” Mugs asked.

“Oh! Yeah, sure. I’m great,” Bendy said.

“We’re already losin’ the guy,” Cup muttered and winced as the car suddenly bounced. “Hey, watch it up there!” he barked at the dog driver. The car raced on. Mugs and Sammy tried to help staunch the bleeding as much as they could. The lights of the city appeared far faster than Bendy expected. They blurred by like shooting stars.

Bendy turned to Felix. “Mr. Felix, do you still have it in your bag?”

“Go on and check,” Felix said. That rag on his arm was useless at this point, Bendy noted grimly. He reached for the bag and felt a weird pulling on his back that he didn’t really want to think about. He saw Mugs wince, and Sammy looked sick. The cat turned around to face the front.

“How much longer?” he asked the dog.

“About five more minutes, muuuuuur, sir,” the dog stated flatly. The driver hadn’t turned from the road since the moment he started to pull away. Nothing seemed to faze him, either, as he gave no indication of emotion at the conversation happening around him.

Bendy ignored them all and unzipped the bag. He reached in and felt his hand brush it. Pulling out the ring, it dimmed in his hand. Bendy blinked at it. It seemed to wobble a little, like a noodle. Oh, wait, no. That was his vision again. He shook his head to clear it and hissed when his back stung at the sudden movement. He refocused on the halo to distract himself. It tingled in his fingers. He could tell it was magical, but where the parts were one thing and his talent was another, this one felt like a magnet set against him. It was something he didn’t think he could ever really touch. It was like it wanted to jump out of his hand.

He couldn’t tell if it was made of metal or glass or even ice. Something smooth and cool. It didn’t give off warmth as Alice did, but it still felt like her. It was something that he just somehow knew was her. It was like walking into a friend’s room for the first time and thinking that it was obviously their room.

“We’re here, thank the stars,” Sammy said with a sigh of relief. Bendy looked up to see they were on Baker Street. The dog was slowing down to pull next to the curb.

“Okay, I’ll run it in,” Mugs said and held out his hand. Bendy moved to hand it over when the dark
presence Bendy had felt chasing them suddenly slammed into his senses like a truck. His back suddenly burned with acidic pain. The others must have felt something too, because Cuphead yelped and Felix sucked in a breath and choked.

The moment the car stopped, Bendy’s mind went blank and the fight or flight response kicked in. He didn’t know what was going on, but he knew if he stayed there something bad was going to happen.

Again, Felix and Cup must have felt something too, because the three of them were out of the car and rushing to the door like death was on their heels.

Mugman’s voice was behind them. “Cup! Bendy? What in the world is wrong? You three shouldn’t be running like that when you’re hurt!”

“That will be seven dollars and fifty-three cents, sir,” the dog said.

“Seven bucks!” Sammy gasped. “Hey wait, we have to go to the hospital a-after this! I-I-I’m not paying you!”

Bendy hit the door with enough force to slam it open.

“Bendy!” Boris called out. He looked over to see the wolf standing from one of the couches. His eyes were wide and jaw dropped at their appearance. With his ears down and tail tucked, he looked terrified.

“Where’s Alice?” Bendy gruffed. He stumbled into the front room.

“Cuphead! Mr. Felix! What happened! You're all covered in blood!” Boris fretted and came up to Bendy. Cup was leaning heavily against the doorframe. Felix wasn’t doing much better against the wall.

Holly came in from the kitchen and gasped. “Horsefeathers!”

“They wouldn’t listen to me. Bendy said we had to come here first.” Mugs came in and wrapped an arm around Cup’s back. He was pale with worry.

“What is the meaning of this?” Oddswell demanded. “I have sleeping subjects!” The lizard appeared at the top of the staircase. He didn’t even blink when he saw them. “Mrs. Gopher, get the bandages!” He turned back to them.

“Nevermind that, Oddswell. That won’t be enough!” Holly snapped at him. She started up the stairs.

Oddswell gave her a sharp glance down his snout. “It’s to slow the bleeding.” He turned back to Bendy and started down the stairs. “What do you three think you’re doing? You should be going to- -”

Oh, forget it. “ALICE!” Bendy put everything he had into it. He fell to his knees.

“Bendy!” Boris knelt with him and reached out but stopped himself from touching Bendy’s back. “We have to get you to a hospital!”

Holly hesitated and pounded up the stairs. “Alice!”

Granny appeared at top of the stairs behind Oddswell. “What is--Oh my!”

Holly jumped around her like she was in an obstacle course. “Get the doll, Granny!” she barked before sprinting down the hall.
Alice was there, suddenly, and pushing past all of them to get down the stairs. “Oh no! Oh no! I knew going against Mr. Hat was a bad idea! What happened to you?” She rushed to them and paused a foot in front of them. Her concern changed to fear as she looked around like she was searching for something. Her face paled. Bendy could feel it too. That weight, that dread, it was like a predator was standing over him with fangs ready to close around his throat.

“Alice.” Bendy lifted up the halo. He wanted to say something clever. “This.” His vision was blurry again.

He heard her gasp. There was a thump behind him. He didn’t have the energy to turn and look.

“Cuppy!” Mugs cried out in alarm. Guess he’d joined Bendy on the floor then.

Alice knelt and, with hesitant reverence, took the halo from Bendy’s shaking hand. It lit up like a spotlight before dimming again. She lifted it to her head and let go. It drifted up and hovered above her like a beacon. She sighed with a small smile before changing her expression to serious concentration. She lifted a hand. There was a flash of light. The darkness that seemed to linger around them like a veil of dread vanished. The room felt lighter, brighter, and not because of the halo. Bendy sighed at the sudden relief and nearly fell over, but Boris caught him. Another thump to his other side must have been Felix joining the floor party.

“Bendy!” Boris called. Bendy was spent. He couldn’t even answer his bro. With the dread and urgency gone, he relaxed. He felt strange, tingly, and numb. That couldn’t be a good thing, right? But then again, it didn’t hurt anymore. There was a weird tugging sensation on his back though.

“Cup! Cuphead! C’mon!” Mugs called from behind them. “Wake up, bro!”

“They’ve lost too much blood. He’s passed out,” Oddswell said.

Boris looked at Alice. “You’re an angel! Heal them!”

Alice’s eyes widened. “I can’t just--I, uh, I need to go upstairs.” She moved to turn but hesitated.

“But I can’t heal Bendy! He’s a demon! My magic’s useless on him!”

A weird ringing filled his ears. The room seemed to be getting further away.

“I can heal them,” a rich, new voice said.

“Blue Fairy!” Oddswell sounded surprised. “My lady, I must advise against it. Your health--”

“Thank you, doctor, but they’ve risked their lives to help someone else. They are also the brave ones after the cure for us all. How can I stand aside as their lives slip away?” The edges of Bendy’s vision were turning dark. He couldn’t find his head to lift it and see who was talking. She sounded beautiful. It was growing dark. He thought he saw the glittering edge of a skirt before his eyes grew too heavy, and he drifted off into the dark.

Cala circled the bay for what seemed like the hundredth time. No one she recognized had come. She wondered how long she would have to wait. She had given Mugs a way to contact her, but she had forgotten to get a way to reach him.

She had gone to her source and arranged for her move to land, but now she had to wait while the sea witch prepared the enchantment she needed to get legs. Cala wasn’t proud to go to the sea witch Ursula. It felt a little like a betrayal to Ariel, but Triton had burned that bridge long ago when he discovered that she and her sister were gorgons. Cala sighed. The life of a cursed outcast wasn’t an
easy one. Turning people to stone with just one look hadn’t been easy, but at least she had had her sister. But that was the past.

Now, she had nothing left for her in the sea.

Ursula had claimed she understood. Ursula was banished as well. And Cala guessed that the isolation was similar, but Cala had no ambition for power. Sure, she may have a grudge against the king of the sea, but she didn’t hunger for revenge like the octopus woman did. Cala simply wanted peace. Paul didn’t care for her either.

Just then, Cala noticed movement on the dock. She paused in her aimless swimming to look at the person walking away from a large warehouse. She seemed familiar. Cala pouted thoughtfully. Oh wait! It was that girl that ran up to them when Cala had dropped off everyone. She had looked like she knew that demon and wolf. What was her name again? She was walking quickly. If Cala wanted to talk, she better stop her. She dipped lower before launching herself up out of the water.

“W-wait!” Cala called out. “You’re that girl from before, right?”

The girl paused and glanced back. She was pretty in her own way, Cala figured. The girl furrowed her brows at Cala. “Who are you?”

“Uh, um, I-I’m Cala Maria.” Cala hunched her shoulders, embarrassed.

The girl appeared to visibly relax. Cala guessed it was pretty late. What was she doing out so late anyway? She took a couple steps toward Cala. Cala suddenly felt a chill behind her. She twitched and glanced back. The warehouse. What was that feeling? “Are you alright?” the girl asked. Cala blinked and turned to her nervously.

“Uh.” Cala glanced back at the warehouse, perturbed. Was that a demon’s magic? It felt disturbingly familiar. “Mostly. What were you doing in a place like that?” she asked the girl distractedly.

The girl stared at her for a long moment. Had Cala done something wrong? “I couldn’t sleep. I went on a walk. When I saw the place something seemed off, so I went inside to take a look,” she finally said. Cala blinked. She went into that place? Couldn’t she feel that darkness?

Cala swallowed and glanced back. It was him. It had to be him. “You’re right. Som…” Blood. She smelled smoke and blood. Her eyes widened in fear. “Something evil happened in there,” she whispered, alarmed. They needed to leave. There was no promise that he wouldn’t return.

“What are you doing here this late? It’s nearly three in the morning,” the girl asked.

Cala focused on her again. Cala felt her face heat and ducked her head. She probably thought she was nuts. “I...think I found a way to get on the Surface, but I have to wait a few days for it to be ready. I didn’t really have anywhere to go, so...I just waited here.” Cala glanced around the docks. There wasn’t anything in the shadows, right?

“That seems a sorry reason for you to wait around here,” the other girl said scornfully. “Do you have to be in the water at all times?” she asked suddenly. Ugh.

Cala felt her face heat in frustration and a little bit of embarrassment. “Well, I might have hoped to see...Um, I only showed up this night. It’s my first night around here. It’s not so...um. Not always, but my scales will crack if they get dry for too long.” She didn’t need to admit she was hoping to see Mugman.

“You were hoping to see Mugman.” How did she guess! Could she read minds?
Cala wished to dive back into the water now. She covered her cheeks with her hands. She had to be on fire. “Wh-me? Mugman? Um...maybe,” she admitted weakly and ducked her head. Could she just leave? Would that be rude? “But I wanted to tell any of the heroes that saved me that I would be able to come up here soon.” Which was the truth.

The girl hummed thoughtfully. “So, would you like me to carry the message, then?”

Really! Cala jumped up happily. “Would you! Oh that would be--” She cut off and glanced back at the warehouse. They shouldn’t be talking about this here. She could be getting Mugman and Cuphead in trouble. She didn’t know what their situation was right now. They didn’t have a chance to talk, after all. “Actually, you better not.” Cala’s eyes darkened. “They might want to come see me, and with that…” she trailed off. “It’d be better if they all stayed away from this place.”

“What’s so dangerous about an empty warehouse?” the girl asked flatly.

Cala bit her lip. She didn’t really want to explain. She wasn’t supposed to. Besides, he had been here not long ago. What could she say? “This may be a weird question, miss, but have you ever been afraid of the dark?”

“When I was a child.” Well, at least it was somewhere she could start, right? Warn her without telling her. Cala could do that, right?

Cala nodded. “Our eyes are usually more open when we are children.” She glanced back at the warehouse again. “We naturally knew to be suspicious of the dark, that there was something to fear. But as we grew up, we grew used to it. Our parents convinced us there was nothing there.” Cala gulped. “But they’re wrong. The shadows can hear us. And whatever happened in there, it was evil. The shadows are excited about it.” She turned back to the girl. Did it work? For all Cala knew, he was watching them right now. There was a buzz of magic around. Twisted and strange but familiar. But if it was him, why didn’t he appear? Was it not him? What other magic was this dark and different?

The girl suddenly changed topic. She laced her fingers behind herself. “How long until your ‘solution’ is ready?” Cala stared at her. It..it couldn’t be her, could it? She wasn’t a demon. How did she have power like that? Had she done something in there? Why? Then it clicked.

“You’ve touched it,” Cala gasped. Of course! Felix had taken the cog. Cala knew it was dangerous. But she thought it had stopped. Yet, here was that strange magic. Did she have it with her? She wasn’t acting hostile, so maybe it didn’t make her evil?

She frowned at the mermaid. “Just because I went inside the warehouse, doesn’t mean I’m evil.” Cala blinked at the girl’s answer. Again with that weird mind reading thing, but she wasn’t talking about the cog.

Cala shook her head and pointed at the girl’s hidden hands. “Can I see?” She offered her hand, palm up. Maybe she could use some ocean cleansing magic to protect her? The girl looked at Cala in confusion.

The girl hesitantly put her hand in front of her and offered it to Cala. The mermaid turned her hand and fingered the strange bracelet on her wrist. The bracelet was magic, but it wasn’t the source of the buzzing in Cala’s head. It made her skin crawl, but sadly, the girl wasn’t the source of that power. Cala couldn’t purify a tree from just a branch. She needed the root. How could she explain that? “There! Oh!” She blinked. “I guess I should say it touched you instead of you touching it. That’s a lot of magical potential.” Cala looked up at the confused girl. “Are you okay? Is this why you can’t sleep? The cog does weird things to people.” Poor thing. Was it making her suffer? Cala
remembered how terrible it had been.

The girl blinked at Cala. “I can’t sleep because I have a lot of my mind,” she said tonelessly. “What do you mean by it touching me?” Oh? Cala wasn’t sure she believed that.

Cala smiled weakly and hunched her shoulders. “Well, of course I recognize the magic. I was trapped right next to it for...years.” She brushed one of the tentacles out of her face nervously and glanced up. Oooh, she really didn’t want to talk about this. “You should be careful of that thing. It’ll get you, and then it’s very difficult to get away.” Cala let go of the bracelet and shifted into a sitting position with her hands wrapped around a bend in her tail. She could still get away from it. Cala was pretty sure that it would leave her alone if she got away from it. “That’s why I want to help them. They saved me when I had given up hope. It was amazing to see Mugman move something I thought was immoveable.” She smiled. “And to see actually daylight again.”

The girl hummed. “That seems pleasant.” She paused thoughtfully. “Your words still confuse me, Cala.”

Cala looked up in surprise. “Oh, I’m sorry.” She blushed. She knew she wouldn’t be able to explain. “My mind has been racing ever since I got out of my cage. There has been so much to see and learn. I keep jumping around.” She glanced back at the warehouse. It’s annoying to be so distracted, but memories and reality were mixing. She could move and do things again. It was all overwhelming. “If you don’t have to rush, you want to get somewhere we can talk more comfortably? I don’t mind telling you everything I know. You’re a friend of the heroes, after all.” She could be trusted, right? Cala had an escape if not, but she seemed like a good person. It wasn’t her fault the cog had messed with her a little. It had done worse to Cala.

“That sounds like an agreeable idea.” She stood up and started to walk away from the warehouse.

Cala jumped back into the water. She splashed along side the walking girl. She jumped up so they could see each other. Cala also watched how the girl moved. Legs were always so interesting. How did she stay up when she went from one limb to another? Did they have to count and time it right? She was getting distracted again. “So how long have--” Splash. “--you known Mugman and the others?”

She scoffed. “I met Mugman three days ago. As for the others, I’ve known Bendy and Boris since a little bit before their trial, so a couple weeks.” Only weeks? And they were going after such dangerous things? Then again, Mugman and Cuphead were involved...but only recently?

“Oh, that’s too bad. I was going to ask--” Splash. “--what Cuphead and Mugman were up to since they--” Splash. “Well, that was so long ago.” They had disappeared from the isles years ago. Cala had wondered if they had ever returned. Guess this girl wouldn’t know. At least they weren’t dead like some had thought back then.

“You’ve known them a while?” She sounded intrigued. Cala grimaced under the water again. She really shouldn’t say anything.

She flew up and waved her hand back and forth before falling back into the waves. Cala might as well be honest, though. She came back up. “Not really. Came from the same Islands, though.”

“And where is that?” the girl asked excitedly.

“Oh, just a little place about half a day’s sail from here,” Cala said vaguely.

“What is it called?” The girl turned to face the waves. Wouldn’t she trip walking like that?
“You wouldn’t want to go there,” Cala said quickly, shaking her head. Oh no. This pretty human didn’t need to meet the Devil or any of the other debtors. Especially if she was in cahoots with the cups. It wouldn’t go over well.

“Why?” The girl pouted. Cala stayed under the water to think. She couldn’t talk about him, so what could she say? Her mind scrambled for an answer.

Finally, she splashed up again. “It’s a long story, but there isn’t--” Splash. “--much left of that place, I’m sure.” She came up again. “It was on the decline when I was still around there years ago.” She fell and came up again. “And if they’re here, it must really have fallen apart.” The girl watched her come up and down as they went along the docks.

She stopped walking and turned towards Cala. “Does your story that’s too long to share, even though I’m not sleeping and you’re just sitting here, waiting have to do with their mysterious ‘big boss’?” Cala nearly squeaked in surprise. She knew! The girl pulled out a notebook and flipped it open. She waved the notebook in the air. “Their Devil?”

What were those boys doing! Did they know she knew! Oh no! Oh no! Wait, wait. She was asking, which meant she was guessing. Then, she didn’t know? Then what was with the notebook? Was that proof! Well, she wasn’t going to learn anything from Cala! “Th-their boss? The--” Oh! She needed to be closer to eye level for this! Shouting this conversation over the sound of the water didn’t feel safe at all! She disappeared into the water and threw herself back on the docks in front of the girl. She stumbled a few steps back, keeping out of reach. Had Cala scared the human girl? Oops. She stuffed the notebook back in her pocket. If that was proof Cala would have to ruin it! Oh dear.

“We can’t talk out in the open. Do you have somewhere we can go? Please!” Cala clasped her hands in front of her. She begged the human to listen to her. Even her octopus was begging with big eyes. “I can even sit out of the water for as long as it takes.” She had to do damage control. If this human dug in too deep, she could get herself killed or worse! Not to mention getting the boys or Cala in trouble.

She looked at Cala with uncertainty. She took a moment to think. She put a hand on her hip and smiled. “You don’t mind riding in a wheelbarrow, do you?” A what?

Cala shook her head regardless. “Just tell me what I have to do.” This was to protect herself, her hero, and this girl that didn’t even know the danger she was putting herself in. The cog was one thing, the Devil was a whole different ball game.

The girl gestured for Cala to wait. “Just wait here while I go get it.” Then she walked away into the rows of warehouses and the shadows. Cala sat nervously on the dock. To think a few years back just sitting in the open had her this jumpy. Now, going to the Surface was one of the easiest laws for her to break. Guess being a ‘monster’ had that effect.

The human was taking a long time. Cala was starting to really worry for her. What if he really was still around and had nabbed her when they seperated? What would she tell Mugman? What about Bendy and Boris? They seemed to have been close to her. Oh dear. She didn’t even remember her name!

“Oh dear, oh my. What to do? What to do?” Cala bit her lip and wrung her hands together. A noise caught her attention. She was ready to dive back in the water when she looked up. “You’re back!” The girl was walking toward her. She was pushing a strange bowl thing balanced on a single wheel. A wheelbarrow?

“Yeah,” she said cheerfully. “Hop up, and we can get going.”
Cala eyed the weird ‘wheelbarrow’ before pulling herself in. Her tail hung over the edge, and her hands gripped the sides. She tried to keep herself in the middle so it stayed balanced. “Okay.” Her scales scraped the bottom of it.

“Off we go, then!” the girl said and turned the wheelbarrow toward the city. Cala stared at the city with wide eyes. The lights were brighter, harsher up here. There were bugs and trees and plants and the sky was dark from the city lights. Instead of coral, buildings were made of rock. No fish, no snails. It was so strange and amazing. They left the city without seeing anyone and headed into a dirt road surrounded by trees. She pushed Cala around a huge, dark building. It had a round dome over one side of it. It was huge. The door was locked, but the human seemed to know what to do. Cala gulped silently to herself. She used magic. The lock didn’t seem magical. She was breaking in. Was Cala in...trouble? Even if she was friends with the heros, that didn’t promise Cala safety. She would need to find a source of water.

A strained, metallic noise came from the door. It door swung open. The human girl smiled proudly and came back for Cala, wheeling her inside. The mermaid noticed the human took a moment to close and lock the door behind them. Cala might have made a mistake.

Bendy woke up to the large, sparkling pup eyes of his little brother. “Bendy! You’re finally awake!”

Bendy blinked. “Uh?” he groaned.

“You’ve been asleep for two days!” Boris said. Oh was that all.

Bendy went to shut his eyes again. He was still--He shot up in bed. “Two days!” The room spun. Boris grabbed him before he could fall over.

“Careful! You’re still weak from healing,” Boris said.

“What happened? Where are we? What happened to Alice?” Bendy demanded, looking around the room.

“Calm down, bro. You’re okay. We’re still at Granny’s house, and Alice is fine,” Boris said. Bendy was back in the bedroom where Oddswell and Holly tested the runes on them. He was even in the same bed. In the one next to him was a sleeping Cuphead and on the other was Felix. He was sitting up and smiled when Bendy made eye contact.

“Hey, Bendy! I just woke up five minutes ago. So hopefully, Cup will be with us soon,” Felix said. He was in a plain t-shirt. There weren’t any bandages or a sign of the hole in his arm. He seemed fine. Sunlight streamed in behind him, hinting at the noon light outside.

Mugs was sitting next to Cup’s bed, smiling at Bendy. “Good-mornin,’ or actually, good afternoon.”

“We’ve been out for two days?” Bendy asked.

“Yep!” Mugs nodded.

Felix groaned. “Sheba’s gonna kill me.” He rubbed the side of his head.

“I should be the one to take any action.” Oddswell entered the room. “That was very reckless of you three.” Felix dropped his ears and smiled sheepishly.
“Now doc, I told you already that they did the right thing!” Alice came in behind him with a slight pout on her dark lips. “If they had gone to the hospital that curse would have gotten them for sure! There wouldn’t have been anything those doctors could have done.” Alice waved a hand at them all. Oddswell scowled.

“A curse?” Bendy asked slowly.

Alice turned to him and nodded. “Yes, that’s right.”

Just then, Cuphead groaned and shook his head. “Cuppy!” Mugs stood up and leaned over the bed. Cup cracked his eyes open.

“Ugh, my aching head,” he groaned. “What happened?” He lifted a hand to the side of his head. “Why does my face hurt?”

“You nearly bled to death in my front room,” Oddswell stated coldly. Alice sighed and gave him an annoyed look.

“Oh, is that all?” Cup grumbled. He rubbed his cheek. “I feel like I got slapped.”

“Well, your face was cracked.” Bendy deadpanned.

He felt his cheek. “Hey! My chip is gone!” He patted the side of his face. Sure enough, the eye patch and chip on the side of his head was healed. “Berries!” He grinned.

“Actually, you all are extremely lucky. That curse would have crashed your car...if your driver was driving any slower. It couldn’t catch up, and when it did, you were already giving me this back.” Alice pointed up to the halo that glowed warmly at them. “So, I was able to banish it before it could finish its work on you three.”

“Good to know Droopy drives faster than a demon can curse,” Holly said dryly, entering the room and leaning against the door frame. She smiled.

Alice nodded slowly with an uncertain look on her face. “I’m not sure those are safe speeds to drive at, but this time, I’m grateful for it.”

“That hellspawn scum tried to curse us?” Cup grumbled from his bed. He scowled. “He tried to kill us? Of cussing course he did. He’s always been a sore loser.”

“Don’t worry, Cuppy! Alice, Boris, and I already went to take care of that.” Mugs smiled.

Now Cup was the one to shoot up out of bed. “You what!”

“Careful Cups! You’re still weak—”

“Sunblaze that! You went back!” Cup grabbed Mugs’ shirt and yanked him until they were nose-to-nose. Mugs lifted his hands in surrender. “What did I tell you about doing risky stardust without me, huh! If he cursed us, he coulda done worse to you!” Bendy felt his stomach drop somewhere around his feet with the thought.

“Alice, Boris and I,” Mugs explained with a nervous smile. Bendy gave Boris a wide-eyed glance. “Alice was able to get Hat to back down and let the other two angels go. It was actually a very civil thing. Nothing shady at all. He ain’t gonna bother us as long as we keep quiet about the whole thing.”
“And why would he do that?” Bendy demanded. “He wanted that halo back bad enough to nearly kill us for it!”

“That was because he didn’t like ‘losing’ to us,” Mugs said calmly, pulling a little away from Cup to look at Bendy over his shoulder. “But he doesn’t want to start another Angel/Demon War.”

“And if this got out, that’s exactly what would happen unless the demon king, the Devil, didn’t punish him or deliver him to the angels for punishment,” Alice said with a straight face.

“So, we’re just supposed to pretend none of this happened?” Felix asked, looking around the room.

“Unless you want to bring politics into it.” Alice sighed.

“That’s insane,” Bendy murmured.

“No,” Felix frowned. “That’s politics.” Felix rolled his eyes like he knew how ridiculous it all sounded.

“So, we nearly die, and the guy just goes about business like it’s another Tuesday?” Bendy asked.

“Pretty much.” Alice grimaced.

“That’s a load of cussing stardust!” Bendy barked.

“But now he won’t try anything, and Alice is free with her halo and everything,” Boris pointed out sheepishly. Bendy dropped his shoulders in defeat. There wasn’t a point, was there?

“Is that all that’s happened?” Cuphead asked, letting his younger brother go.

“Pretty much,” Mugs said smiling.

“We fixed the pain pill deficiency problem, and everything is back on schedule,” Oddswell said. His eyes turned to Bendy and his tongue flicked. “Bendy, you had an Ink Attack while unconscious, but it appears that it wasn’t very bad. Not at all like the other one I was here for.” He narrowed his eyes. “It’s almost like you reversed it.”

“I what?” Bendy blinked.

Boris jumped in. “You didn’t melt much. There was still a lot of ink, but it wasn’t like it has been. Dr. Oddswell thinks this is a really good thing.” The wolf smiled and wagged his tail.

“You think it was because I was out?” Bendy asked.

“No, I’ve had unconscious subjects before,” Oddswell said. “Did you happen upon something in that casino? Or it could have possibly been the Blue Fairy’s healing magic?” Oddswell reached up and adjusted his glasses. “We’ll have to see.”

Something that happened at the casino? What could that have--Black Hat! He had somehow forced...something into Bendy. It had been terrifying and exhilarating. Power and strength had flooded him and sent him on a high he had never experienced before. He felt like he could do anything. What he wanted to do was break something, to fight and test that power and see where the limits were with this amazing...But his friend and idol had been right there...and he had something he had to do. He knew if he had let go...

Could it have been that power? But hadn’t Hat taken it back after the fight? He’d thought so. He had the rush taken just as suddenly and forcefully. It had made him dizzy, nauseous even. He had almost
collapsed when Hat had done that. Had some of it lingered? Had it helped his attack? What did that mean?

Bendy shifted on the bed uncomfortably. Black Hat had given Bendy a lot to think about. For maybe the second time in his life, he wanted to know more about what he was. The first time, he had only found those horrible stories and legends that filled him with disgust or annoyance. But this was different. Hat had terms and knew the culture. He was a demon. He had called Bendy a budling and then a fledgling. What did those even mean?

“I’m sorry, Dr. Oddswell. I don’t really know. It...could have been Hat, but I have no idea what he did,” Bendy admitted. Oddswell’s eyes gleamed. He nodded.

“I want you three to take it easy today. Take rest, go for a walk, have a night out. You need a break, so don’t push yourselves,” Dr. Oddswell said. He looked pointedly at Felix. The cat grinned and chuckled.

Cup yawned and rubbed his eyes. “Yeah sure, that sounds so nice I almost can’t believe it’s real. What’s the catch?” Mugs snorted at his older brother. Felix stood up and rotated his arm around slowly.

Bendy stretched too. He arched his back, then paused. “Oh, the burns are gone too.” Boris grinned next to him. “That fairy is good.” Bendy smiled. They got dressed quickly after that.

“Oh, Alice, could you stay up here for a moment?” Bendy asked. “Boris and I need a word with you.”

The others gave him a curious look but filtered out nonetheless. Alice fidgeted by the door. Bendy stood up, Boris next to him. “So, you’re the angel that gave my brother the map.”

Alice smiled awkwardly and shrugged. “Yes, but it was supposed to be an anonymous miracle.”

“Well, I want to thank you anyway.” Bendy smiled.

Alice’s eyes widened, and she shook her head quickly. “Oh! You don’t have to do that! Getting my halo back was more than thanks enough! Actually, I think I owe you now.”

Bendy chuckled. “But you saved the doll that one time too before the trial.”

Boris nodded. “Yeah Alice, you’ve done a lot for us. You took care of the curse too! And gave Holly a place to live.”

Alice blushed shyly. “It was no big deal.”

“It is to us! So, I have a couple questions.” Bendy stuffed his hands in his pockets. Alice over to him cautiously. “What are you doing here?”

“Um, I’m on the Surface trying to earn my wings.” Alice smiled.

“How?” Boris tilted his head.

“By learning a virtue or lesson I can take back to the Upper with me after performing an act of charity,” Alice explained. Both Bendy and Boris gazed at her oddly. Alice giggled. “It’s like the miracle I gave to you, Boris, except I have to learn something new too.”

“Oh, okay.” Boris smiled.
“So, are you planning to stick around?” Bendy asked.

Alice blinked surprised. “I hadn’t thought about it. I’m not planning to leave, if that’s what you mean. I want to help all of you more. I think I can.”

Bendy nodded. “Alright, I just have one favor to ask you.” He held up a finger. Alice nodded. “If you ever do leave, just tell us good bye yourself. No letter.”

Alice’s brow flew up. “Okay,” she said softly. “Can I ask a favor too?”

Bendy nodded. Boris smiled. “Sure!”

“Me being an angel is supposed to be a secret,” Alice explained.

“We won’t tell a soul,” Boris promised. Alice grinned.

“And thank you again, Alice.” Bendy winked.

Promises made, they joined the others.

The group made their way down the stairs. “So, today is a forced day off,” Bendy said. “What should we do?” Bendy asked Boris.

“I’m not sure,” Mugs said.

“Not sleeping. I’ve done enough of that,” Cup muttered.

“Um, well, there is one place I can think of,” Boris said with a small smile.

“Yeah? Where’s that bro?” Bendy asked.

Boris’ smile widened hesitantly. “The circus?” Bendy frowned. “They’re still in town, and it would be fun. We’d be able to relax and have a good time.”

Bendy grumbled, but Boris started to give him the wide eyes. “Fine, fine, don’t. We can go if ya want.” Boris deserved a good time. Whatever. Bendy would have his date with Holly. That would be his break. Heh.

“A circus? That sounds delightful!” Alice chirped. Her bright eyes glittered with excitement.

Cup deadpanned. Mugs elbowed his side. “C’mon Cup, it could be fun!”

“Surrounded by a sea of screaming brats. Fun.” Cup frowned. Boris glanced at him with annoyance in his eyes.

“Well, some of the tightrope girls are cute.” Bendy shrugged.

“Which circus?” Felix asked.

“Mickey’s circus! Circus Fantasia!” Boris smiled.

“Mickey’s.” Felix blinked. His face darkened. Bendy raised a curious brow at the odd reaction, but before he could ask, a sudden weight appeared on his shoulders, nearly yanking him down.

“The circus! What a fun idea, my mailman! You can win a prize, and we can ride the ferris wheel and kiss at the top.” Dot giggled. Bendy grimaced and tried to pry the girl’s arm off his neck.
“Uuuuuuuuuh, I think that’s a carnival, Dot.” Yakko stuck his head around Boris, making the wolf jump.

“Or the amusement park,” Wakko added from Cup’s shoulder. His eyes widened, and he jerked. The Warner stayed in place despite the sudden movement. He only swayed a little.

Dot pouted. “What’s the difference?”

“They don’t have rides.” Yakko chuckled.

“They do have food though.” Wakko licked his lips. He leaned over Cup to peer in his head with narrowed eyes. “So, how does your hair work? Do ya comb it or blow bubbles to make it fluffy? And what’s with the straws? Do they come out?”

“Get off!” Cup reached up, but Wakko hopped out onto Mugs shoulder. Mugs stiffened.

“Boy! He’s sure grumpy.” Wakko laughed, leaning on Mugs’ rim and throwing a thumb at Cups. Mugs smiled nervously.

“Well.” Dot sighed dramatically and swung to Bendy’s other side. “I guess it could still be fun.”

“You’re not invited! You’ll burn the place down!” Bendy growled. “And I’m supposed to relax! You three do the opposite!”

“Relax? Then why not hit a spa?” Yakko said. “I could use a massage after all.”

“Vat is going on ‘ere?” Dr. Scratchansniff asked. He came from the dining room.

“We’re going to the circus!” Dot declared.

He sighed. “But ve must be getting on de traun in un hour, yeah?” Dr. Scratchansniff said.

“Train? Where are you going?” Boris asked Yakko.

Yakko sighed dramatically and rolled his eyes. Bendy finally succeeded in pulling the youngest Warner away from him and dodging her attempt at a kiss in the meantime. A heart drifted in the air as he jumped behind Felix to put someone between them. Felix watched with an amused smile. “Someone is tryin’ to steal our company from us again, so we have to go back and take care of the mess.”

“Company?” Bendy blinked. “You fellas own a company?”

Wakko hopped off Mugs and wrapped an arm around Bendy’s shoulder. “Well sorta, we have to wait for Yakko to turn eighteen before we can really take over, but the sum we do get from it now pays the bills.”


“It’s uuuuuuuuh, somewhere between that and a choice,” Yakko said.

“What company?” Felix asked.

“Ever heard of ACME?” Dot asked. “We get a lot of our gags from there too.”

Cup and Mugs startled, their eyes widening. “You three own ACME!” Mugs exclaimed.
“What are you, future billionaires or something?” Cuphead muttered. His eye twitched.


Dot shrugged. “Don’t worry, we’ll remember you when we get our inheritance.” She looked at Bendy. “Some better than others.” She winked. Oh, stars above.

“Un ve better start packing if ve dos not vant to be late,” their guardian said. The three Warners sighed. Boris gave Bendy an awed look. Bendy shrugged. Should anything they do really surprise him anymore?

“We’ll see ya later,” Yakko said. “Maybe a little before the third act.”

“Don’t ya mean ‘climax’? We’re in a written fic, not a play or movie,” Wakko pointed out.

“Ah.” Yakko snapped his fingers. “Right!”

“Well, I hope you travel safely, and we hope to see you again soon.” Alice smiled.

“Promise a kiss, and I’ll be back like a flash,” Yakko growled and wiggled his eyebrows. Alice blinked and looked a bit taken by surprise.

“Okay! That’s great, have fun.” Bendy waved a dismissive hand at the three. They laughed. With the Warners leaving, that left the group back at where they started.

Felix tugged at his hat. “I really need to visit Sheba, but a quick drop by the circus shouldn’t hurt.”

“Berries! I wanna see the elephants,” Mugs said.

Cup sighed. “Well, the lion tamers should be interesting, at least.”

“Hurray! This is gonna be fantastic!” Boris cheered.

Bendy swallowed an annoyed grumble. Boris deserved this.

Just before they headed out, the phone rang. Granny called from the dining room. “Could one of you dears get it?”

Bendy grabbed it. “Hello?”

“Bendy? It’s Xedo Tiptail.” Xedo sounded happy. “It’s good to hear your voice. I am hopeful this means you have recovered.”

“Xedo? Hey, it’s been a while. Yeah, I’m fine. The Blue Fairy really saved our tails.”

“Quite.” Xedo’s tone dropped a bit. “Listen Bendy, I’m calling because I have a concern.”

“Yes?” Bendy drew out the word a bit. He sounded worried.

“Are you aware of the fire that happened?” Xedo asked.

“Your apartment?” Bendy furrowed his brows.

“No, the Syke’s warehouse,” Xedo stated.

Bendy’s eyes widened. He looked at Boris who paused and walked toward him. “The Sykes? When
“Did that happen? How! Why!”

“Sometime last night,” Xedo said gravely. “The Sykes are missing.”

“Do you think they’re covering their tracks? Or that they got attacked?” Bendy asked. Boris was now listening intently, so was Felix, Alice and the cups were noticing something was off.

“We don’t know, so be careful,” Xedo warned.

“We will, thanks for calling,” Bendy said with a sigh. Great, another mystery.

“Sure thing. Talk to you later.” The line went dead.

“Later,” Bendy muttered and hung up the phone.

“What was that about?” Felix asked.

“The Sykes are missing and their warehouse was burned to the ground last night,” Bendy said. The group went quiet.

“Golly,” Boris murmured. “Burned?”

“Xedo wants us to watch out,” Bendy finished.

Felix nodded. “Sounds reasonable to me. The Sykes are dangerous after all.”

“We can take them,” Cup stated with a bored expression. Bendy snorted.

“Well, we’re burning daylight, so we might as well go,” the demon said.

So, the questers plus Alice and Holly headed out to the circus. Before walking out the door, Alice tapped her halo, and it disappeared from sight. She winked and smiled at him.

On the way, there the demon noticed that their group got some odd looks. One person even stopped Felix to talk about his books. But most stayed back and looked at them like they were on display or something. It made him a little uncomfortable, but the others didn’t seem to notice. Mugs and Boris chatting happily about the circus. Holly, Alice and Felix were talking about something to do with angels. Bendy wanted to overhear, but Cup distracted him.

“Hey, so how are you holding up after all that at the casino?” Cup asked.

Bendy glanced at him. His face didn’t give much away. “Awww, does the cuppy care?” Bendy puckered his lips and changed his tone to match the one adults use to talk to babies.

Cup scowled, jammed his hands in his pockets. “Forget it!” And started to walk faster.

Bendy laughed and pulled him back by his sleeve. “Wait! Wait! I’m joking! I’m fine. That fairy did a bang-up job.”

“Not that. I’m mean.” Cup scowled. He glanced ahead and leaned down to whisper. “He was a demon and said a lot of stardust to ya.”

“Ah,” Bendy muttered, realization dawning on him.

“Just wonderin’ if you’re alright after all that.” Cuphead straightened up again, but he spoke softly.
Bendy sighed. Was he? He didn’t know. Most of what Hat had said went over his head. Still, Hat made him sound like a little kid, like he was a ticking time bomb for something bad. It was unsettling if he thought about it. “It’s not every day someone threatens to kidnap ya so you can get a hang of a culture,” he joked weakly.

Cup snorted.

Bendy felt his smile slip. “I don’t know what to think really, man. Hat’s a jerk,” Bendy muttered.

“No kidding,” Cuphead grumbled and rolled his eyes.

“So, how do you know him? ‘Cause he said...well.” Bendy glanced at Cup before looking away.

Cup’s face darkened. “It’s just that with the stories the other day, I thought you and Mugs with your...Know what? Nevermind, it’s none of my business.” Bendy waved his hands out like he could brush the whole conversation away.

Cup heaved a weighted sigh. “Mugs and I ended up living with him in a somewhat forced foster situation. He didn’t want to, and we didn’t want to, so the dislike was mutual.” He pulled out a pack of cigarettes and grabbed one.

Bendy felt a few questions bounce around his skull. What happened? Who were they with before that? But he held his tongue. Cup only had to share as much as he wanted. “Sorry to hear that,” Bendy muttered.

Cup snorted. “It’s nothin’ compared to your stories.”

“I dunno, I bet you had some scares with a schmuck like Hat around,” Bendy said. Cup smirked.

“True,” Cup said. He lit his smoke and pushed his hand into his pocket. Suddenly, there was a squeak. Cup jumped.

“What was that?” Bendy looked at him with a raised brow. Cup frowned and felt around his pockets. Bendy watched curiously.

“What the--?” Cup reached the inside of his coat and pulled out a familiar fluffball. She clenched to the inner lining of his pocket like it was her last bit of food. “Puff? How did you get in there?” He tried to coax her to let go. She sunk her teeth into the cloth stubbornly. Bendy thought he would force the animal to let go, but to his surprise, he put her back in his pocket.

Bendy frowned. “You’re not planning on stealing her, are you?”

Cup scowled. “No,” he said sternly. “But something has her spooked, and if she feels safer in my pocket, then I don’t have a problem letting her stay.”

Bendy blinked. “Spooked?”

Cup shrugged. “Like I said, animals have good instincts.” He gently patted the pocket and then stuck his hands in his pockets.

Bendy frowned and looked around their group for Holly. She had decided to come, hadn’t she? She was at the back, looking towards the house. She turned when Alice spoke to her.

“As long as you let Holly know her pet is alright, I don’t care,” Bendy said.

It didn’t take much longer for the group to get to the circus. The side shows were already going at
full swing. The fellas had to stop at the strong man’s mallet test. Of course. Mugs got it halfway to ‘amateur.’ Cup passed him by one to ‘works out.’ Felix got it up to ‘tough guy.’ Poor little brother was stuck at marshmallow. He scowled and passed it to Alice. She tried to pass it to Holly first.

Holly took the hammer, giving Alice an amused look. She swung it.

The bob stopped under Boris’ at ‘first swing,’ which Bendy figured meant ‘try again.’ He held back a chuckle and watched a bemused Holly pass the hammer to Alice. Bendy crossed his arms. Were angels strong? Guess he’d get to find out.

Alice smiled and lifted the hammer. “Well, here I go!” She swung it down and the bell rang loudly. Boris even had to cover his ears.

“Good heavens woman! You’re a beast!” The clown working the thing laughed. “Nice job.”

“So, I did it right?” She smiled. That caused the clown to laugh harder. Cup and Mugs shared a surprised glance.


“Fine.” Bendy rolled his eyes. He held back enough not to break it...though he may have dented the bell a little bit. They wandered around after that, going to different booths, and trying out different games. Cup and Mugs were way too good at the baseball throwing booth. They got every target without blinking! Alice and Holly were both pretty good at the ring toss. Felix was amazing with the peashooter rink. They had fun, then got some popcorn and cotton candy before heading into the big tent.

There, the big show was about to start. Elephants, trapeze artists, lion tamers, clowns, knife throwers, jugglers and fire eaters. You name it, they had it. Mickey was ringleader, and the bunny kids were the band and moving crew for everything that didn’t demand heavy or dangerous things to be moved. They also worked with the clowns. One clown stopped in spotting them. He came up to the stands.

“Hey! It is you! Holly!” he grinned.

She looked up with a bland expression and blinked. “Oh.” She smiled. “Hello Koko.”

“You know a clown?” Mugs asked.

“She knows us, she knows a bunch of clowns.” Alice smiled.

Koko laughed. “That was a good one, little miss!” The clown’s eyes scanned the group. They zeroed in on Bendy and Boris. Oh stars, here we go. “And you two are the Bbros! The mouse will want to see you after the show!” Koko grinned.

Boris vibrated with excitement. Bendy resigned himself to the future. The clown finished his scan with Felix before turning back to Holly. “So, no luck with Betty and Bimbo, uh?”

She blinked. “No, not really. They’ve been wrapped up in each other.” She shrugged. “I’m sorry.”

Alice leaned forward. “You know Betty and Bimbo?”

Koko lit up. “I’m an ol’ chum of theirs! Bimby has some grudge issue with Mickey and Oswald, though, so he doesn’t come around. Think he’s mad at me too. That was years ago though, so I wanna patch things up with that stubborn dog.”
“Good luck,” Cup muttered.

Alice blinked. “Well, you should come by the shop sometime. I’m sure Holly and I can help.”

Koko brightened. “That’d be swell. Now, you folks enjoy the show!” He waved and went back to the ring.

Cup leaned over to talk to Holly. “Golly Holly, what kinda company do you keep outside of this circle from that house?” He chuckled.

Holly looked at him, giving him a polite smile. “Why all sorts. The people in the city are all so interesting.” Her voice was light, drizzled with forced sweetness. She turned back to the show. "Though not everyone is my cup of tea.”

Cup raised a brow and snorted a laugh. Alice looked a little taken aback. Bendy pulled him back down into his seat. “Shush. There’s a show going on.”

“Alright, alright,” he grumbled and stuck his hands in his pockets.

Bendy glanced over and caught Alice’s eye. She gave him a concerned look. He knew Cup was a pain, but Holly was a great girl and probably still didn’t trust him. He didn’t need to mess with her like that.

The show ended too soon for Bendy’s liking but also not soon enough. It seemed the clown had accidentally drawn attention to them, and the whispers of ‘Bbros’ started to circle around him and Boris. That, and people had started to notice Felix again. When it ended, there were a number of people that immediately came up to talk to the cat and to the brothers. Bendy was instantly overwhelmed. Boris stayed close to him luckily, so Bendy didn’t feel like he was completely drowning. People had all these illness stories and were thanking them for speaking up about the issue and standing up for the doctor. It was all a little amazing.

In a daze, Bendy and Boris were pulled free by Cup and the clown and ushered to an exit. Felix was saved by Mugman.

“Golly, that was a shock,” Boris said.

“A lot of families have come here hoping to get help,” Koko said. “And you two are the reason the story broke out. Nice job.” He winked.

“Yeah, well hopefully more will come of it than just a story going out,” Cup muttered.

Koko raised a brow. “Oh yeah? You wouldn’t be talking about that there machine that’s hit the papers?”

Cup smirked. ‘Wouldn’t you like to know.”

“Anyway,” Bendy broke in. “Isn’t there somewhere we should be going?”

Koko blinked. “Oh! Right! Mickey is expecting ya!” The clown grinned and escorted them to the line of apartments behind the circus. He knocked on the door and winked at them before walking away.

“What an interesting fellow,” Felix commented.

“He should be, he’s a clown,” Cup said.
Before Bendy could say anything in response to Cup’s snark, the door opened. The famous mouse was there. “Boris!” He immediately hugged the wolf.

“Mr! Mickey! It’s so good to see you again!” Boris’ tail was going a mile a minute. Bendy rolled his eyes and bit back his grumble.

“You too! And goodness! You brought a number of friends!” Mickey pulled back and looked around the group.

Boris bounced aside to introduce everyone. “Yeah! This is Mugman, Cuphead, Alice, Holly and--”

“Mr. Felix! It’s good to see you again!” Mickey grinned and stepped up to shake his hand. Bendy blinked.

He turned to the cat. “You know him?”

Felix smiled. “We’ve run into each other a couple of times. How are you and the family?” he asked Mickey.

“Great! The kids will be excited to see you again!” Mickey said cheerfully.

“And your brother?” Felix asked, his face darkening with a blush.

Mickey lit up. “He’s a lot better too. He’ll wanna see you too.” Felix’ face darkened even more, and he ducked his head.

Huh?

“And Holly! It’s good to see you again! Thank you for bringing everyone here!” Mickey grinned at the girl.

She smiled. “Oh, I didn’t need to, they all were so excited to come see your circus. You are all so talented.”

“It’s the best!” Boris cheered.

Mickey chuckled, his cheeks flushed. “Ah shucks. You should tell the kids that! I don’t do much.”

“Yeah right! You’re the best Mr. Mickey!” Boris shook his head so hard his ears flapped around.

“Well, come in! We have some time to relax a little. Once Oswald gets back, we can go to dinner, my treat!” Mickey said. Bendy blinked. After what happened last time? He glanced at Cuphead. Oh, that’s right. Mickey wasn’t there when the dish had busted in, finger gun blazing. Who had been? Bendy couldn’t remember.

Holly cleared her throat. “You wouldn’t be thinking of going to P--the cafe where Max works?”

Mickey paused. “Well, I don’t know. Max would love to see you again. He heard about your thoughtful invite and wanted to thank you on his and his girlfriend’s behalf.”

She grinned. “Oh, he’s so sweet.”

They came inside the same simple living room. No one else was in sight. “Sit down, relax. We have a bit of time. How have you been since that trial?” Mickey asked Boris. “The doctor got out too, so that has to be good news.”
Boris perked up. “Oh, it is! Things are a lot better now! Hospitals are helping, the doctor’s pain pills are being made in other places, and we found another way to help fight off the illness’ affects.”

Mickey sat next to Boris with a smile. The pup’s tail hadn’t stopped.

“And with our friends’ help, I’m sure will find a cure soon,” Boris said. Mugs and Cup smiled.

“Absolutely.” Felix beamed.

Alice nodded. Holly smiled in affirmation.

Mickey’s smile slipped. “Oh? Has the doctor found something?”

“You’ve heard the rumors of the machine, right?” Boris asked with wide eyes.

Mickey blinked. “Oh, well, a little. I have been so busy I don’t know the details.”

“Well, it’ll make the cure,” Boris explained.

“Have they found it?” Mickey raised a brow. Boris paused.

“Oh, uh, no, not yet, but it’s only a matter of time!” Boris got his momentum back almost instantly.

Mickey smiled, but it didn’t seem to reach his eyes. “Well, in the meantime, there is still a job here for you.” Mickey rested a hand on his shoulder.

Bendy blinked. A job? When the hell had Mickey offer Boris a job!

Boris smile shrank but didn’t fall completely. Mugs cut in before he could speak. “You can work here at the circus Boris! That’s berries!”

Boris chuckled and scratched the back of his head. “N-no! It wouldn’t be anything special--”

“Nothing special! No way, Boris! We definitely need a good fix-it man! This place would fall apart instantly without good maintenance.” Mickey chuckled, Bendy’s eyes widened as he looked to his brother, his flushed face, his wagging tail, his sad eyes. He wanted to. He really wanted to.

“Sorry, Mr. Mickey, the answers the same as last time.” Boris shrugged like it was no big deal, but Bendy could see the sacrifice. He was turning down his idol.

“That’s too--”

“What kind of work?” Bendy found himself asking. Mickey startled.

“Oh, uh, mechanic maintenance and such.” Mickey smiled.

“Show us,” Bendy asked and stood up. “You said we have some time before dinner. We might as well have a look.”

Mickey blinked. Boris’ eyes looked like they might roll out of his head. “Would you like to see, Boris?”

“Really?” Boris looked to Bendy. The demon nodded. The wolf whipped to Mickey. “Absolutely!”

“O-okay! Follow me!” Mickey stood up. The group made to follow when a door opened.

“It’s Mista Felix!” a small voice shouted. Suddenly, there was a rumble, and when Bendy turned
back, the cat adventurer was buried under a pile of happy bunny children.

“Mr. Felix? You okay?” Bendy asked uncertainly.

“Fine! Hello lovelies! It’s good to see you sweeties again. Wanna come with us?” Felix asked.

“Yes!” sounded the chorus. Bendy raised his brows at the flood of fur passed him. Cup blinked. Mugs stared.

Felix fixed his jacket and hat with a chuckle. Bendy looked up at him. “They sure like you.”

Felix looked at him then ruffled his head. “They’re good kids.”

“Wait.” Cup lifted a hand. “They’re all siblings?”

“All of them?” Mugs added.

“All of them.” Felix nodded.

“How--”

“Four hundred and twenty,” Felix answered the stunned brothers.

“Oh my.” Alice giggled.

Eventually, they made their way around the building and to the back. There was a mountain of parts, machines, tools, and scrap. Bendy raised his brows. Cup whistled. “That’s a lotta junk.”

“’S not junk,” Bendy muttered. He found Mickey and Boris leaning over a cotton candy machine.

“So, you see the problem?” Mickey asked.

“Yeah, that should be easy enough.” Boris stood up and looked around. “Where are your tools?” The next thing Bendy knew, he and Boris were getting swept up in project after project. A busted wrench here, a bad cage door there, a tiny clown car motor and so on. The others got dragged into the work or were entertaining the kids that messed around with the parts like they were a playground. Alice and Holly watched them mostly, and Felix couldn’t shake them if his life depended on it. They loved him.

Bendy tried not to let the pang of annoyance or jealousy get to him. Mr. Felix was an adult, and Bendy had no reason to get jealous. What was he to the great cat adventurer, after all? A teammate. One of the questers. He should be proud. Cup and Mugs helped with the assembly and bringing over parts or finding things. Bendy did his best to get lost in the work. It was nice to hold a wrench, a screwdriver, a drill, and not think about anything outside of pulling something apart and putting it back together better than it was before. He had missed it.

It was only when that mouse would walk up and compliment Boris, patting him on the back or petting his head that he would lose his rhythm. Or those kids laughed extra hard with Felix. He grit his teeth.

What was he doing wrong? Nothing! He should be happy that Boris was getting praise. By his idol no less! Felix’ compliments sent Bendy through the roof with joy after all! So, why was he feeling so cussing bitter? He glared at Mickey from behind his goggles.

*It’s just demon nature.* Bendy shook his head. Hat’s words were a bunch of hogwash. He didn’t have a ‘claim’ on Boris or Felix. They were both their own people that could make their
“What’s got you in a twist?” Cup suddenly leaned on the ice machine.

“What the hell are you talking about?” Bendy snipped.

“Well, ever since we came out here, your mood as taken a cussing nose dive, that’s what.” Cup raised a brow.

“Nothing,” Bendy grumbled and leaned back into the open panel to reach the far side.

“Uh-huh, that’s a load of stardust.” Cup chuckled. “Is it the mouse?”

“Leave me alone, Cuphead,” Bendy warned.

“You're not jealous are you?” Cup taunted.

Bendy pulled back and lifted his goggles to glare at the man. Cup blinked, his eyes widening.

“Holy cuss, you are!” Cup smirked.

“Shut up!” Bendy barked. “He’s having a great time! I’m not jealous!”

“Oh yeah, then what’s with the red light show?” Cup leaned down to grin in Bendy’s face.

Bendy took a couple of deep breathes so he wouldn’t punch the schmuck. “It’s...he really wants to work for that mouse.”

“And?”

“He won’t because I’m here,” Bendy admitted.

“And is that a good thing or a bad thing?” Cup lost the smile.

“Good?” he answered. “No, bad.” The demon shook his head. “I don’t cussing know.”

“You're afraid that mouse is going to take him away from you,” Cup stated.

Bendy scoffed and rolled his eyes. “That’s ridiculous.”

“Is it? A good job at a world traveling circus with your biggest idol as your dream boss? He could go off and see places he never dreamed of, he’d do something he loves doing, and he’d have the positive support of someone he looks up,” Cup said. Bendy felt like stomach turned to lead. He clenched his fists. He was right. That damn mouse could offer Boris everything he ever hoped for. Everything Bendy had never been able to give him.

“But he won’t take it.” Cup’s words cut through his thoughts. “Know why?”

Bendy grit his teeth. His fists shook. “Because I’m holding him back.”

Cup snorted. “No, you cussing moron! Because he loves ya! You're his brother! He couldn’t replace you for anyone in the world! You’ve been through thick and thin together. He won’t just run off because there’s a nice deal hanging in the air. He wouldn’t be the good brother you bend over backwards for if he did. Only scum would do that!”

Bendy blinked and looked up at him in surprise. Cup chuckled. “What’s with the shock? It’s obvious
to the rest of us.” Bendy felt his throat tighten. Was it really that clear to everyone else? He cleared his throat.

“Thanks Cup,” Bendy murmured.

“Hey, what are pals for?” Cup gave him a cheeky smile. “And the same goes for the rest of us too, Bends. We got your back man.”

Bendy let out a surprised huff of air. He turned back to the machine and reached in again. Cup chuckled. “You’re not crying are you?” he taunted.

“Shut up. You’re the one that cries, not me,” Bendy chuckled wetly.

“Tsk, see if I ever open up to you again,” Cup grumbled.

“But really, thanks,” Bendy said.

“Forget about it. Let’s just finish this up so we can go eat! I’m starved!” Cup waved off his words.

“Alright, alright, almost done.” Bendy smiled and went back to it, feeling a lot lighter than before. With that machine done, Bendy straightened out and wiped his hands off on a rag. He glanced at Mickey and Boris again before approaching Felix, Alice, Holly, and a swarm of rabbits.

“Hey, Bendy! Are you done? That was splendid work out there. You and Boris are so fast!” Felix smiled. A bunny hung off his shoulder.

“Can you shew me how to build like dat, mister?” one of the kids asked.

“Uh?” Bendy looked down...Hey, he looked down!...He shouldn’t be so proud of that. He looked to the kid that spoke.

“I wanna fix things like you do!” the kid said.

“Um.” Bendy looked from the child to Felix. The cat was smiling warmly. Bendy cleared his throat. “Well, it takes a lot of practice. And just because you don’t get it right the first time, doesn’t mean you give up. It can be dangerous though, so you can’t just throw things together. I learned a lot by taking things apart and seeing how everything fit together. It took me a long time to figure how to put them back together, so that they worked. Don’t give up, and I’m sure you’ll get a hang of it kid.” Bendy smiled.

“That’s so berries!” The kid looked up to him with bright, excited eyes.

“Hey, your glasses are really snazzy! Where’d you get ‘em?” another kid asked.

Bendy lifted a hand to his goggles. “They’re protective goggles to keep my eyes safe while I work.”


“Hey, where’s the party?” Bendy turned to see a tall rabbit walk up.

“Daddy! Papa!” The children rushed him. His eyes widened as he was bowled over.

“I guess dad is home,” Alice giggled. A little bunny was sitting contently in her arms.

“Hey Ozzy!” Mickey called. He, Boris, and the Cupbros joined the group. “Where’s Donald and
“Goofy?”

“They’re already at the restaurant. Who are all of these people?” Ozzy asked, getting up from his child pile.

“Ozzy, this is Boris, Cuphead, and Mugman.” Mickey indicated the three behind him. “And that over there is Alice and Holly, and you remember—”

“Felix! Nice to see you again!” Ozzy walked over to the cat with a bright smile. Felix ducked and flushed.

“Hello, Oswald,” Felix murmured. “Glad to see you’re doing well.”

“Everyone, this is my brother Oswald,” Mickey said brightly.

“It’s a pleasure,” Alice nodded.

“Nice to meet you,” Holly said.

“Hey,” Cup said. Mugs waved with a smile.

“It’s a pleasure, Mr. Oswald!” Boris grinned.

“And all of you!” Oswald said. “So, I’m guessing this is a party then?”

“They were helping with repairs! I was thinking of treating them.” Mickey grinned.

“Ah, fix-it guys, huh?” Oswald smirked.

“Papa! I want fix-it goggles like his!” one of the kids said, pointing at Bendy.

“Oh?” Oswald looked over to him. “Oh really?” He grinned. “We’ll see.” He looked at his kid with a smile before turning to Bendy. “And I think I missed your name.”

“Bendy,” Bendy said.

“So, you fixed up my brother’s junk.” Oswald smirked.

“It’s for the circus, Ozzy!” Mickey popped up behind him and threw an arm around his shoulders. It seemed a little tough since the rabbit was taller, but Mickey managed it. “Come one! Let’s get some food for everyone.”
Chapter Summary

Mic smiled, he had on a festive sweater vest and bowtie. He tugged at the tie and cleared his announcer's voice. "Welcome ladies and gentlemen to the show! The brothers are in for a meal they weren't ready for! Let's see where this madness goes!"

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! Sorry, it's late!
It's all finals and lack of sleep for me! My brain is fried and Mercowe and my boo are the ones keeping me sane...~ish. XD Sorry for all you sweets that left me comments and feedback. I promise I will get around to answering you when I can. Finals are down this week but then I have to pack for a few weeks to see my family. (Psst. we're thinking of getting my bro a gag gift. Hopefully it will work out XD) so sorry I am dropping the ball here guys. Life...got in the way. Please enjoy. And Happy Holidays.

OH WAIT! Owo I nearly forgot! I made a mistake and added to the last chapter. It's just before Bendy wakes up so if you don't wanna miss something go check it out. I am so sorry. =w= I am prone to mistakes which is everything I've done this past week...or at least that's what it feels like sometimes. Honestly, I will probably redo some of these chapters once the story is done because I'm not completely happy with them, but that's neither here nor there so go ahead and enjoy reading. Thank you for your patience.

Bendy, Boris, and the cups had to clean up in the house before they headed out. The kids wanted to come, but the rabbit father and two babysitters were able to convince the children to stay. It was no small feat. Felix also had to promise to come back and visit soon so they could play. The little bunny, apparently a girl, also cried when Alice had to put her down.

Bendy wasn't sure, but he thought the angel had teared up a little too. All child drama aside, they were finally headed to the restaurant.

Mickey chatted excitedly with Boris and Oswald. He would bring in Alice or one of the dishes with a question or a compliment. Felix walked, mostly quiet, beside them. Bendy was still trying to figure out what was with the cat author. Felix wasn’t shy, so what was going on? He and the rabbit obviously knew each other but wasn’t it the same with the mouse?

“So, have you ever eaten at this place?” Cup asked. Oh yeah, Bendy should warn him about that.

“Almost,” Bendy said.

“Almost? How do you almost eat somewhere?” Cup snorted a laugh.
“Oh, I don’t know, when you are waiting on the food, but then a gunner comes running in and shoots up the place.” Bendy shrugged and turned a deadpan gaze on the former thug. “It’s hard to eat somewhere when you’re running for your life, after all.”

Cup’s face froze. He tripped before saving himself. “What!”

“Yeah.” Bendy smirked.

“It can’t be the same place!” Cup said.

“Oh, you can bet your straw it’s the same one.” Bendy chuckled.

“Cuppy, what did you do?” Mugs looked back at them.

“I--Uh--It,” Cup choked on his words.

Bendy burst into laughter from the flustered look on Cup's face. “Oh Cup, you might have some apologizing to do.”

“You are terrible!” Cup turned on him. “I ain’t going!” He went to leave, but Bendy grabbed his arm.

“Wait, no.” Bendy breathed to calm himself down. “You’ll feel better after. Besides, you’re the one trying to go straight. Doesn’t work if you run away.”

“I ain’t runnin’,” Cup growled.

“Uh-huh, and I ain’t a demon.” Bendy smirked.

“Cup, did you break something?” Mugs asked with a sigh.

“What?” Boris finally seemed to hear them over his own conversation. “What did Cup do?”

“Remember that last time we tried to eat at this place, bro?” Bendy smirked. The wolf blinked, then his eyes widened. Bendy laughed at his expression.

“Bendy! That’s not funny!” Boris gasped.

“He’ll apologize! It’ll be fine.” Bendy waved off his brother’s worry.

“Wait, you two are brothers?” Oswald asked.

“Yeah! Bendy’s my big brother!” Boris answered. Oswald gave the demon an amused look. “He’s the best!”

“Big brother, huh?” The rabbit smirked. Bendy didn’t like that look. “And you’re letting him hog all the attention?”

Bendy shrugged. “I don’t need it.”

“Boris, is there something we don’t know?” Mickey asked.

“Oh, it’s…” Boris glanced at Bendy for help.

Bendy opened his mouth to speak up, but Mickey spoke first. “I’m sure it’ll be fine. Don’t worry!” Mickey smiled. Bendy was left with his mouth half open.
“You sure, Mr. Mickey?” Boris asked sheepishly.

“Absolutely!” Mickey grinned, wrapping an arm around Boris’ shoulders.

Cup blinked. He glanced from the back of Mickey’s head to Bendy. “That was a little weird, wasn’t it?”

Bendy closed his mouth and frowned. “Dunno,” he muttered. The two of them stayed quiet and listened in on the other’s conversation now.

“So, you’ve been working as a mechanic with your brother for five years?” Oswald asked. “Not bad.”

“I’m still learning, but Bendy is an genius!” Boris said. Bendy smiled.

“Nonsense, you did great today, Boris!” Mickey said. “I think you have amazing talent!”

Boris grinned and blushed. “Th-thank you.”

“And what are you doing now, kiddo?” Mickey asked.

“Mostly traveling with Bendy and the rest to help Dr. Oddswell,” Boris said.

“Huh, how do you make ends meet?” the rabbit asked.

“Oh, we’ve been staying with the doctor. Our money is getting a bit tight,” Boris admitted.

“You should come to the circus to earn a bit! You can’t go hungry,” Mickey gasped. Bendy felt his stomach twist at the thought of Boris going hungry like before.

The wolf laughed. “Oh no, Granny would never let us go hungry.”

“Too true!” Mugs added.

“And if she didn’t, I would feed you!” Alice declared. “I can’t let my heroes go hungry!”

Mickey and Oswald laughed. “Heroes huh?” Oswald asked.

“Oh yes! Bendy and Boris are very heroic people!” Alice smiled.

“They’ve helped all of us,” Holly added.

“Yeah, that’s true,” Mugs agreed.

“Absolutely.” Felix nodded and ducked.

“Yeah, Bendy has been a real lifesaver,” Cup stated.

“Well berries.” Oswald smirked. “Who knew I was amongst such examples.”

Bendy snorted. “No way, I’m just a fella trying to get by.”

“Oh, and humble too!” There was teasing in the rabbit’s tone.

“Yeah right! This guys’ ego could move the moon.” Cup snickered.

“No, no, that’s your head,” Bendy said. Oswald laughed.
“So Boris, what are your goals for later in life?” Mickey asked. “What do you want to do? Travel? Go to school? Go back home?”

“Well, Bendy and I always thought about opening our own shop and keeping doing the mechanic thing. We’d teach and hire folks that’d need the help.” Boris shrugged. “Like we got help.”

“That’s really something.” Mickey smiled. “And generous. Who taught you to fix cars?”

“Jack and Turney, a couple of old grumps. They weren’t the nicest about it, but they did help us,” Boris said. “We’ll be nicer though, uh Bendy?”

“Yeah.” Bendy nodded.

“Of course you’re nice, Boris. I can’t imagine you not being so! You’re a swell young man. So, you want to own your own business,” Mickey mused. “It takes a lot of work.”

“Like when you and Mr. Oswald started out?” Boris asked.

“Yeah, we made a lot of mistakes back then,” Mickey said, looking off in the distance. He smiled as an idea seemed to come to him. “Hey Boris, how about I show you the ropes so you can avoid those kinda things?”

Oswald smirked. “Yeah kid, avoid our mess.”

“That’d be great!” Boris said.

Bendy blinked. Um... he shared a glance with Cup. Cup looked a little confused too. So it wasn’t just him?

“But how much is a circus like a car shop?” Boris asked.

“Well, business is always business,” Mickey said. “You have assets, liabilities, and your money flow. There will be supplies you’ll need and a location to run a business. For you, you’ll need a license to operate too.”

“Golly, that sounds like a lot.” Boris' ears fell.

Alice pulled on Holly’s sleeve. “What’s a license?”

Mickey chuckled. His thin tail flicked. “It can feel overwhelming, but you have books that help keep track of everything.”

“And what about the license?” Boris asked.

“We can look into it.” Mickey petted him with a bright smile. Uh…

“Would it have to be both of us?” Bendy cut in.


“So, once the licensing is done, you’ll need to find a spot to open shop,” Mickey said.

“Why aren’t you sure?” Bendy suddenly asked. He was annoyed. He didn’t want to ruin Boris’ good time, but that uncomfortable feeling was growing. This guy was talking about Boris’ future with such certainty. Taking over the planning like it was nothing. The mouse was assuming things.
Bendy didn’t like it. He just—didn’t!

“What?” Mickey asked with wide eyes.

“Is the license for Boris to own the business?” Bendy asked with annoyance in his tone.

“Well, yes.” Mickey blinked.

“So, would I need to get one too or can both of us be on one?” Bendy asked slowly.

Mickey glanced at Oswald quickly before looking at Bendy again. “Uh, b-both your names can go on one license,” he squeaked.

“Are you okay, Mr. Mickey?” Boris asked.

“Fine! I’m fine!” Mickey grinned and turned back to Boris. “And are you ever thinking of going to school or heading somewhere to learn more?”

“Uh.” Boris blinked.

“We’ll work on it ourselves,” Bendy said. “Boris is a quick learner.”

Mickey smiled at the pup. “Boy, I’ll say. You figured out half that stuff in the back in no time! That helped us out a bunch!”

Cup frowned. “Bendy helped too.”

“Well, of course he did!” Mickey looked back at Cup before turning back to Boris. He didn’t even give Bendy a look. Bendy felt his eye twitch.

“So, if you ever need to stay somewhere and earn up to go to school or something, our door is always open Boris!” Mickey said.

“Yeah, it’d be nice to not hear the backyard blow up,” Oswald muttered. “Not that Goofy doesn’t try.”

“He does his best,” Mickey said. Alice gave the mouse a confused glance, frowned at Holly, and then turned a concerned look to Bendy. Mugs was now frowning and glancing between Mickey and Bendy like they were puzzle pieces.

“And what about Bendy?” Cup suddenly cut in. They were almost to the restaurant now.

“Whadda ya mean?” Oswald raised a brow.

Cup frowned. “You’re makin’ all these ‘swell’ offers ta Boris,” he glanced at the pup, “which is great.” His eyes turned back to the rabbit. “But what about Bendy?”

“Cup.” Bendy half attempted to stop him.

“Well, he’s an adult that seems to have things figured out,” Oswald said and smirked at Bendy. “Right? Personally, I thought he would see our help as us lookin’ down on him.”

Bendy paused. Had he just--

“Well yeah,” Mugs muttered. “But still, uh.” He blinked like he wasn’t sure how to word what he wanted to say.
“Look! We’re here!” Mickey said grandly and opened the door.

Mugs looked up. “But--”

“Let’s get in. The others must have been waiting for a while!” Mickey said and ushered them in. Mugs and Cup shared a look Bendy didn’t quite understand. Boris seemed just as confused. Alice slipped back as everyone went in.

She leaned over to whisper to Bendy. “Bendy do you know what’s going on here?” she asked.

“What do you mean?” Bendy whispered back.

She bit her lip. “Well, Holly and Cup seem angry for some reason. And Mickey is sad about something.” She shook her head. “Did something happen between all of you? Can I help?”

Bendy blinked. Cup being a grump wasn’t new, but Holly? Bendy glanced at the girl as she disappeared into the building. And the mouse was ‘sad’? What the hell did he do? “I have no idea what’s going on here, Alice,” Bendy answered honestly. He frowned. “But I think it’s about time we figure it out.”

In the light of the setting sun, the group was led to the back by a rather pudgy and nervous waiter. The front actually had a rather full gathering of customers that seemed to be enjoying the drinks and a game on the radio.

“Thanks PJ,” Mickey told him as they came up to a long table with the duck and dog. The back only had another pair that Bendy felt like he should recognize, but the lighting and angle they were sitting at hid their faces.

“Sure thing, Mickey,” PJ said. “Max will be with you shortly.” He disappeared quickly.

“Hey Mick, Ozzy, I almost ordered without you, you fellas were taken so long,” the duck quacked.


Donald snorted. “The dog wouldn’t let me.”

Goofy frowned sadly. “It’s rude to get food before everyone else, Donald.”

“See?” Donald rolled his eyes. “And it looks like you brought a party with you.”

“Yeah! You remember--” Donald suddenly squawked at the sight of Cuphead and dove under the table. Mickey blinked. “Uh? Donald? What are you doing?”

“That guy’s the crazy--” He dissolved into a bunch of noises that Bendy couldn’t make heads or tail of. He shared a lost glance with Alice. She watched with surprised eyes between the hidden duck, the mouse, and Cuphead.

Cup, on his part, was grimacing. Mugs gave him a suspicious glance.

“Donald! Slow down! We can’t understand you!” Mickey said. He and a confused Goofy were trying to get the duck to come out from under the table. He was just sitting up when the waiter came. Bendy guessed it was Max.

“Hey everyone, what’s with the--” He gasped and dropped his metal tray, which clanged loudly when his eyes landed on Cup. Cup now appeared like he just wanted to crawl under and rock and never come out. Bendy raised a brow. “Y-y-y-y-you!” he stammered and quacked.
Cup sighed. “Look I’m--”

Max made a strange strangled noise and dove behind Oswald. The rabbit watched all of this in mild amusement.

“Does someone want to explain?” Oswald asked.

“They’re terrified of you,” Alice said softly to Cup. He only frowned more at that comment.

“He’s the guy that destroyed the restaurant that one time!” Max accused.

“Him?” Oswald asked.

“Golly! He’s the fella that burned Donald’s tail feathers?” Goofy asked.

Donald quaked angrily. Seemed he got over his fear rather quickly and was now glaring daggers at the cupman.

Cuphead sighed and rolled his eyes. “Yeah, okay, that was me. Sorry about the business. You fellas did a good job cleanin’ it up.” He turned to Donald. “And sorry about your...feathers,” he finished awkwardly and ducked his head into his coat as if he could hide.

“What were you doing attacking the restaurant?” Oswald asked, his tall ears down.

“It was a problem with us,” Bendy said quickly. “We got it all figured out.”

“He shot at you,” Donald said now that he was calmer. “You two ran for your lives!” He pointed at Boris and Bendy.

“What?” Mickey frowned.

“As I said, we got things figured out,” Bendy said again.

Oswald and Mickey gave him suspicious looks.

Boris stepped up. “It really is okay. Things were rough back then. It’s better now.”

“Rough how?” Oswald crossed his arms.

Bendy felt his eye twitch. “Revenge,” Cup suddenly said.

Bendy’s eyes widened and he turned to Cup. “I thought my brother was dead, and I blamed them.” His eyes were hard as they passed over the group.

“Cup, you don’t have to go into it,” Bendy said. “It’s none of their business.” He knew how touchy of a subject that day was. For a number of reasons. He was sure that Mugman still didn’t know that Cup had nearly...done something extreme.

“Cuphead.” Mugs sighed. “You didn’t.”

Cup didn’t look at his brother. “Sorry Mugs.”

Boris walked up and patted Cup on the shoulder. “Like Bendy said, it’s okay now. We got it figured out. You and Mugs have now saved our lives a couple times now.”

Cup snorted, but there was a shadow of a smile on his face.
“Sounds like you four have some stories to share,” Oswald said. He gestured for them to sit. Why did Bendy feel like this turned into an interrogation? Alice was looking from person to person with concern and confusion. Bendy sat, Boris followed. Mickey went on his other side, Oswald sat cross from them. Cup sat next to Bendy. Mugs went on his other side. Alice and Holly too. “So, mind sharing?”

“It really isn’t any of your business,” Bendy said.

“Bendy.” Boris frowned.

“I kinda want to hear this too,” Mugs murmured.

Cup took a deep breath. He was stiff. His eyes glanced at his brother wearily.

“I’ll start,” Bendy suddenly said. Cup glanced at him. The demon smiled. “So, it was before we were arrested. We ran into these two in an alley. We already had a bit of a history, so this wasn’t our first meeting.” Bendy looked around the table. “Cup and I had a little scuffle. I broke free but tripped. Boris came around with Mugs right behind him. There was an accident, and Mugs got hurt.” Bendy choose his words carefully.

Cup looked at the table. “It was--”

“Don’t,” Mugs cut him off. Cup looked up before he dropped his eyes back to his empty plate.

“So Cup took him to the hospital but didn’t think he made it. We were in jail and didn’t see him again until you brought us here.” Bendy pointed to Mickey. Felix blinked.

“Wait, didn’t I meet you here too?” Felix asked.

“Yes, for a minute.” Bendy smiled. “When you three disappeared.” He pointed to the rabbit, mouse, and Felix. “Cup came through the door, and we had to run.”

Eyes went to the cupman. He didn't look up, but he did speak. “I shot up the front of this place and chased ‘em into the streets. I didn’t get ‘em, obviously. I lost ‘em in the alleys.” It was so quiet a pin could have dropped and sounded like a bomb going off. Bendy didn’t think anyone was breathing. “They had a chance to be rid of me for good, actually.” Cup stared at the table. It seemed the weight of what happened was still on his shoulders. “Instead, this idiot saves me and takes me to the same hospital Mugs was in. I woke up to an angry nurse dragging me to Mugs.”

“Cup?” Mugs asked with wide eyes.

Cup smiled up at his brother. “Yeah, it was a mess. I was a mess. So, I owe these two big time.” Cup glanced at Bendy and Boris with a smile on his face. “They put up with it, and instead of turning their backs on us the next time they saw us, they gave us a chance.”

Bendy snorted. “Gave you a chance?” He shook his head. “You showed up, helped me, and then saved Boris from a mugger. How the hell was I supposed to say no when you asked for a chance to explain yourself?”

Cup and Mugs grinned at that.

“So, you were enemies, but now you’re friends?” Alice asked. Bendy had almost forgotten about everyone else.

“Pretty much.” Boris shrugged.
“What made you two shoot at a kid?” Mickey frowned.

Both of them grimaced. “We were stuck in a rough crowd. We were only doing what we were told.”

“But why them?” Felix asked.

They shrugged at the same time. Oswald scowled. Mickey didn’t seem any more impressed. He kept glancing at Boris worriedly. Donald still looked angry. Holly kept her expression neutral. Alice...had relaxed. She even smiled. “It’s nice to see what friends you’ve all become despite the difficulties. It’s a wonder that things turned out this way,” she said. “You two even helped save me from my situation,” she said to the two. “And you, Mr. Felix.” She turned to Holly. “And you.”

She then smiled at Boris and Bendy. “And of course you two.” Bendy felt something warm grow in him, but he was sure it was just that warmth that was around her all the time. At least now he knew it was because she was an angel. Did that mean it was her magic that he was picking up on? He hadn’t really had a chance to talk to her since they rescued her. He’d have to sometime soon. He had a lot of questions. But that was for later.

“What are friends for?” Bendy said.

“Golly, you’ve all been through a lot, huh?” Goofy asked.

“Yep.” Boris smiled. “We’ve made a lot of good friends.” Bendy glanced at the wolf before looking at the people around the table. Felix, Alice, Holly, Cuphead, Mugman, Boris. It was just like Cup had said, there were a lot of people around him now. People he considered friends. When had that happened? That was just the ones here. The Warners, the doc, Red, Granny, Fin and Sammy, and the Tiptails too. All of them. The uncomfortable feeling he had on entering this place disappeared with these thoughts.

“What about you fellas?” Bendy asked. “You must have some stories from your travels.”

“Boy do we!” Goofy smiled.

“Uh dad, c-can I get your drink orders first?” Max asked nervously. He still was giving Cuphead glances. Wait, father-son?

“Well, sure son.” Goofy grinned. Bendy looked between the two. He could see the similarities. Weird. Everyone shared a drink order. Bendy and Boris, of course, going after the fizz-wizzles.

“Campari,” Cup said.

Bendy gave him a look. “Alcohol?”

Cup shrugged. “What? We’re supposed to take it easy, right?” He gave him a glance. “Never tried it?”

Bendy shook his head. Cup smirked. “Well, try just one.” Bendy shrugged.

Mugs snickered. “As long as you two don’t get into a drinking contest. I don’t think that’s what the doctor meant.”

Bendy snorted a laugh.

“Drinking contest?” Oswald raised a brow...and an ear.

“Ozzy no,” Mickey said behind him. Bendy looked to the rabbit and mouse. Oswald was giving
Mickey a pleading look. Donald was snickering. “No.” The mouse put down his foot. “This is dinner, and there’s a minor here.”

Boris snorted. “Don’t bother. I’ve watched Bendy drink himself silly a number of times.”

What? “I don’t drink that often,” Bendy defended himself. Alice was frowning. Oh boy.

“No, but when you get drunk, you get really drunk,” Boris said. There went his decency.

Cup snickered. “Oh stars, I have to see that.”

“Cup, we just said not to drink.” Mugs rolled his eyes skyward like he could ask the heavens to stop his brother.

“Not tonight, later.” Cup turned a challenging smirk on Bendy. “Unless you don’t want to, pal.”

Bendy grinned. “Oh, you’re on. You’ll regret it.”

“Ha! I’m a cup man. You’ll be sloshed way before me.” Cup laughed.

“We’ll see.” Bendy lifted his chin. Boris shook his head and put a hand on his forehead.

“I might have to get in on that action.” Oswald laughed.

“You drink, Mr. Oswald?” Felix asked.

“Not in a long time, but once when we were overseas for a show, I had to beat this sullen looking guy so we could leave the city without fighting for our lives,” Oswald said.

“Golly! Why?” Boris asked.

Oswald snorted. Mickey spoke up for him. “There were a few people in our circus that he wanted to stay.”

Mugs leaned forward, his elbows on the table. “Why?”

“Because they were pretty girls.” Donald rolled his eyes. “Tried to buy them.”

“Oh creepy,” Cuphead said.

“That’s despicable!” Holly looked stunned.

“Actually, it’s normal in other countries and cultures,” Felix said.

“That doesn’t mean it’s right,” Holly shot back.

Felix tilted his head. “I agree.”

“I don’t think I’d be comfortable buying a girl.” Mugs pulled a face and shook his head.

“Yeah, what about choice, man?” Cup asked. Bendy felt inclined to agree.

“Well, for a lot of cultures, it would be an arranged marriage. Sometimes the two getting married would have a little say but most of it would be the choice of the parents,” Felix explained.

“But marrying someone you don’t love?” Boris asked.
“Well, you learn to love them. What’s wrong with that?” Alice asked. Holly turned and stared at Alice.

Bendy paused. “What’s wrong?”

Cuphead gave her an equally confused look. “Most people want to be in love before they slip on the rings, ace.”

“Yeah, what if you never love them?” Mugs asked. “Or your parents have really bad tastes?”

“Well, my parents love each other, and they were arranged.” Alice frowned.

“You come from a place like that?” Donald asked with raised brows.

“Yes,” Alice said. Everyone but Felix seemed surprised by that.

“So, do they have someone set up for you?” Donald asked with a raised feathered brow.

Alice blushed and lifted a hand to her cheek. Bendy hadn’t thought about that. She was an angel, and she was down here for some reason. Bendy had no clue if she had someone back in the angel city or not. “N-no, they don’t. At least...I don’t think they do.” Her voice went really quiet.

Cup and Mugs shared a glance and a smirk. Mugs shifted and rested his head on his hand. “Is there someone you’re hoping for back home?”

Her face darkened further. “Wha-what? Not at all! No!”

“Could the lady be protesting a little too much?” Cup smirked to his brother.

“No!” Alice squeaked.

“Anyway, Mr. Oswald was tell a story,” Boris cut in. Alice seemed relieved to see the spotlight shift away from her.

“Uh? Oh yeah.” Oswald’s ears dropped. “Where were we with that?”

“I remember!” Goofy said. “When Mick turned down the sultan for our friends, they threatened us with swords. We was gonna have to fight until Oswald challenged him to a drinking contest to solve everything,” Goofy said.

“Noticed the guy always had a drink in hand at our shows,” Oswald explained.

“So, they sat across from each other, and Ozzy drank him under the table.” Mickey shook his head. “It was nuts.” The rabbit and duck laughed.

“We scrammed before the schmuck woke up,” Oswald said.

“How do you know? You were almost as bad!” Donald snickered.

“I woke up somewhere other than a dungeon,” Oswald said. That caused all of them to laugh. Conversations stayed pretty light after that. Bendy learned a bit about traveling in the circus. They stuck together like a family. They had seen a lot of different cultures. The drinks came, as did the food. Bendy had to admit that Cup’s recommendation tasted good. But to avoid that impending drinking contest and humiliation in front of the girls, Bendy only had the one.

Mickey and Donald proved to be good storytellers. It was great when Donald extravagated, because
Goofy would point it out like it was an honest mistake and not the duck’s attempts at grandeur. The atmosphere was light and fun. Bendy was almost happy he had come. Almost, because as the night was wearing down and the dishes were moved, Max came out one further time.

“The boss wants to see you before you go, if you’ll just wait a moment. He said to offer you some desserts,” Max said.

“Yes, if that involves a carrot cake.” Oswald plopped back down in his seat.

“You all don’t have somewhere to be?” Mickey asked.

“No, we can stay for some dessert.” Alice smiled.

A number of treats were brought out for the table. Bendy figured it was getting late, but with names like Mickey Mouse and Felix the Cat at the table, he understood the owner of this place wanting to meet them.

“So Boris, do you have any back-up plans in case the carshop doesn’t work out?” Mickey asked.

Boris blinked. “No, um, not really.”

“Would you stay in your hometown?” Mickey asked.

“Probably.” Boris glanced at Bendy. The demon shrugged. Boris turned back to Mickey “We might be willing to move. I don’t mind Toon Town. What do you think Bendy?”

Bendy pursed his lips. What did he think? He liked how more open minded the city was, but he didn’t really care for more people around or the constant noise. He found himself missing the woods, stars and calm outdoors. “We could, but I personally prefer the woods back home. I still wanna build that cabin.”

“Oh yeah!” Boris brightened up at the thought.

“Cabin?” Mickey asked Boris.

“Yeah! Bendy and I have always wanted our own place. There’s this little meadow that opens up to a lake not too far from town. We found it when we were kids looking for berries to eat. It’s beautiful! We’re planning to buy that area and build a cabin there someday!” Boris smiled and tilted his head. “We just need to save up.”

“I see. That sounds really nice, Boris,” Mickey said. Bendy rolled his eyes and nabbed a fork full of apple pie. “Have you--”

Suddenly, the door from the kitchen slammed open. Bendy turned to see the last person he was prepared to see. Pete marched up to them, glaring daggers at Bendy and Boris. Bendy choked on his pie. He coughed. Boris reached over to pat his back. Pete shook an angry finger at them.

“Pete! What is it?” Mickey half stood, startled at the violent motions Pete was making. Why wasn’t he saying anything?

“Speak up!” Oswald scowled.

The chubby waiter rushed in. “Oh man, oh man, oh man!” He hurried to Pete’s side. Pete turned a glare on him and gestured from the waiter to the table. “S-sorry dad! I was cleaning a spill!” Pete repeated the gesture and made a reaching motion. The waiter jumped and pulled out a notepad and
pen. Pete snatched it from him. “Right! Um, so dad was cursed earlier this week by a witch, but he’ll be able to talk in a few days.”

Oswald burst into laughter. “That’s great!” Pete turned a dark glare on him.

Holly started laughing as well.

Pete turned to her, and his eyes widened. She continued to laugh, wiping at her eyes. He wrote something down and shoved it at his son. “Oh c’mon dad! I can’t say that!” he whined after reading what his dad wrote. Pete pointed at it forcefully.

“Don’t worry, PJ. We know you’re just helpin’ your father,” Goofy said. Bendy could finally breathe again and stood up.

“I don’t want any trouble! Either give me my voice back or get out of my restaurant. You and your witch! Before you burn this place down too,” PJ read reluctantly.

“Burn down too! The cussing court agreed it wasn’t us, you schmuck! And who the hell are you calling a witch!” Bendy barked. “And what the hell ever happened about that ‘car accident’ you threatened to pin on me, huh? You show that record to the cops? I don’t owe you a cussing thing!” Bendy snarled. Boris grabbed his shoulder to stop him for approaching the guy.

Pete glared and wrote some more. He passed it to PJ. “You should still be locked up. You’re a menace to society,” PJ whimpered.

“Me!” Bendy barked.

“Woah man.” Cuphead stood up. Donald gulped and ducked under the table. “That’s some pretty strong language against my friend there.”

Pete raised a his brow with surprise and wrote again. PJ sighed as he took the paper. He scanned it. “Dad, that’s just mean. Mom wouldn’t be happy to hear this.” Pete scowled at him. PJ sighed again and read. “Wow, the demon got himself some thug friends, then? Did he brainwash you like the dog? Just wait for him to nearly get you killed too!” Bendy’s eyes widened until he narrowed them to slits. Oh, so that was how it was going to be? Using those old cussing rumors from back home!

Cuphead looked surprised, but he quickly shook it off. Mugs just looked like he was going to nail the guy.

“That’s uncalled for.” Felix frowned and went to stand.

“Pete.” Mickey’s tone was full of warning.

Bendy forced himself to smile. He knew it was a creepy smile. He hoped it looking terrifying. “Oh Petey boy.” He stepped around Cup and out of Boris’ hold.

“Bendy! Don’t!” Boris begged him.

“You have a problem with me?” Bendy asked the big scum.

Pete glared down at him. He couldn’t fool Bendy, though. He saw the line of sweat run down Pete’s face. He glanced behind Bendy to his table. Bendy took one step closer. He felt excited for some reason. He could almost smell the scum’s fear. Pete paled, and his eyes snapped back to Bendy. With a shaking hand, Pete wrote and handed it to PJ. The poor kid was also trembling. “H-he wants you to leave. He’ll call the cops.”
“Call them,” Bendy purred. “I would love to see what you’ll try to sell them.”

Bendy was sure he’d be growling if he could. “Bendy.” Bendy glanced over his shoulder. Alice was pale. “Please, can we just go?” Her voice was shaking.

Bendy raised a brow. “What?” he asked. He glanced around the table. Everyone seemed shocked or scared. Why? Boris was the only one that didn’t seem fazed at all. He came up to Bendy and rested an arm on his shoulder.

“Let’s just go,” Alice said again in a smaller voice. Bendy gave everyone another glance before nodding.

“Yeah, sure. We can go,” Bendy murmured. What did he do? He hadn’t done anything. Why were they looking at him like that?

Boris and Bendy cleared out, the cups right behind them. Alice followed at a slower pace with Holly. Felix hesitated before he shook his head and came outside with them. On the streets the cold crisp air seemed to snap Bendy into awareness. It...was warmer here than it had been in that room. What did that mean? How? Everyone was being quiet. What did he do?

Bendy was just about to say something when a voice called out behind them. “Wait!” They paused and looked back to see Mickey racing after them. “I’m sorry about Pete.” He caught up, panting. Oswald and Goofy were behind him. “He’s full of it and drives me crazy too.”

“Why the hell do you eat there if the owner is such scum?” Cuphead sneered.

Mickey smiled and scratched the back of his head. “I used to work for him too. I know what he’s like, but please, don’t think that’s how we feel.”

“Oh really?” Mugs asked.

“Because we’ve been watching all night, and you have been treating Bendy just as crummy as that schmuck!” Cuphead jabbed an accusing finger at him.

“The only difference is that you won’t even admit you’re doing anything wrong.” Holly’s voice was low.

“I--I!” Mickey looked between Cuphead and Holly.

“Guys.” Bendy glanced at Boris’ confused and hurt expression.

“Mr. Mickey?” Boris asked. Mickey’s look of distress fell on the wolf. “Is that true?”

“No! Of course not!” Mickey shook his head. Oswald raised a confused brow as did Goofy.

“Oh really? Then tell me one thing you know about Bendy that doesn’t involve Boris?” Cuphead crossed his arms.

Silence fell over the group. Mickey glanced from person to person. Alice’s sad, downcast eyes; Felix’ sad but slowly hardening gaze; the cup brothers stony glares; Holly’s icy stare. He looked at Boris’ sad large eyes.

“Mick?” Oswald clapped a hand on his shoulder. “I don’t know what the deal is here, but I think it’s time we go.”

“Mr. Mickey, you don’t actually think Bendy is...You don’t agree with Pete, do you?” Boris asked.
“No, I don’t.” Mickey sighed. “That’s not it.”

He still wouldn’t look at Bendy. The demon had had enough of it. “Then why? Is it because I’m a demon?”

“No.” Mickey shifted his eyes from Boris to Bendy.

“Then, what is it? What makes me something you don’t even want to make eye contact with?” Bendy demanded. He shoved his hands in his pockets.

Mickey clenched his fists. “It’s because you’re sick!”

Ozzy stiffened like Mickey had electrocuted him. Bendy stiffened too.

“What does that have to do with anything?” Mugs asked, baffled.

Mickey’s shoulders dropped like Mugs’ words added the weight of the city on them. “Because...because we’ve already lost someone to the illness. And I can’t--” He swallowed and covered his face with his hand. “I can’t go through that again.”

Bendy’s eyes widened. He felt like he had just been slapped. Oswald stumbled a couple steps back. A haunted look crossed his face. Mickey turned to him.

“Oswald?” Felix took a small step toward him. The rabbit shook his head.

Mickey turned to Goofy. “Get Ozzy home, Goofy.”

Goofy glanced between the rabbit and the mouse. “But Mickey, yo--”

“Please Goofy, I’ll be fine.” Mickey gave him a sad smile. Goofy frowned but nodded.

“C’mon Oswald. Donald probably lookin’ fer us.” Goofy led the rabbit away. Mickey waited until they were well away before turning back to Bendy.

“I don’t think that’s the best way for you to handle your grief, Mr. Mickey,” Alice whispered.

“Sunblaze that! It’s a cussing sleazy way of dealin’ with anyone,” Cup growled.

Mickey nodded and sighed. “It was my sister-in-law. We went all over the world chasing rumor after rumor for a cure.” Bendy felt his stomach twist uncomfortably. “In the end, she…” Mickey shook his head. Oh stars.

“Bendy isn’t going to die!” Boris shouted, tears brimming in his eyes. “He’s not! We’re going to finish the Ink Machine and save my brother!” Bendy flinched at his growl.

Mickey didn’t seem surprised. He looked heartbroken. “You’re building it?”

“Yes! Yes I am! And we’ve already found two pieces!” The tears ran over. “So, why are you still looking at us like that?”

“I’m sorry Boris, but I’ve seen this before. I’ve been in your position! I know how this ends,” Mickey said. Oh no. No, no, no. That look of defeat. That brokenness. Is that what Boris would look like--

“No, you don’t!” Boris covered his ears. “You don’t!”
“I think you’ve said enough, Mickey,” Felix said.

Mickey looked around the group again. “I’m sorry.”

“I think you should go,” Alice murmured. Bendy rested a hand on Boris’ shoulder. The wolf grabbed him and sobbed. Bendy rubbed his back. He looked up to see Mickey watching them, half turned to leave. The pain in his eyes, the experiences. It was like looking at a ghost. Stars. No wonder Mickey wouldn’t look him in the eye. He felt a hollow dread open up inside of himself.

“I’m sorry. My door is still open regardless,” Mickey said. He turned and walked away. As soon as he was around the corner, Cup tsked.

“Cussing scum. Who does he think he is?” Cuphead jammed his hands into his pocket and pulled out his cigs.

“Shut it, Cup,” Bendy muttered, still rubbed Boris’ back. Cup glanced at him before looking away, a little abashed.

“C’mon Boris, we know that the machine will work,” Alice said gently.

“Yeah, we’ve made so much progress,” Holly added, frowning.

“H-he was my-my idol! I-I trusted him! I di-didn’t even notice wh-what he was do-doing to Bendy!” Boris sobbed.

“It’s okay, Boris.” Bendy swallowed. He hated seeing his little brother so heartbroken. “You were having fun. You don’t have to watch out for me over every little thing.” Boris shook his head before Bendy was even done. Poor little brother. He didn’t deserve this.

Felix suddenly came up to their side and rested his hand on the pup’s head. “Hey now, Boris. Why are you crying?” the cat asked.

“Because Mick--”

“He doesn’t believe you,” Felix said slowly, gently. “What have you done when people don’t believe you?”

“Wh-what?” Boris lifted up his head. Large watery eyes turned to the cat adventurer.

“What have you done when people don’t believe you?” Felix repeated the question gently, a small smile on his face.

“We prove them wrong, that’s what,” Bendy claimed.

“We…” Boris looked to Bendy with his ears down. But his tears slowed. He brushed at them.

“Listen bro,” Bendy said. He put his hands on either side of Boris’ furry face. “We are going to get the rest of those parts, find that hunk-of-junk, fix it up brand-cussing-new and show Mickey that there is a reason to hope!”

Boris sniffed. “O-okay. I can do that.”

“Hell yeah, you’re gonna do that!” Cup said.

“Yeah!” Mugs added.
“See Boris?” Bendy said. “And we have all this help with us, too.”

Boris smiled and nodded. Bendy grinned. It was fine. As long as they stuck together.
"Welcome ladies, gentlemen, and all in between!" Mic called out to the audience. "Today is a big occasion! We follow the famous Mickey Mouse! How exciting! I can't wait to see it!" He grins until he hears a murmur off stage. He turns. "What was that? What? What do you mean it's gonna be hard to see?"

Mickey sighed. He was an idiot. He was thinking only of himself, not how he would affect Boris or his friends.

“Mickey.” Oswald stepped out the door. The children must all be in bed now. He looked at Mickey solemnly.

“I’m sorry Ozzy. I-I messed up again.” Mickey’s voice cracked miserably.

“Why would you do that?” Oswald asked. Mickey wrapped his hands around his elbows. Oswald leaned back against the house, his hands in his pockets, a foot against the wall.

“Why did you stop talking?” Mickey shot back defensively. “We all have our own way of grieving and trying to protect ourselves.”

Oswald frowned, his eyes narrowing. “Yeah, but you have never been cruel before.”

Mickey grimaced. “I-I wasn’t thinking. I just didn’t want to get attached, Ozzy! You out of anyone should—” He choked on his words.

“Understand?” Ozzy asked. “Yeah, I do brother. I understand that you just wanted to help that wolf pup. I understand that you see a lot of us in him. But Mick, you have to see this from my point of view too. What if you had treated her that way?”

Mickey’s eyes widened as he whipped around to face him. “I would never!”

Oswald scowled. “But you just did!”

Mickey jerked like Ozzy had just punched him. It would have hurt less.
“Think about this, Mick! Think! They are brothers! You were treating one of them like he had already died!” Oswald snapped. “How do you think that makes him feel?”

“Him?” Mickey’s eyes widened, dazed.

“Yes, him! Bendy! Boris’ big brother! The guy you tried to pretend wasn’t there!” Oswald growled and straightened up. “He has it too, ya know! What do you think your actions have done to him, huh?”

Mickey felt sick. His mind reeled with the dawning realization. Bendy? The demon? No, that couldn’t be. Bendy didn’t really seem to care. He had been quiet most of the time. But...that was Mickey’s fault, wasn’t it? Oh, stars. What had he done? Ozzy took a couple steps to stand in front of him. Mickey half expected Ozzy to punch him. He was surprised when a hand landed on his shoulder instead. Ozzy sighed disappointedly and shook his shoulder a little. “And now you’re beating yourself up all the more.”

Mickey looked up. Oswald was frowning down at him. “I know how you are, Mickey. I know you didn’t want to hurt anyone.”

Mickey shook his head. “I don’t know how to fix this, Ozzy. I really messed this up.”

The rabbit nodded. “Yep, it’s rare, but this is a royal mess you’ve made.” His tone dripped with sarcasm.

Mickey gulped, too anxious to notice. “What should I do? If something happens now--”

“You’ll never forgive yourself, I know. So, I’m going to be an amazing big brother and help you.” Oswald grinned hotly.

“Really? But this is about the...That. Are you sure you’re going to be okay?” Mickey asked tentatively. He covered Oswald’s hand with his own. A flash of pain shot through the rabbit’s eyes. His ears dropped, but his smile didn’t. He was pushing himself.

“I can’t pretend it didn’t happen or that the illness is gone, Mickey. The day will still come tomorrow. But you’re my brother, and you need help. What kinda big brother would I be if I didn’t step in?” Oswald answered quietly.

“Thank you, Ozzy,” Mickey mumbled, partly relieved, partly feeling guilty. He was making Ozzy face something he wasn’t sure his brother was ready to handle. He was just getting used to the sound of Ozzy’s voice again. It would be devastating if Ozzy relapsed into silence.

“Yeah, I know I’m the best. But it’s late, and we need our sleep.” Ozzy tilted his head toward the door. “We’ll talk about ways we can make it up to those oddballs tomorrow.”

“Alright Ozzy,” Mickey agreed tiredly. The two headed in. The house was quiet as they tip-toed their way to their rooms.

They went through the living room and into the back hall. Creeping past the kids’ rooms, they arrived at their own. “Good night, Ozzy,” Mickey whispered.

“Night Mick,” Ozzy said and went into his room.

Mickey opened his door and stepped in. The box of chocolates, unopened, and a vase of flowers that Mickey meant to give to Minnie before he chickened out still waited on the dresser, mocking him. Cards and gifts for Mickey from fans were scattered around the room. Scattered over the wall there
were posters of the performers and pictures of everyone on their trips around the world. It was his space of memories, now resting in the dark of the night. He was so tired and ready for bed. He hoped he would sleep despite his worry.

Suddenly, a figure appeared on his bed. Mickey jumped. It was that girl, Holly. One of Boris’ friends. “Hello, Mick.” She smiled, hands on the bed as she leaned back.

What was she doing here? He opened his mouth to ask her just that. “Wha--” She lifted her hand. The rest of his words vanished. He was still talking, but no sound was coming out. It wasn’t like he wasn’t talking but...nothing. He raised his hand gingerly to his mouth. What had she done? Why? He swallowed.

“Frustrating, isn’t it?” She smirked, her voice disgustingly sweet and mocking.

He dropped his hand. Why was she here? What did she want? Obviously trouble. Did Bendy send her? This was the same thing that happened to Pete, wasn’t it? So...she was the witch? She didn’t look like any of the witches Mickey had dealt with before. No clothes, no symbols, book of spells, nothing to indicate she was anything but a normal girl.

She tilted her head onto her shoulder. “I’m here because you messed up. Because you hurt a lot of people I care about today.” Her brows knit together in anger, her mouth twisting into a dark scowl. “Because you deserve to understand.” She suddenly smiled again. Was she insane? Mickey took a deep breath and lifted his chin in defiance. He knew he messed up, but that didn’t mean he could be pushed around.

Her smile dropped a little, and she rolled her eyes at him. There...was something wrong with them. It was hard to see in the dark. Wait. Mickey looked closer. From eyelid to eyelid, her eyes were black. What in the world? Still, she appeared annoyed. Seemed he wasn’t quaking in fear like she wanted him too. He couldn’t just turn and run. The kids would wake up and with magic getting thrown around he couldn’t risk endangering any of them. He had the sword under the bed. It was his best chance to defend himself. He dove for the floor underneath the bed, but he slammed into something instead and banged onto the ground. Symbols on the ground glowed. Mickey blinked. It was some kinda invisible barrier. He had never seen a witch use symbols like these.

Holly raised an eyebrow and grinned mockingly above him. “That won’t work,” she said in a sing-song voice. Mickey scowled and picked himself up. If he couldn’t do anything, he could at least warn Oswald! He turned to reach for the door. If he just banged loud enough! The barrier stopped him again. No! What was he going to do now? He could make noise since he hit the floor and-- the floor! He started jumping up and down, hoping his brother’s sensitive rabbit ears would hear him.

Holly quickly figured out his plan. Her eyes widened, and she dove forward, scribbling on the floor at his feet. A flash of pain jolted up his body. He grit his teeth and fell weakly to the floor, vision swimming in and out of focus. Mickey grimaced in pain.

“This spell will last as long as I have energy.” Holly smirked down at him, her black eyes glittering excitedly. “Which at this point will be a very, very long time. Let’s see how you like living as the invisible man.” More pain rushed through him. He couldn’t focus anymore. Everything was slipping away from him. No! What about Ozzy! What about everyone else? Was she just here for him? He couldn’t leave now…

He still needed to make it up to Boris and Bendy.

Mickey woke up to the sound of birds singing. The sun was peeking through the tree leaves. It was a
bit chilly. He reached around to find his blanket. Strange. It didn’t seem like he was in a sleeping bag. Did the kids claim it, and he decided to just take a blanket? Then, where was the blanket? He sat up to look. He blinked when he didn’t see his legs. When he blinked...he could still see. He shouted and swung his arms up. Nothing. No voice to scream. No arms swinging. He felt himself screaming and moving, but he didn’t see anything. The leaves under him rustled violently. He paused in his panic and reached down until his hand bumped into the leaves. He grabbed one and lifted it. The leaf appeared to float down.

Oh no. This was a weird dream. This had to be a weird dream. He crumbled the leaf in his hand. It felt real enough. He stood up. It was a bit tricky since he couldn’t see himself. He stumbled a bit and looked around. Where was he? What happened? Mickey crossed his arms and thought.

He and Ozzy had talked last night, gone to bed, and...Holly! That--That witch! Or...was she a demon? Mickey had no idea. She wasn’t like any witch Mickey had seen before! Those eyes...He had to get home...wherever that was. He looked around for anything that could help. The trees were too tall to see the horizon. He could try to climb, but with how difficult it was to guess where his limbs were, it might be too dangerous. He looked around the leafy floor.

It took a bit of searching, but he found it. A tire track! Thank the stars! It went off into the underbrush. He went that way, following the track as carefully as he could. Still, he tripped over the roots and branches often. Falling was common, and the shock of seeing it all whether his eyes were open or not was extra terrifying.

He didn’t know how long it took him, but eventually he was able to stumble out of the woods and to a suburb. He was cold, hungry, and exhausted. His body ached from all his falls. He didn’t know if he was bleeding or if they were just bruises. He couldn’t see them, after all. He also had to shake leaves off of himself so he didn’t look so strange and cause trouble if anyone saw. Mickey sighed in relief at the first sign of buildings. He just needed to get to the circus and tell Ozzy...he was mute.

No! He’d figure something out when he got there. Mickey walked down the street carefully. The morning was slipping into noon. Mickey had a shock walking down the street when some man ran into him and knocked him down. The man tripped and fell. “What in the world!” the man said, looking back. Mickey frowned, but the man looked around, terrified. Mickey blinked with realization. Oh right. Couldn’t see him. He opened his mouth to tell the man it was okay, but nothing came out.

Ah. He didn’t have much time to sit and think about it, because another person was coming, and they weren’t slowing down at all. He rolled out of their way and stood up. He would have to dodge everyone since no one would be aware of him. This...was a nightmare.

Mickey resigned himself to many more bruises and pain. The mouse made his way further into town. He jumped around people and dared to hop into the street three times to get around a crowd. He bumped into a fruit stand, grimacing from the new bruise on his hip. He eyed one of the large apples. Reaching into his pockets, he found his wallet. Which was invisible...He felt inside for his money, which was also invisible! Sigh. Fine. He’d remember to come back later and pay! He snatched one of the apples and started to walk away. Which made it seem like the apple was flying. He couldn’t hide it with him being invisible! He thought about just eating it, but then...wouldn’t they still see it? And it would be in his stomach. Uuuuuggh. He abandoned the fruit on a table after scaring three people he passed.

After banging around and dodging a bit longer, finally, the familiar tents come into view. Mickey could have wept. But then he looked at the sea of guests and realized he’d have to somehow find his way through all that before reaching the apartment building. Oh, stars. He didn’t know if he’d make
that. He gazed at the people and booths in despair.

No! He had made it through the swamps of the south, the deserts of the east, and the icy tundra of the far-off north! He’d faced rulers, kings, mobs, monsters, and dragons! A busy crowd wasn’t going to be the end of him! He straightened his spine and headed into the crowd. He bumped into a number of them, confusing them and causing a number of exclamations. He also ran into two booths, banging his knee and his shin.

He went through the least crowded areas, which meant the long way around the tents. It took him way longer. Some of the animals perked up at his passing, which gave him a glimmer of hope. If the animals sensed him then maybe others could too.

He rushed to the apartment. He would have shouted joyously if he could. He did, but no sound came. He got to the door, tried the knob, and froze. Locked. He reached into his pockets and found his keys...which were invisible. He took a deep breath.

The second one from the trunk key. He carefully felt the keys and moved to the one he wanted. Then, he went to insert the key in the lock. The metal clinked and slipped from his hands. Oh...The sound of the keys hitting the patio ringed ominously in the mouse’s round ears. Mickey dropped to his knee and patted under the door. They were around here somewhere. His hand brushed something. He froze. Slowly, he moved his hand and wrapped his fingers around the metal of the keys. Oh, thank the stars! He carefully stood, found the key he wanted a second time, and tried again. He missed. He tried again. The key hit the lock. Slowly feeling where the invisible key was in reference to the lock’s hole, he slowly inserted it. He turned the lock, pulled the key out, and made sure to return it to his pocket. When he entered his home, he found it empty.

Of course.

Everyone was working. No one would be home right now. Mickey screamed in frustration. Silently. He dropped his head in his hands. Well, this was great! What was everyone thinking? It was past lunchtime, and they hadn’t seen him all day! They must be worried sick! Mickey sighed. It was just too dangerous out there. He’d wait until someone came in. Until then, he went to the kitchen. He pulled out some sliced chicken, cheese, and bread. He made himself a sandwich, a little entertained to watch the meat, bread and cheese floating around before stacking them up into his sandwich. If he did end up stuck like this for a while, he’d at least be an entertaining new act.

He grabbed it and ate, looking around the room to see if there was any hint of traps or that black-eyed girl. Nothing. He ate in wary peace. To his horror, the food was still visible...for a little. It did disappear when it hit his stomach, thankfully. It was more information than he wanted to know about his body, regardless. After that, he wanted a shower. He went into the bathroom, turned on the water and went to strip. He froze. His clothes were invisible. If he lost them, that was it. After that, he was either going to have to borrow visible clothing and be floating empty clothes...or naked. Not a lot of options there for public travel. He sighed, and with much care, removed his clothing and placed it on the counter. He would remember where everything was.

Then he hopped in the stream of water, his silhouette appearing in the water. He realized that a faint line of dust that had clung to him from his many falls washed away. Huh. That was an idea. A powder or paint or something. Hhhmmm. How much clown makeup did Koko have?

It was a bit easier in the shower since he could see his outline. He kept flinching his head back from seeing through his eyelids, though, worried he’d get water or soap in his eyes.

While he cleaned up, he thought about some way to contact Ozzy and the others. He didn’t want to
scare the kids, after all. A written letter would probably be best. He didn’t have many options, being silent and all. Besides, it seemed Pete was making that work…

Mickey paused. Pete. She had done that to Pete. She was a friend of Bendy and Boris’. Did that mean they sent her to do that or was she acting on her own? Before last night, Mickey would have denied the possibility of the Bbros acting maliciously toward anyone. But after the accusations Pete threw at the demon, which normally he would have dismissed, and Bendy’s rather terrifying reaction...well...and the fact that Pete was cursed to be mute. Was it really so hard to believe Bendy would ask that Holly girl to do that? Was she really a witch? Could those two not be as innocent as Mickey had first thought?

Mickey had dealt with witches before, and none had been like that. Even the most terrifying ones. And there was that one thing Pete had said--Well PJ, but details--about Bendy brainwashing Boris. Was the demon manipulating the people around him? Had he possessed that girl or something and made her do that? Was it actually him that attacked him last night?

And why?

Had he hurt Boris that badly? Was the emotional pain worth a physical attack? Mickey pursed his lips. If it made Bendy’s attacks worse, then it was possible. Still, he was the kind of person that believed in innocence until proven guilty. Whether Bendy was a demon or not didn’t matter much to the mouse. He knew too many ‘monsters’ that turned out to just be scared individuals and too many ‘heroes’ that were schmucks. Still, Holly was a problem, and it was a possibility he would have to consider. The mouse turned off the water and grabbed a towel. There were too many questions and not enough answers. He got back in his clothes, and with nothing left to do, went to his bedroom. He found a notebook and pen.

What to tell Ozzy or whoever found the letter first? They had dealt with some magic shenanigans before, so hopefully there wouldn’t be too much disbelief or panic. The problem was reversing it. Holly had said it lasted until she ran out of power and that was a very, very, long time. Mickey gulped.

Well, first focus on the note. He picked up the pen and begun.

Hello. This is Mickey. We have a spell problem. I have been turned invisible and made mute. I am in my bedroom if you want to find me. Kinda. Bring the notepad, and I will do my best to explain where I’ve been all day. Please don’t panic. I am okay.

-Mickey Mouse

Hopefully, this would work. He took the notepad out and put it on the kitchen counter. He then went back to his room and laid down. He was exhausted and sore. A nap sounded perfect. He shut his eyes and...still saw his room. How did he keep forgetting that! He silently groaned. He pulled his blankets up to his face and used the quilt to block out the light. There! Now he could sleep…

“Mickey!”

Mickey woke up with a start. He shot up in bed and looked around. Was it all a horrible nightmare? He looked down at his hands. Nope. He was really gone.

“No sign of him still?” Donald asked.

“No.” Ozzy sighed. He sounded so worried. “Where could he have gone? Why did he just disappear on us?” Ha. Oh Ozzy, if only you knew. Well, they just had to see his note. He shifted to get up. A
scrap of paper fluttered to the floor.

Mickey reached down and unfolded it.

_Silly Mickey,_

_I’ll bet you feel so clever, thinking “I can write a note!” just like meathheaded little Pete. Well, think about this. I’ve set a trap somewhere near a person you care about. You can’t see it, don’t even try looking, silly mouse. But if you tell anyone I’m the one that did this to you, I’ll activate the trap and that person will disappear from your life permanently. After all, if people think a dangerous witch is about, I’ve got nothing to lose, right? Think about it. Because taking that person is only where I’ll start._

_Have fun!_  

_-You know who_

Oh stars. _Oh stars, no!_ Mickey jammed the note under the mattress and jumped for the door. He slammed it open and tripped. He banged into his brother’s closed door before racing down the hall. He heard Donald quack in alarm.

Ozzy exclaimed. “What the hell! Who’s there?”

Mickey stepped against the wall as Donald and Ozzy raced past him. Mickey stepped into the living room and looked toward the kitchen counter. There the notepad sat, unmoved from where he put it. He quickly approached it and snatched the pad from the counter surface. He grabbed a pen and scribbled out his note.

“Hello! Come out! We know you’re in here!” Oswald called in the back room. The house fell into a tense silence.

“What do you think that was Oswald?” Donald quacked nervously.

“No idea,” Oswald said slowly. Mickey sighed with relief as he stuffed the notepad in a drawer. Too close. _Way_ too close.

Mickey sighed and slid to the kitchen’s linoleum floor. Oh stars. What was he going to do now? He couldn’t tell anyone. She had threatened someone. _She hadn’t even said who!_ That evil witch! What was he going to do? He couldn’t stay here. It was too risky. They might discover him, and then he’d lose someone. He couldn’t do that. But he couldn’t live the rest of his life like this! Away from the people he cared about, mute and invisible forever! The dread of the thought brought tears to his eyes. No! He couldn’t give up! Think Mickey! What could he do? Telling people was out as long as she had a hostage, so what were his options? He knelt there, thinking for a time, ignoring the sounds of his brother and friend searching the house for an intruder. Then, it suddenly clicked.

If he couldn’t go to his friends, then he’d have to go to his enemy.

Maybe that witch had a spellbook or a potion that could reverse this. If he couldn’t rely on help, then he’d just have to help himself! But he had no clue where to look! Where did she live? Where could he start?

She was friends with the Bbros. Though there was still a chance this was all Bendy’s doing. Then, so be it! The answer may be with him then! So where would he go to find them? Boris had said they were staying with that doctor, right?
He had been there once…

Mickey stood up and hurried back to his room. He had to step around Donald, the duck’s worry showing underneath his annoyance and frustration. Mickey apologized, silently of course, before getting back to his bedroom. He looked under his bed and found his sword. He pulled it out and blew the dust off it. It had been a while since he needed it, but now…

Oh no! He couldn’t! What would people do if they saw a floating sword! Ah! He put it down with a shake of his head. He couldn’t bring it, then. The witch would see him from a hundred miles away! Ironically, being invisible might be his greatest advantage right now. He heaved silent sigh as he got up and turned away from his room. He glanced over the pictures of all the family and friends he had made or seen over the years of traveling with the circus. With a heavy heart, he left the room.

In the living room, Oswald was sitting on the sofa with his head resting in his hand, his knee jumping with nervous energy. He had a deep scowl on his face. Donald had gone to the kitchen to start cooking dinner.

“I think we should call the cops, Oswald,” Donald said.

“I just don’t get it! Where’d he go? I know he was low last night but nothing that would make him pull a stunt like this.” The rabbit tapped his fingers on the couch armrest. “We were gonna go apologize to those fellas today.” He fell quiet, thoughtful. “Nah, he’d wait for me.” Oswald shook his head.

Mickey gulped. Oh, he really hoped Ozzy didn’t try to go over there. It would be so bad. It was already so bad. He couldn’t warn him, either. Mickey waited until they were looking away to slip out the door.

The sun was starting to sink toward the horizon. The crowds…were worse. Mickey groaned. Oh boy. This was going to be a obstacle course.

It took him hours to get out of the circus and into the city. Even then, he was spending equal amounts of time jumping into the street and back on the sidewalk to avoid crashing into crowds of people and rushing cars. Still, block by block, he made his steady way into the neighborhoods. Finally, things calmed down, and Mickey was able to walk on the sidewalk, careful of the coming and going of others. He reached Baker street and followed the road down the tall houses. There was a black car parked across the street, but otherwise, the street was empty. The cold must be pushing everyone indoors with the setting sun.

Mickey found the right house after peeking into a couple different windows. The front room was a crowd of characters at the doctor's home. Mickey quickly spotted Bendy and Boris playing cards with Cuphead, Mugman, Felix, another slim black cat, a short fox, and a dwarf. No sign of the witch. Mickey made his way around the house to look in the back. He was careful not to step in the turned dirt of the garden. He hopped a tall fence into a cozy looking backyard.

Looking through an open window he saw a pie sitting on the sill, cooling. It smelled amazing. In the back were three women cooking. He recognized one of them immediately. The beautiful actress and singer, Snow White. What was she doing here? There was also an old gopher woman and another pretty woman in a nurse uniform. They were going about the kitchen with pot, pans, plates, and glasses. It looked like they were preparing a feast. Mickey felt his mouth water.

No! Focus. Still no sign of the witch. He wasn’t sure if that was a good thing or a bad one. He thought about just waiting outside, but the cold air was already numbing his toes, so with careful movements, Mickey heaved himself through the window. He had a moment of panic when he
brushed the pie, and it teetered. He caught it and righted it.

“Red dear, you mind getting the pie and closing the window? It’s getting a touch nippy in here,” the gopher said.

“Sure Granny,” the pretty woman said and walked over. She reached out, her hand level with his face. Mickey jumped back so she wouldn’t touch him. Hooooooo, that was close. Mickey tiptoed out of the busy kitchen, past a large dining room with a long table, and into the front room where the card game was still in play.

“So, that’s it, then? You two are just going to leave it at that?” the fox was saying.

Bendy shrugged. “What else are we supposed to do? Until we have the machine running, we aren’t going to convince him. Besides, changing people’s opinion is too much of a headache.”

Boris’ ears dropped.

“I still say I should go over there and give those mooks a piece of my mind.” The fox crossed his arms, careful to still hide his cards.

“Please don’t, Finley.” Boris sighed warily. He looked exhausted.

“Leave it, Fin. We’re done talking about it,” Bendy warned with an annoyed glance at the short fox with huge ears. The fox raised a brow.

“We’ve been tryin’ ta get them to let us go over there all day,” Mugs admitted. The demon gave him an even more annoyed look.

“The conflict won’t resolve itself, but we’re all still high with emotions.” Felix sighed. “I guess I agree with the boys on staying away for now.” The fox rolled his eyes frustratedly.

Cup scowled. “We shouldn’t have ta do anything! He should be comin’ to us to apologize.”

Bendy rolled his eyes. “I said drop it.”

“Fine, whatever.” Cup shook his head and heaved a sigh. Mickey bit his lip. The tension in the room was a bit uncomfortable.

“So, how did research go today?” Bendy asked Felix.

Felix sighed. “Well, I haven’t been able to find much. The only symbol on both of them are those diamonds and lines. The gear has a few simple lines and shapes cut into it, but I don’t know if they are magic or not. If they are, they aren’t runes or symbols I recognize, though they should be the same civilization, the Micco. If it is, then this design is very different from the doll’s.”

Mickey listen in idly. Gear? Doll? What were those? He wandered into the room across from them. It was a study of some kind. Books lined shelves. There were some awards and figurines here and there. He banged his knee into the desk and hissed in pain. The conversation in the other room fell silent. Mickey hobbled away from the desk as Felix peeked in. He came in and looked around before scratching his head and going back into the other room.

Mickey let out a sigh of relief. He spent the evening going through the house carefully and quietly. No room seemed to be a witch’s spell room, though. The closest was the doctor’s lab. He found a second study that gave him a bad feeling. He couldn’t put his finger on why. After looking around a little, he decided to leave. The grinning doll on the chair that looked like Bendy was unnerving. Was
that the doll they had been talking about?

He eventually ran out of places to look and went back downstairs. He tucked himself into a corner and just listened to the conversations while he waited for the witch to make an appearance.

He learned a lot by just watching. Bendy and Boris were definitely centerpieces in this home. Everyone treated both of them with respect or some kind of affection. The Red woman didn’t like the cup boys. There actually seemed to be some hesitance from everyone around them except for Felix, Snow, Granny, the boys, and Alice, who had joined them at some point. It wasn’t that strange after hearing the story the other night.

Those two had been hunting the boys, and now, they were there sitting and eating dinner together. Yet, the interaction between the two sets of brothers was completely friendly. It reminded him of the dynamic between himself, Donald, and Goofy. What was it about those two that drew people in? Boris was a sweet kid, really smart. Now that he was watching Bendy, he noticed a few similarities. Both of them were clever and sharp. Bendy’s sense of humor was bit on the nose, but his comebacks were quick. Alice really enjoyed her puns and word play. Cuphead and Mugman seemed inclined to follow her lead. Boris pretended to tolerate them all, but his little smiles gave away his amusement. The old gopher dotted on all of them like they were her grandchildren. It was a homely setting, for sure.

Snow was just as charming and lovely in real life as on the stage. The doctor was quiet through most of the meal. He seemed to be far away in thought. His assistant seemed equally distracted and on edge, but that might have just been because she was around the cups. They seemed to like the cups the least out of the party guests. The fox, Finley, was loud and boisterous, but he did a good job with Alice and Bendy to keep the energy and spirits up around the table and erase tension or awkward moments quickly. Then, there was Sammy, the other cat. He was nervous, quiet, and stuck close to Finley. He didn’t have much to say, but he did smile at the other’s antics.

Felix seemed more relaxed too. He wasn’t quiet or nervous at this table like he had been at Mickey’s that time a bit ago. He almost seemed like a completely different cat. Confident, sure of himself, smart, and not afraid to put any of them in their places when things started going too far. Yet, he was still willing to tease and laugh too.

It was so strange to be on the outside for once. Mickey couldn’t really remember the last time he wasn’t in the middle of an event or dinner or show. It kinda just came with the job and lifestyle they chose. Still, from this angle, he learned a lot more about all of them just by watching and listening.

Like how Cup was very aware of everyone in the room and how he always kept his back to a wall. Or how Felix would twitch his tail at a joke he found funny but couldn’t laugh because someone was the butt end of it, so he’d have to rein them in. How simply aware Bendy and Boris were of each other and how they seemed to always unconsciously shift when the other did. They could reach around each other at the same time without looking and not bump.

He could now understand what his actions and words may have done to two that were so close. He had been blind and selfish. Well, no, not blind. He just choose to ignore it. And now, here he was. A practical ghost. A Scrooge without a guide to tell him when the nightmare was over. The dinner was switched out for the pie. Mickey slipped into the kitchen and scavenged the leftovers. Boris was right. Granny was an amazing cook! He had a near scare with Snow White but managed to duck behind the counter in time. He waited a few minutes until he was sure nothing seemed suspicious and went back out to the group.

The conversations were winding down a bit. Mickey fought off the urge to doze until Bendy spoke
“The next morning, Mickey awoke with the sun. The light bugged him, and it wasn’t like blinking changed anything much. He got up to a most quiet house. There were some soft voices coming from downstairs. Mickey decided to stay on the second floor and go back to that odd study. It gave him a bad feeling, so maybe it had some of the witch’s hidden things around.

He had to creep by the doctor, who was so absorbed in his work that he didn’t notice when Mickey opened the door and slipped in. He went over the room again. The doll was now on the shelf, but otherwise, nothing else had moved. Mickey chuckled nervously to himself. The doll moving. That was...Then again, he had seen weirder.

Still, he dismissed the creepy doll and his bad feeling about it. If it was the witch’s, it didn’t seem to have anything to do with him but rather Bendy. He couldn’t see anything obvious...again. Mickey sighed. He instead picked out a book from the shelves and began to read. The Micco People. They had been mentioned last night, so he might as well take the time he had to learn what he could. He got absorbed into the text rather easily. The ancient relics the pictures showed were amazingly described. The author explained everything known of the magical race. They were very knowledgeable, inventing pulley systems, ancient machinery, aqueducts, and a number of other things that would be forgotten for hundreds of years with the loss of their race, especially their magic system that, even today, was still mostly unknown. It was a picture of a wall that had Mickey pause. Those...those looked familiar! Those were some of the symbols Holly used on him!
She wasn’t a witch. She was using ancient rune magic! Mickey jumped in the book to see if he could find anything about their spells or language or anything. Frustratingly, there wasn’t anything specific, just that the race relied on them for even everyday things and that the limited magic use of…

Wait. Limited? If it was limited, then why was he still invisible? It had been over a day! Was she not sleeping? Was she actually a witch and borrowing power from somewhere else? Mickey wasn’t the best at understanding magic, but he and the circus had seen enough of it to have learned a trick or two. Not to mention, they were still sheltering that fairy that was hiding from the Circus De Freak and trying to get home.

Before Mickey could go further, he heard footsteps approach the door. He snapped the book shut and threw it under the couch. He stood up and stepped back as the door swung open and in stepped Cuphead. He glanced at the room before closing the door behind him. He smirked when he spotted the doll.

“So, we meet again.” He snickered and picked it up. He glanced at the bookshelf with suspicious eyes. “Aren’t you supposed to be hiding behind the books?” There was a squeak from his coat. “Okay, we’ll get outta here in a second. I just wanna see something first,” he murmured. “I mean, when I was trapped in that cussing chest I thought I heard it move but thought I was just paranoid.” Cuphead frowned. “Guess not.” Cuphead pinched the doll’s head, and the stitched smile opened. “Oh, that is so creepy.” Cup frowned and then tilted the doll to look at it. “Uh,” he murmured. “Well, what do you know? There it is.” His eyes narrowed.

Did that mean the doll really did move itself? Oh stars. Why did they have something like that? If he called it creepy. It wasn’t because they liked it. And why was it made to look like Bendy?

Cuphead lowered the doll and turned to one of the display items. A big cog. He tilted his head to look on the inner circle. “And there too. But they ain’t from anywhere I recognize. Not demon script and not angel runes, so what is this thing?” Suddenly, there was stomping and the door slammed open.

“Would you stop pinching my face!” Bendy exclaimed, still in his night wear of a t-shirt and shorts.

Cup’s eyes widened until he looked down at the doll again. “What? This?”

“Leave it!” Bendy ordered angrily.

Cup raised a brow slowly. “Ya know.” An amused smirk started to spread across his face. “I heard that anything done to the doll will happen to you.” Mickey’s eyes widened. It what? Why would they have something like that!

Bendy glared at him. “Cuphead.” His voice was sharp with warning. “It’s too cussing early! Whatever you’re thinking, stop!”

The ceramic man lifted one of the arms of the doll. “Stop what?”

“Put. The doll. Down. Now!” Bendy took a half step into the room.

Cup tilted his head, thinking. He wrapped his other hand around the back of it. “Uh, nah!”

Bendy lunged for him. Cup dove to the side, and suddenly, Bendy was on the floor laughing. “N-N-NO! STOP! Y-Y-YOU MON-MONSTER!” Bendy had his arms wrapped around his sides yowling.

Cup straightened up, still fiddling with the doll’s side. Mickey watched in morbid fascination. A
voodoo doll? He’d heard about them being used for torture, needles and such, but he hadn’t ever heard of tickling...

“Holy cuss! It actually works! But it doesn’t make you move like the doll does. Interesting.” Cuphead snickered.

“En-enough! St-stop!” Tears were streaming down Bendy’s face, and he rolled across the floor, fighting hands that weren’t there. Mickey looked back and forth between the two.

“And I learned your ticklish!” Cup grinned evilly.

“I a-a-am g-g-g-go-in-g to kill y-y-you Cup!” Bendy gasped and laughed.

“You’d have to catch me first,” Cup mocked. “Wonder if this works.” He stopped the torture and pulled back the tiny goggles. Bendy sat up with a growl, gasping for air. Cup let the mini goggles go. They snapped into the doll’s head.

“Ouch!” Bendy yelped and lifted a hand to his empty forehead. “That hurt, you jerk!”

“Wow,” Cup muttered in awe. He looked between the doll and Bendy. “All the things I could do with this,” Cup said gleefully.

“When I get my hands on you, dishware, I am slinging you out the window!” Bendy shifted to get up.

“Oops!” Cup snickered, turning the doll’s leg. “Charley horse!”

“AH! You cussing scum!” Bendy fell back, holding and rubbing his leg. “You are going to bleed,” he hissed, his eyes flashing a terrifying red. It didn’t seem to faze the ceramic man, though. Was this them just messing with each other? It started out normal, but this was turning down a rather intense corner. Would the demon actually hurt him? Should Mickey try to stop this? How?

“How? You can’t even stand up,” Cup gloated. Bendy shifted his weight again. He paused when his hand brushed something under the couch. So fast that, if Mickey couldn’t see through his eyelids, he was sure he would have missed it, Bendy pulled the book Mickey had been reading out from under the couch and hurled it across the room at Cuphead. He gasped and ducked, barely dodging the thick projectile. Mickey was less fortunate, but luckily, it didn’t seem either of them noticed when the book hit an invisible body in the chest. Mickey winced and grabbed the book. That...would be a bruise.

“Cuphead!” Bendy bellowed. Cup was laughing. The demon was up on his feet again. Boy, these two were fast! They were blurs.

“That’s my cue to bail,” Cup laughed.

“Like I’ll give you the chance! I’m gonna drown that doll in your stupid head. And once it turns into you, I will give you a taste of your own medicine!” Bendy threatened.

“Uh-huh sure, but first.” Cup threw the doll to the other side of the room. “Catch!”

Bendy’s eyes widened, and he dove for the item. Cup vaulted over the couch, dove over the chair, rolled and popped up next to the door. “Later!” he called as he raced away.

Bendy caught the doll last minute. It was like watching an intense baseball catch. He sighed in relief. “That could have hurt, you schmuck!” Bendy called over his shoulder, eyes red again. He stood up. “I’m gonna kill him.” He pulled some books away from the bookshelf with a touch more force than
necessary. He placed the doll behind them before putting the books back.

That’s when Mickey realized he was still holding the book...that would appear to be floating. He gasped and dropped it. Bendy jumped and turned at the sudden thump. He blinked a couple times before glancing at the gear that Cuphead had been looking at. “Don’t you start doing weird stardust too,” he muttered. “Shadows in the corner of my eye is one thing. You start moving stuff, and I’ll have to do something.” Bendy appeared to be talking to the item. Mickey blinked. What kind of reaction was that? He looked at the rather ordinary looking machine part. What did it do? Why in the world was Bendy talking to it? Could...it hear him?

The demon sighed and rolled his eyes. “And now I’m talking to things. Maybe this is all starting to get to me?” He scratched the back of his head. His tone implied he was kidding, but his eyes watched the cog warily.

“Hey Cuphead? What was all that noise upstairs?” Boris could be heard outside of the room.

Cuphead’s laugh reached them. “Well you see kid, your brother went and--”

Bendy scowled and raced out of the room, spiked tail whipping behind him. “Cuphead!”

“Oh!” Mickey heard Cup say. The stunned Mickey took a moment to breathe. That had been...interesting. If he didn’t know better, he’d think Cup and Bendy were the brothers. They went after each other like they were.

Movement from outside got his attention. A laughing Cup was racing down the street, a yelling Bendy after him, fist in the air. Mugs was laughing behind them with Boris next to him. Felix walked out, shaking his head at the scene.

“Bendy stop! Cup apologize!” Felix called after them. “Where are you four going!”

None of them stopped. They disappeared around the street corner. Felix laughed, amused. He pulled off his bag from his waist and tossed it into the street. It suddenly changed into a motorcycle. Mickey’s eyes widened. Felix put on the helmet, started the bike, and rode down the street after the group. Mickey had read one or two of the cat’s book, but it was different seeing the bag in action. Wow. This house had all sorts of sights going on. It almost gave his circus a run for its money.

Still a little dazed, Mickey wandered downstairs. The smell of breakfast was hanging in the air. Red and Granny were laying out an amazing spread. Mickey’s mouth watered. Wow. Okay, Mickey was jealous he couldn’t just dig in. When both their backs were turned, he did swipe a muffin.

Mickey hid away and enjoyed his prize slowly. He didn’t come out until he was done. By then, Bendy and his group had returned. Finley and Sammy had gotten up. Snow White was up and so was Sneezy. There were also two new foxs in the group.

“So, how’s the move in?” Boris asked.

“It’s going well,” the older one said. “We’ve got most of the furniture taken care of and a space for Fireball figured out.”

“Let us know if you need any help Xedo,” Bendy spoke up.

“Thank you Bendy, we’ll remember--Wiston! No!” Xedo reached over and snatched a match from the younger fox. “You would think that our last place burning down would deter you!”

“Uh, but brother.” Wiston pouted. “I just wanted to see what a burnt strawberry looked like.”
Xedo scowled. He sighed and adjusted the small glasses on his snout. “No.”

“Oh, and have you two seen Snowball around? Holly has been really worried, but it doesn’t seem like anyone has seen her.” Boris spoke up.

Wiston paused before biting into some toast. “Snowball? No, I’m sorry. We’ll keep an eye out for her.” Boris nodded with a smile.

“Thanks Wiston,” Boris said.

“Sure, maybe Fireball can help? She’s magic too after all.” Wiston shrugged.

There was a sound from the other side of the table. Mickey froze at the sight. It...it was bird, but with a deer’s head. What in the world? It let out a cry like an ‘Aaaah!’ from atop Mugman’s head, like it knew it was being talked about. Mugman laughed.

“Careful! You’re tail feathers tickle!” Mugs said. It cawed at him. Mugs lifted a bacon strip that the strange thing ate up happily.

Bendy frowned. “Hey! Not the bacon, man!”

Cup rolled his eyes. “Oh hush, there’s plenty, you weirdo!” he said offering the thing a hunk of sausage.

Bendy gave him an affronted stare. “There’s never enough bacon,” he declared.

Boris rolled his eyes.

“So, is she a carnivore or a herbivore?” Felix asked with an intrigued eye.

Xedo smiled. “Both it seems, and she loves our fire stove.”

Bendy looked at him in surprise. “You have a wood burning stove? With him in the house!” He pointed a fork at Wiston. The younger fox frowned.

Xedo sighed. “Surprisingly, having a fireproof pet is helpful. It’s only when he gets curious about other things that we have trouble now. Fireball is good for his boredom.”

Wiston pouted. “I don’t have a problem.”

“Mother and father sent you away from the den and to me for a reason, Wiston. You have a fire problem. It’s getting better, though.” Xedo shrugged. Wiston huffed and crossed his arms. Fireball made another noise at him.

“Hey Cup, mind sharing those pancakes? That pile you got there is about to topple.” Bendy smirked.

Cup glance at the small tower of cakes he was pouring syrup over.

“You’ll have to fight me.” He smirked. “Or surrender your bacon.” Bendy narrowed his eyes.

“Could you two not try to fight anymore this morning?” Mugs asked, exasperated. “Boris and I already had our morning run plus chasing you two. We’ve had enough exercise.”

Felix perked up and set down his coffee. “Speaking of exercise, I hear Mugs is teaching both of you how to defend yourself?”

Boris brightened up. “Yeah! I know a couple moves to escape people trying to grab me now!”
Bendy nodded around a mouth full of bacon.

Felix chuckled. “I’d love to see a demonstration.”

“What about you, Mr. Cat?” Mugs asked. “What fight styles do you know?”

Felix scratched the back of his head and chuckled. “Well, some martial arts from the dragon mountains. I pretty much came up with my own style, though.”

“Berries! You’ll have to show me too,” Mugs said. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. More people? Boy, this house always seemed busy. Guess that was a good thing. Mickey was used to a loud, rambunctious house.


“Sorry to come knocking so early. We are here on business,” one of the others said. “May we come in?”

“Of course,” Red said.

A raccoon and crow walked into the dining room. Boris put down his utensils. “Good morning Detective Featherworth, Detective Ringtail!”

“Good morning.” Featherworth nodded her head.

“Hey.” Ringtail tipped her hat. “We need to ask you some questions today.”

“Questions?” Bendy stopped with another bacon strip half raised to his mouth.

Ringtail nodded and flipped open a notepad. “Do you have any idea where Mickey Mouse went after you saw him last night at 10:15 p.m.?”

Bendy furrowed his brows. “Mickey?”

“Did something happen to Mr. Mickey?” Boris asked worriedly. His ears dropped.

“He’s been missing a full day,” Featherworth explained coolly.
Chapter Summary

“Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear,” Mic fretted. “This is not how friends should treat friends!”

Chapter Notes

Hello! Sorry it’s late and I haven’t really been responding to comments! We are with my family for the holiday and it’s been really busy. (Aren’t vacations suppose to be relaxing? I’ve done more work away from home than at home!) it’s been great but my schedule is all sorts of wonky. Hope you all had a great holiday. And Happy New Year! This will be the last post of the year! XD What madness awaits us?

“Missing!” Cup asked.

“And you are some of the last people to see him,” Ringtail added.

“What happened?” Boris’ eyes widened with alarm.

“The last time he was seen was entering his room. The next morning, when Oswald the Rabbit came in, his bed had not been slept in,” Ringtail told them. “There was a sword in the room that had been disturbed, but otherwise, there are no clues.”

“Gone?” Felix asked, awed. “A sword? There wasn’t any sign of a struggle?”

“No,” Featherworth answered. Mickey sat in a corner. So they had called, and now the police were looking for him. He wondered if Holly was nervous.

The detective went through the list of questions they had. If they suspected Bendy or anyone else, they didn’t give any hints. Boris was animated to help in any way they could. The detectives seemed to almost be friends of theirs. Guess there was a story there too. They didn’t stay long before they headed back to the door. Mickey sighed.

Then, as the detectives were on their way out, there was a voice at the door. “Oh, hello detectives!”

“Hello Holly, it’s good to see you. Glad we were able to run into you here, actually. We have a few questions for you.” Featherworth smiled.

Mickey saw Holly pause at the front door, hand on the door-jamb and head tilted a little. “Of course. What is it?”

They gave her the same line of questions they had asked everyone else from the diner. Mickey wanted to grab their pads, draw an arrow, and point it right at her! She did it, officers! Take her away! But...his family and friends…
Holly leaned against the door frame, and for a moment, he thought he saw her smile right at him.

“Oh, and one last thing,” Ringtail said. “You didn’t do anything to Pete again, did you? We warned you about that.”


Holly frowned, looked at Bendy and Boris, and then at the detectives. She looked down, speaking to Bendy and Boris. “Well...while you were gone I was at the cafe, and he was talking badly about you both, so I sort of used a rune to mute him.” She looked up at the detectives again quickly. “I’ve steered clear of him since, though, just like you told me to.”

“Except you were at his restaurant last night with the group, were you not?” Featherworth asked professionally.

“Wait, wait,” Bendy cut in and stepped up to the women. “You runed the guy? You were the reason he was mute?”

Holly shrugged. “Yeah.”

Bendy cackled. “That was you! Oh! That was so good!”

Boris frowned and patted her shoulder. “So when he was talking about a witch, he was talking about you. I’m sorry Holly.”

She smiled at Boris. “That’s okay. He doesn’t matter.” She turned to the detectives. “I felt awkward leaving the group just because we were going into his diner, but it’s not like I went out of my way to talk to him or anything,” she said with wide eyes. “He was talking to Bendy and Boris the entire time.”

Featherworth glanced at the brothers before nodding to Holly.

“Why bring up the mook anyway?” Bendy turned to the detectives.

“He turned himself in this morning for insurance fraud and starting the fire back in Sillyvision.” Ringtail smirked.

“So it was him! I knew it!” Bendy brought his fist down into his open hand, a cocky smile spread across his face.

“Yes, well there are still some things we’ll have to look into,” Featherworth informed slowly, her narrow shoulders hunched uncertainly.

“Like what? He confessed!” Bendy huffed and crossed his arms.

“But he was still accusing you of that last night Bendy.” Boris looked from the police to the demon, his brows knit in confusion. Bendy frowned and shrugged.

“And he was talking, but now he’s blind,” Featherworth added.

“Blind!” the two exclaimed together.

“We asked if he was cursed again, but he wouldn’t answer.” Ringtail scratched the side of her head, darting a glance at Holly. Mickey would bet his tail it was her!

“That’s...terrible.” Holly’s eyes were as wide as dishes. Mickey scoffed silently. She must have.
There was no way it wasn’t the witch. She probably had Pete in the same situation he was in. Pete was a bully, but Mickey didn’t think blinding him was the answer. She was probably threatening his family the same way she was threatening Mickey’s!

“Holly wouldn’t have done that even if she knew how. She’s not cruel.” Bendy shook his head dismissively. Yeah right!

They chatted a bit longer before they said their goodbyes and left.

“ Weird with Pete,” Bendy muttered and went back to the dining room.

Boris in tow. “No kidding. I hope he gets his sight back someday.”

Bendy snorted loudly. “I hope this humbles him! That mook always needed to be knocked down a peg.” Boris sighed and rolled his eyes but didn’t say anything.

Holly followed them. “A lot of things are happening.” She blinked and looked up. “Also, did something happen to Mickey?”

“Dunno, sounds like he’s missing,” Finley commented indifferently.

“Maybe he just wanted a break from everything?” Mugs suggested weakly.

“But disappearing without saying anything?” Felix had his ears down in concern. His eyes searched the group.

“Yeah, it’s pretty strange,” Holly said, frowning and sitting down on a couch. “Doesn’t he have shows to perform?” Mickey glared at her. If only he could do something! A rope? No, he couldn’t do anything here. She had magic. How could he stop that? He’d have to knock her out somehow.

She looked at Boris. “Do you think we should go looking for him?”

“Yes!” Boris answered immediately.

“Where would we even look Boris? None of us know the guy.” Cup frowned crossly. “Besides, the cops are looking for him. And since they came to us, we are on the suspect list. If we go out and about like that, it’ll only make us more suspicious.”

“Th-they wouldn’t suspect us,” Boris denied and shook his head quickly.

“They’re cops, of course they do. They have to.” Cup looked peeved. “We were some of the last people to see him, and we fought with him. I’m sure that rabbit or duck told them. That means we have a motive to want something bad to happen to him.”

Boris was on his feet in an instant. “We would never!” he gasped.

Cup looked at him with a steady, cold gaze. “We may know that but the cops don’t.”

“You sound like you are very aware of their methods,” Felix stated nonchalantly.

Cup shrugged unbothered. “When you cause trouble, it’s good to know how the law will see it.”

Bendy frowned. “Well then, I guess we better stay here then. We don’t need more trouble, and I’d rather not go back to jail.”

Holly grimaced. “I think your first time in there was enough.” She looked out the window. “Do you
think they’ll care if I go to the library?”

Mickey hoped she was thinking about getting herself fitted for the jumpsuit.

“No, it should be fine I think,” Felix said. “It’s not like you’d do anything to anyone, especially to someone famous,” he joked.

“Except stalk them.” Cup smirked tauntingly.

Holly scowled at him. “I only--” She cut herself off, glaring at Cup. “The only people who get stalked are those acting suspicious,” she shot back. Mickey shook his head. She what?

“But you aren’t a cop,” Mugs said. “Or a private eye.” He tilted his head. “Unless that's what you want to be someday?”

Holly gave him an exasperated look. “Every single time the police have proved less than helpful.” She started listing off fingers. “With Fairfax I tried to go to the police, but they were all corrupt; when I found out about the mob I tried to go the the mayor and nearly ended up getting caught; with Alice I actually called the police, and it ended up being pointless.”

“They got the evidence to prove us innocent,” Boris murmured weakly. “And Dr. Oddswell.”

“Well, Ringtail and Featherworth are certainly the exception in my mind,” Holly relented, folding her arms and shifting.

Bendy glanced at Cuphead and Mugman. “Shouldn’t they be on your fella's cases? I mean, you guys were into shady things before.”

Mugs eyes widened before he ducked his head. Cup sneered. “Hey, we are helping you! And trying to get ourselves into better places with that mess too! Don’t go asking us to run off and confess anything to the cops!” He waved his hand irritatedly. “We ain’t gonna do any good in some cell out in the bay.”

Bendy turned to face Cuphead more fully, his face smooth of expression except for the mischievous glitter in his eyes. “Just wondering if there was a warrant out for you two. I could use the cash.” The demon chuckled.

Felix raised a brow. Red stiffened. A number of people grew tense. What was all this? Mickey looked around the room, feeling completely lost.

Cuphead shook his head. “They won’t. And we didn’t do anything the public knows about, just individuals.” Mugs gave Red a wary glance. “And we can’t make up for it in a cell. So, drop it.” Cup bristled like a cornered cat.

“Woah, okay, calm down. I was joshing.” Bendy lifted his hands placatingly. “Prison is a pile of stardust, but it’s not that bad.”

Mugs shook his head. “We have a lotta guys that don’t like us. If they found out we were in the slammer, we could be--”

“It’d be bad,” Cup cut in. “So we’ll do our redemption out here, if ya don’t mind.”

Bendy shook his head, eyes rolling to the sky in exasperation. “Alright, alright. I won’t turn you in for anything.”
Boris shook his head meaningfully. “Me neither.”

Felix frowned, obvious disapproval cast out toward the Cupbros. “I just hope you two can do some good now. I think anyone can change if they really want to and that past choices can be learned from.”

Cup and Mugs seemed a little taken aback by his words. “Thanks, Felix.”

“Well, pretty words are cheap in my opinion,” Red snipped and marched into the kitchen. Both of them winced. Mickey raised his brows. Oh dear. Something had to have happened there. It was at this point that Mickey noticed the witch was gone again. Somehow, she had managed to slip out without him or anyone else noticing. A chill crept down his spine.

“I’m a bit surprised you two are so understanding,” Oddswell observed.

Bendy shrugged, untroubled. “Boris and I were always running from cops growing up. We were never bad enough to get sent to juvie. But until I got old enough, us being on the streets was technically illegal.”

Cup whistled mockingly. “A hardened criminal, you.”

Bendy threw a roll at him. The other caught it easily. “Shut it! I was just doing what I thought was best.”

Cup lifted his hands placatingly, roll still in one of them. “I ain’t judging.” Bendy stared at him with mild accusation in his light gaze.

Mickey looked around for the witch. Where did she go? Had she left the house? People were starting disperse and go their separate ways. Mickey kept looking.

Felix slowly made his way toward the circus. He wasn’t sure this was the right thing to do. After what happened between Bendy and Mickey, Felix had been struggling. He knew Mickey was in the wrong, and Bendy didn’t deserve that treatment. After seeing Bendy struggle with his illness and all the responsibilities he accepted or had put on him, Felix was understandably angry with the mouse. Bendy was a wonderful kid that needed help, support, people to rely on, not--that.

Felix sighed. But then Ozzy’s haunted face would pop into his head, and all his feelings would tangle up. He knew Ozzy lost someone, but he hadn’t understood it was from the illness. A sickness, sure, but he hadn’t thought it was the ink. He could see where Mickey was coming from. He had heard a little of their world travels while he was off doing his own work. They were just as brave or daring as he was, if not more so. They protected every member of their circus, after all.

Felix admitted he was a little curious about the things they’d learned about the illness before it was too late. What were the rumors they had followed? None of that mattered at the moment though. The fact was Mickey was gone, and Oswald was probably worried sick. After seeing that dark grief in him again, Felix wanted to check on him. Regardless of the things his friends and Ozzy’s brother were going through. He just wanted to be sure the rabbit was okay.

He came to the city of tents, strips, and energy. Some fans stopped him to talk or get signatures, nothing new, but his head wasn’t really into it like normal. He weaved his way through the crowd, eventually reaching the apartment complex the circus owned. He knocked on the door and pulled off his hat. The door opened, and Felix looked down to see one of the bunny kids, ears down and eyes sad. His ears perked at the sight of the cat.
“Mr. Felix!” he gasped.

“H-hello lov--Wha!” The door flew open, and he was tackled to the ground by a number of children hugging him.

“Who is it, kids?” a familiar voice asked.

“It’s Mr. Felix!” one of the little girls answered.

“Ah, well let him up so he can come in,” Oswald said, sounding a bit chest-fallen. The kids whined but did as their father ordered.

“Thank you,” Felix said, pulling himself up and dusting off his pants. Oswald nodded. He seemed a bit paler than before. His ears were down but he didn't have the blank, dull despair of when Felix first met him. That was good. He was ushered in by the children and made to sit on the living room couch. A number of them sat around him.

“Don’t crowd him,” Oswald told them as he sat across from the cat.

“Okay,” they chimed.

Oswald looked at Felix with a wary gaze a question in his eyes. Felix jumped, realizing he was staring. “Ah! Um, w-well the police were over and asking about Mickey.” Felix felt his face heat up.

Oswald blinked. “So, I’m guessing you and none of your friends saw him,” he drawled dully.

Felix shook his head, ears down. “No, Boris is really worried.”

Oswald raised an ear. “Really? I thought he’d still be angry. I mean, Mickey did do something pretty selfish.”

Felix hesitated. He didn’t want to betray his teammates' trust or characters, but he did want to be honest with Oswald and not insult him. “That’s true, though he did say it was for self-preservation,” Felix said slowly.

Oswald snorted. “It wasn’t right. He knows it, and I do too. He was gonna go over to apologize, but he disappeared first. He felt awful for what he’d done.” As he should, Felix thought.

“I’m sorry too. I knew he was oddly tense but I didn’t know why.” Oswald grimaced. “I understand where Mickey is coming from, and there are somethings I still can’t face yet, but pretending they aren’t there isn’t the answer.”

Oswald snorted. “It wasn’t right. He knows it, and I do too. He was gonna go over to apologize, but he disappeared first. He felt awful for what he’d done.” As he should, Felix thought.

“I’m sorry too. I knew he was oddly tense but I didn’t know why.” Oswald grimaced. “I understand where Mickey is coming from, and there are somethings I still can’t face yet, but pretending they aren’t there isn’t the answer.”

Felix nodded sympathetically. He could relate. He was still sore about Professor Wiseton, and he wasn’t family. He couldn’t imagine what it must be like to lose someone to this horrible disease. Bendy was the closest he’d come to it, and he couldn’t imagine someone so vibrant and full of life to just being gone suddenly.

“You’re right, but you can’t rush certain things. You and Mickey need time. What happened to Bendy wasn’t acceptable but understandable. I think both he and Boris realize that,” Felix said. He frowned, and Oswald relaxed a little more into his seat. “But most everyone at the house still expects an apology.”

Oswald nodded. “None of them would know where he is, would they?”

Felix started to shake his head but paused. Was everyone clean in this? Ever since they'd returned,
the house was divided on the Cup brothers. Everyone was fiercely loyal to the Bbros and protective. Would any of them go after Mickey, even though they were told not to? Cuphead and Mugman came to mind, but Felix couldn’t be sure. Holly had seen them sneak out before. And what about that ‘witch’ comment Pete had used? Was he talking about Holly or Alice? We’re either of them that vengeful? And if they did do something, where was Mickey now? Cuphead was right to say they were all perfect suspects.

Oswald picked up on his hesitation and straightened. His eyes hardened. Felix felt his chest tighten. “Are you protecting them? Did you help, Felix?” Several of the bunny children gasped.

“No! Not Mr. Felix!” one boy threw himself over the cat’s lap, scowling at his father.

“No! He’s a hero! Not a bad guy!” a little girl agreed. A number of other protests rang out for the sweet little lovelies.

“No, no!” Felix denied with hands raised placatingly. “Absolutely not!” Oswald’s frown deepened. “I may be with Bendy on this, but I wouldn’t agree to something like kidnapping, Mr. Oswald.” Felix shook his head. “Just like ignoring issues isn’t the answer, neither is violence.”

“See! Mr. Felix is a good guy!”

“He’s even bringing Uncle Mickey back!”

“Yeah! Save Uncle Mickey Mr. Felix!”

“Oh dears.” Felix did his best to smile at the children. “The police are already looking at this very moment.”

“But if it’s you, I’m sure you’ll find him first!” a little boy said.

“It’s not a race,” Felix told him.

The rabbit sighed and scratched his ear. “I want to believe you, Felix. Sorry, I’m worried, and I can get hot headed,” he apologized, his sharp eyes turning gentle again.

“Th—that’s okay Mr. Oswald.” Felix felt his face heat again. Oh bother, his racing heart! “I understand. I have nephews too. I would lose my mind if something happened to Inky, Winky, or their mother.”

Oswald’s ears perked. “You have a sister?” Felix nodded.

“And the kits are growing way too fast. They live in town. I need to visit them again soon. I’ve been a bad uncle.” Felix shrugged. It had just been something crazy lately with the cog, the boys, his book manuscript, those research notes he still needed to take to the university, and all the research he still needed to do to figure out that cog.

Ugh. He had so much to do. “Bring them by the circus sometime,” Oswald offered. “I’ll be sure to get them good seats.”

“You should join the circus, Mr. Felix!” one of the kids called out. All the children began chatting to him and Oswald about him joining. Oh dear.

“I’m sorry. I can’t. I have to help Bendy and Boris get the parts for the machine,” Felix apologized.

“The machine? What machine?” the little girl in his old hat asked. She tilted the hat up to look at him.
Felix chuckled.

“The machine da papers were talking about, idiot,” one of her brothers grouched at her.

“Don’t call your sister that,” Oswald chastised.

“Sorry,” he muttered reluctantly, not looking at her.

Oswald rolled his eyes and sighed out his nose. Felix covered his mouth to hide his smile. Too cute. All of them.

“So, do you really think this machine will have the cure?” Oswald asked, a curious twitch to his ear.

Felix took a deep breath. “Despite how ludicrous it sounds, I think so. These parts have strange and powerful magic that I’ve never seen before. I think those two are really on to something.” He hoped they were. They still had to get three more parts. And though Bendy was somehow doing better since the Blue Fairy healed him, that didn’t mean they had much time.

Oswald hummed. That dullness seemed to return to his eyes as he reflected on something Felix could only guess at. “I hope you’re right,” he said gravely.

Felix gave a small nod. A shard of guilt cut into his heart. “Me too.”

“Miss Hood! Upstairs now!” the doctor called out. Several individuals jumped at the shout. Mickey looked up. What was going on? Red Hood walked from the kitchen swiftly. Granny was right behind her.

“No Granny. Don’t come.” Red rested a hand on her shoulder before marching up the stairs. There was a glass shattering shriek. Mickey jumped and looked up the stairs. What in the world!

Granny wrung her hands. “Oh dear! That’s Lady Blue, isn’t it! Please le--”

“No!” Red ordered from up the staircase. “Stay downstairs, don’t strain yourself Mrs. Gopher.” Granny seemed really upset by this. Finley and Boris were able to get her to leave the stairs. Everyone would glance up, though, as the screaming and wailing continued. Mickey stood up and rushed up the stairs. It was her wasn’t it? Holly did something again. Red raced past him when he reached the top of the stairs. She went into a room at the opposite end of the hall from the lab and study. Mickey followed.

“Here doctor!” Red sounded strained. “C’mon, Blue Fairy. You’re stronger than this.”

“Get me the needle, Miss Hood.” Dr. Oddswell voice came from inside the room. Red turned on her heel and passed Mickey again. Mickey approached the room and peeked inside. There, a person covered in ink was weeping. “I’m sorry, my lady,” Dr. Oddswell said gently. He brushed a hand on the figure, the lady’s arm. His coat and hands were stained with ink. She was quickly losing shape and withering in pain. Mickey choked. No! Not this! He jumped away from the doorway, horror freezing him to the wall. Red went past him again, a syringe in hand. “Thank you, Miss Hood.”

“Sir, is there anything else?” Red sounded choked.

“You know the answer to that Miss Hood,” Oddswell said grimly.

“Oh stars.” Red’s voice cracked. Mickey could hear dripping. He felt sick. He couldn’t stay here! Mickey crept away on shaky legs. He would have run if he thought he wouldn’t fall. He wanted to
run. Memories haunted him, chased him down the hall and stairs. The rooms that once held so much light and energy suddenly had become dark and gloomy. Everyone was quiet or whispering. Boris was looking up the stairs and then at Bendy. Bendy had his lips pursed into a grim line. He looked pale. Granny was sitting in a chair behind him, a handkerchief in her hand as she dabbed her eyes behind her thick glasses.

“S-she’ll be okay,” Finley whispered to the old woman.

“No dear. This time is different,” Granny wepted quietly.

“You don’t know that,” Boris said. Granny patted the back of his hand with a watery smile.

“Oh child. I have seen too much,” Granny whispered. “But I hope you are right.”

Mickey found a dark corner in the front room and curled up. He sunk to the floor and wished he was home. Wished he was with his friends and family. Wished he couldn’t hear the ghostly screams of his sister-in-law or could unsee the despair in his brother’s eyes. He didn’t want to hear these things again. He didn’t want to see it again.

The screaming faded to silence. It was the heaviest silence Mickey had heard since she passed. Mickey didn’t think anyone breathed. He didn’t know how long they waited, it could have been five minutes, it could have been an hour. Eventually, Red came down the stairs. Mickey looked around the room. Boris, Granny, and Finley looked like they wanted to rush her. To dare ask. But they didn’t. Sammy looked like he wanted to faint. Snow and Sneezy were solemn. Bendy was completely unreadable. Red didn’t say anything. She didn’t look at any of them. She went to the phone and called.

“This is Dr. Oddswell’s,” Red said with a raw voice. “Yes sir. The Blue Fairy...Okay...Yes sir.” She hung up. She then looked up. Tears in her eyes. “I’m sorry.”

Granny was up and wrapped her in a tight hug. “It’s okay. You did everything you could!”

Red sobbed.

“Sh-a-she-s-achoo!” Sneezy sneezed into his beard. “She’s gone?”

“Yes, Sneezy.” Snow brushed her eye.

Cuphead and Mugman shared a wide-eyed stare. Felix dropped his head. Sammy sank into a chair and started to shiver. Finley went over to comfort him. Boris returned to Bendy.

Mickey watched as the coroner came. Hardly anyone spoke. Boris seemed to shadow Bendy now. Snow and Granny seemed to also be ghosted throughout the house. Mickey could guess as to why.

Finally when the man left and the police arrived, Oddswell came down stairs. He wasn’t wearing his white coat for once. His shirt was still stained. When the officials were all gone and the silence returned, the lizard looked around the room.

He seemed shaken for once. Pale, stiff, his scaly face etched in grief, he looked around at everyone in the front room. His patients, the questers, his assistant. “The time has come that we have lost a gentle soul to the Ink Illness.” He took a moment to clear his throat. “She was a noble person of power and kindness that knew no limit. She died hoping that we would press on. That,” he swallowed, “that our mission to find a cure will succeed and all those that have sacrificed to this goal can rest easy.”
“And we will,” Boris said. Everyone turned to him. “We will build the Ink Machine and save everyone that we can. Blue Fairy saved Bendy, Cuphead, and Felix’ lives. The least we can do is this.”

Bendy nodded. “We won’t rest until there’s a cure,” He looked at Oddswell and Red. “We can’t give in to despair. Not now. We have two parts. We have three to go. If anyone can beat this thing, it’s everyone in this house. Everyone that has helped us up to now.” He looked around the rest of the house. “A lot of people have suffered. A lot have died, but they wouldn’t want us to get weighed down. We are pushing forward, and we are doing it for them.”

“For everyone that got us here,” Felix said.

Oddswell nodded. “You are right Bendy. Thank you. We better get back to work.” Red nodded. “And...her funeral is this weekend. Let’s all do our best until then.”

Boris tugged on Bendy’s sleeve. They went off somewhere. Mickey didn’t follow. He just watched as everyone started moving again. Visitors came and went. The news traveled quickly. Those that came by were there for checkups, pill refills, and so on, but they also brought gifts and sympathy cards.

Though there was sorrow, it seemed Bendy’s words had some strange effect, because there wasn’t despair. The sadness in the house was there, but it wasn’t suffocating. Mickey couldn’t understand how it was so different.

Back then, he had been suffocating. His brother had shut down. It had been a nightmare. Why wasn’t it here? The thought that none of these people were her family came to him, but it was obvious that the Blue Fairy had been loved and respected in this place.

Why was it so different? It wasn’t until late in night while the dinner table was being cleaned up that it finally clicked. Mickey watched Bendy and Boris head upstairs. Bendy smiled at the wolf. There was hope. They were looking to the future. And there was power in that.

The afternoon passed in a series of visitors. Finally, when it got dark, the house was left only with it’s original occupants.

Just then, Mickey heard the sound of the front door opening. Holly peeked in, a blank look on her face as she slipped in the door. His heart almost stopped.

She closed the door quietly behind her and wandered down the hall to the front room. Leaning just barely past the wall into the room, she took in everyone’s solemn expressions. “Hello,” she said quietly.

“Hello dear,” Granny said. “I’m glad you came by to visit.”

Holly paused. “I heard what happened. I’m so sorry,” she said, gazing at the floor. Looking closer, Mickey noticed that the edges of her eyes were smooth, no wrinkle of emotion. Just a wide, unconcerned look in them, although her mouth was turned into a frown.

It was an act. Mickey was sure. She didn’t care that someone had died, someone that had apparently saved Bendy’s life. Mickey narrowed his eyes at her. Did she even care about them? If something happened to Boris or Granny, would she be upset or have the gall to pretend like she was now? Mickey felt bitter anger burn his soul.
Mickey’s heart nearly stopped when the dark haired one--Alice?--seemed to glance at him. She looked past him and turned back to Holly.

“It’s been a hard day all ’round,” Finley sighed.

Holly nodded. She wandered into the room and sat down next to the fox. He smiled at her.

“Where have you been all day, Holly?” Alice asked. “I’ve been a little worried.”

Holly shrugged. “Looking for Snowball. Still haven’t found her.” She paused and looked around. “Has anyone seen Snowball in the last couple days, anyways?”

A ring of negatives answered her.

Holly looked directly at Cuphead. “I know she likes you a lot. Are you sure you haven’t seen her?” she said, tilting her head and watching him.

Cup blinked and snorted. “No. I’m pretty sure I don’t have a little puffball running around my head.”

Something rippled across her face, but then her expression smoothed, and she sighed. “I’m just so worried.”

She went to the kitchen to find something to eat. Alice watched her go with a wary expression.

Bendy gave Cup a pointed glare. Cup glared back and gave a small shake of his head. Mickey glanced between them. He did have Snowball? And Bendy knew it? If Bendy was keeping secrets from her, did that mean he wasn’t behind her attack? Or was this more complicated than he realized?

Holly came back and picked up her bag. “Well, I’m going to go out and look some more. You guys have a good night.” She waved as she moved into the hall. Mickey made a split second decision. He stood up to follow her.

Alice’s eyes snapped up and followed him. Mickey paused at the hallway and looked back at her. She wasn’t gazing at him, more through him. But still, her eyes searched from one side of the room to the other. Could she sense him or something? Was she another witch?

He lifted his hand to wave at her. Nothing. She frowned and looked back to Cuphead. He and Bendy were back to glaring at each other.

“Give it back,” Bendy hissed quietly.

“No,” Cup hissed back. “She’s terrified of Holly.”

“Terrified? Why would she be? She loves Holly! You just wanna keep her.” Bendy pointed at him accusingly.

“Have you seen her come out of my pocket at all since she left Holly?” Cuphead hissed back.

“Huh?” Bendy’s finger half fell. Cuphead moved, opening his coat to show in the inner lining. He hooked a finger in one of the inner pockets. The barest tip of a nose hovered at the opening but then ducked back inside.

“There’s no button, no zipper. She can come out whenever she likes, and she hasn’t. She was shivering the whole time Holly was in here,” Cup hissed. “And last I checked, she liked being in my head, not in my pocket.”
“So what? She’s hiding?” Boris guessed.

“You can bet your whiskers she is.” Cup tucked his coat back into place.

“But why?” Mugs asked.

“Something is wrong. Snowball is afraid of that girl, and I am one to trust animal instincts,” Cuphead stated. Bendy and Boris shared a concerned look.

Mickey sighed in relief. It seemed that they at least were starting to figure it out. The mouse rushed to the door and opened it, hoping that he hadn’t completely lost her with his delayed exit.

Just as he made it out the door, he saw her turn down a street two blocks away. He hurried down the steps, slipped, and got back up. He rushed down the street to find her again.

Once again, as he reached the corner, he saw her turn. He hurried again, nearly tangling his feet. He had a few days being invisible, but not being able to see his limbs made placement really hard.

The entire time it seemed to go like this, with Mickey barely managing to keep up. She didn’t seem to look anywhere. She didn’t even seem particularly interesting in anything but getting to where ever she was going quickly.

Eventually, she got to an apartment complex and entered an apartment on the second floor. When he got to the front door, it was unlocked. Mickey paused. This was a bad idea. A really dangerous, bad idea.

But he didn’t know what else he could do. With that thought he opened the door. He didn’t step in. The front room was empty, but there were two bedroom doors farther inside, one open, one closed. It was a trap. There was no doubt.

Mickey sighed. And sadly, he was willingly walking into it. He stepped forward into the front room. Silence. Oh boy. He took a couple tentative steps forward. The nice thing about seeing through his eyelids? Constant visualice.

The apartment remained quiet.

Mickey licked his dry lips as he inched into the apartment. He scanned the space for any sign of her.

Wait a minute. Hadn’t she appeared out of nowhere the night she attacked him? If she could turn him invisible, of course she could turn herself invisible!

Just then, he heard a shift from inside one of the rooms. It was the sound of a bed creaking. He sucked in a breath, steeled his nerves and tiptoed toward the sound. It was coming from the room with the closed door. There was no light coming from it, and Mickey heard a sigh and another shift from inside.

Mickey frowned. Was she impatient for him to come charging in? He would think to grab...was there anything that would work as a weapon? He rolled his eyes. What was he thinking? Of course not. He opened the door without anymore hesitation.

The room was dark, and Mickey could just barely make out the form of a person lying in a bed at the far end of the room, breathing softly. Two bookshelves were next to the bed, full from ceiling to floor with row after row of old books. There was an open closet to his left. Ah. He took a step toward the closet to peek inside.
That was when the floor underneath his feet lit up with symbols and four thick vines shot up, wrapping around his arms and legs tightly. More vines sprouted up and bound him until he was covered from shoulders to ankles and he started to lose his balance. He teetered before he fell with a silent ‘oof’ onto the carpeted floor. Well, he couldn’t say he was exactly surprised at this point. Just disappointed.

The figure in bed sat up and turned towards him. Her eyes had been normal at the house, but now they were black again. She smiled, propping her head up on one hand. “You know, sneaking into a lady’s room is rude, mousy.”

Sneaking into his room, muting him, and forcing him away from his family was criminal. What was her point? He had to blindfold himself to sleep for pete’s sake! The line for rude had been crossed a long time ago.

She slipped out of the sheets, sitting on the edge of her bed. “I’d ask you what you thought you could accomplish here, but that would be pretty pointless, now wouldn’t it?” Mickey scowled...not that she could see that. She shrugged. “Well, for now I need you to stay out of my way. So you’re going to be spending the night here.” She got up and shut her bedroom door. Then, she grabbed a couple vines at the back of his neck, dragging him across the floor. She paused and then looked down at him. “So what would you prefer? Underneath the bed or inside the closet?”

Oh, a choice? He rolled his head toward the bed to see if she would actually do it.

She grinned maliciously. “The closet then.” With that she shoved him inside and shut the door behind him.

Perfect. Now he just needed to figure out these vines. He twisted himself this way and that, careful to not make anymore noise. His tail easily slipped loose. Okay, so the vines were tight. They didn’t allow for much movement. He worked his tail into his pocket. It was hard, he had to wriggle more. Finally, he was able to pull out his keys. Looping his tail carefully through the ring, he brought the keys to his bound hands. With some careful finger work he was able to get the small pocket knife open. He turned it and started on the nearest vine. He slipped twice, almost dropping the blade once and cutting himself the other time. Ouch.

He was just feeling the vines start to loosen when the door opened again. He looked up, not into the black, evil gaze of the witch, but in the gentle, concerned eyes of Alice.

“Oh dear,” Alice gasped. She knelt down and gingerly touched the vines. She bit her lip and looked over her shoulder. With a deep breath, she reached down, and her hand sparked. The vines withered and broke like they were dried out husks. “I don’t know what you are or why you’re here, but you were at the house too. I have a bad feeling about all of this.”

Mickey sat up and stretched his stiff muscles. Alice shifted back a little. “Can you talk?” Mickey huffed. He knocked on the wall. “I’ll take that as a no.” She bit her lip again. “What about write?”

Mickey crossed his arms. Well, what was he going to do? She already knew he was there. As long as he kept his name and Holly’s a secret his friends and family were safe...ish.

He knocked twice, hoping she’d catch on. Her dark eyes brightened, and she nodded. “Then come with me. I have a notebook.” She walked back into the living room. Mickey followed cautiously. She got out a notepad and pencil from a drawer and placed them on the counter. Then, she turned toward his general direction, not seeing him...but somehow aware of him. He stepped up to the pad and lifted the pencil.
“Why were you in Holly’s closet?” Alice asked. Mickey looked around to see if she was anywhere around. He doubted it, but his nerves demanded he look anyway. He wrote, ‘She put me there.’ Alice read it and ‘looked’ up at him again.

“Why?” Alice asked.

Because she's an evil nutcase? ‘I followed her in.’

“For what? Why have you been here and at the house?” Alice demanded.

‘How do you know that!’ Mickey wrote. Alice smirked. “I have a gift,” she said. Mickey frowned. He wasn’t going to get anymore explanation, was he? “Now why were you following us?”

‘Cursed,’ he wrote.

“You’re cursed?” Alice asked.

‘Yes. Wanted help,’ he wrote. This may be close to crossing that ‘no contact’ line…

“And you went to Holly?” Alice asked and blinked. Mickey heaved a silent sigh. Well, what was he going to say? No, she’s the one that cursed me! Sure? Somewhere in the middle?

He finally moved the pencil. ‘Sorta.’

“And she locked you in the closet?” Alice frowned. Mickey grimaced. “Because that’s what Holly would do to someone that wanted help.”

Oh boy. She didn’t believe him. Of course not!

‘It’s complicated. Is she here now?’ he wrote quickly.

That had the woman pause. “No. She isn’t.”

‘Why? It’s late.’ he wrote. There! See how suspicious she was!

Alice frowned, no, she pouted. He fiddled with the pencil. ‘Has she been acting normal at all lately?’ he asked.

Alice jerked her head up at that. “I know you were there for all those conversations! Don’t think you can trick me, mister...What is your name?” Alice asked.

‘Call me M.’ He couldn’t say his full name since that might get the puzzle pieces to fall into place, and then the angry witch would go after his loved ones. Couldn’t have that.

“Alice blinked. She sighed and dropped her head into her hands. “Oh, I just don’t know what to do anymore.”

Mickey thought. Well, it couldn’t get any worse...He might as well try. He wrote his message and poked her in the arm. She jerked and looked at the note he held up. ‘The first step might be to just find her.’

Alice’s eyes widened, and she nodded. “Okay, yeah. That’s a good idea.”

He turned it back to himself and scribbled more. ‘But when you do, don’t mention me. You don’t know me. For all you know I’m a ghost.’
Alice raised a brow. “But you’re not,” she said slowly, like she was making sure.

‘No just cursed,’ Mickey wrote.

“How should I keep you a secret?” Alice narrowed her eyes. Oh. If that wasn’t a hundred dollar question! Lie? Truth? Trust? Which should he go with?

He looked her up and down. From what he’d seen, Alice was a good person that not only cared about her friends but everyone else too. Would she believe him? Was this crossing that line? But what else could he do? He couldn’t live the rest of his life like this! Ozzy and everyone else were worried sick, he was sure. And Holly had done this to him and Pete. Who knew how many other people she had hurt like this?

So with a shaking hand, he wrote down the truth. ‘Because she threatened to hurt my family and friends if I told anyone that she cursed me.’ He gulped and turned the pad to face her. Alice’s determined gaze had softened as he wrote. She gasped in reading the message.

“Oh heavens above!” she murmured. She grit her teeth. “I...I don’t want to believe it.”

But she did! Mickey was stunned.

Alice smiled bitterly. “Of course. Your emotions.”

His emotions? She shrugged. “I can sense your emotions. It’s why I know you’re there. You really are afraid for them.” Mickey could almost cry. He had to stop himself from hugging her. He wrote quickly. ‘Then you need to stop her. If I try anything, they’re in trouble.’

“Stop her?” Alice’s eyes widen. “I can’t! She’s my friend!”

Mickey frowned. ‘She’s hurting people! I can help as much as I can, but what can I do like this? She still knows when I’m around somehow!’

“If she did this to you, then it’s the spell. She can sense the magic she is using on you.” Alice frowned. “I...might be able to conceal your magical signature so you’d be as invisible to her as to everyone else. I would still be able to sense your emotions though.”

Mickey smiled. Sneak up on the little sneak? Oh. He would be willing to do that. Absolutely. ‘Yes, please.’

Alice nodded. “Okay, just give me a moment.”

Mickey took a seat on the couch while the girl went into her room. Well, he had been able to stay secret for almost two days. Now he had to trust everything to this girl. He really hoped this paid off.

She came back with a veil of what looked like water. She stood in front of him and offered the small thing to him.

He took it and eyed it suspiciously.

“It’s made with some leaves of the hush-hush fruit. We give it to anyone that gets magic sickness. It lessens the magical output of the sufferer. I’m sure it will be able to hide any magic she’s been sensing,” Alice explained.

Well. What did he have to lose at this point? He drank the veil. It wasn’t even a mouth full. It tasted fruity, a little tangy. He didn’t mind it. He waited a moment but nothing seemed to happen. Alice smiled and took the glass back. She returned a minute later. “Okay, we’re ready to go.” She slung a
bag over her shoulder and headed toward the door.

Mickey scrambled to follow her. She took quick, sure steps down the road. “Hopefully Holly will explain herself, and we can get you back to normal.”

Mickey did not hold on to the same hope.

To his surprise, Alice led him back toward the house. Alice seemed equally shocked by this. She approached the dark house with a confused kink in her thin brows. “This is where she is.” She went to approach the door, but Mickey grabbed her arm. He had a bad feeling about all this. Alice looked over toward him. “What? I’m just going to--”

There was movement inside. He tugged Alice behind the neighbor’s bush. “Hey!” Not a moment later, the door opened.

Holly was sitting on the cog.

But that didn’t half describe the scene before them. No. Holly was floating in the air on the cog, and just behind her were the hovering, unconscious forms of Cuphead and Mugman, their packs hovering just behind them.

Holly waved a hand, and all three of them vanished. A moment later, the house door shut by itself with a click.

Alice stared. She didn’t move. Did she break? Mickey didn’t blame her. He was shocked too. Then Alice stood up and jumped to the door. What the--? Were all of Bendy and Boris’ friends superhuman or something! Was anyone around here normal?

Boris seemed normal…

Mickey shook his amazement off and got out of the bush to follow her.

“Anyone! Someone! Wake up!” She was shouting upstairs.

The house remained silent other than her cries and the creak of the stairs as she ran up them. Mickey followed more cautiously. By the time he got up the stairs at a normal speed, Alice had already run from room to room, trying to wake the residents. He peeked in to see her shaking Boris’ shoulder. She straightened up when he entered. “It’s no good! It’s an enchanted sleep! We won’t be able to wake them normally.”

Mickey went to a desk and found a scrap of paper and a pen. ‘Is there anyone you can call?’

“Call? At this time of night?” Alice asked.

‘She left with the cups,’ Mickey pointed out. ‘Do you know where she went?’

“The cups! Oh no! Oh, oh, oh, oh! Holly what are you doing? What are you planning!” Alice fretted.

Mickey rested a reassuring hand on her shoulder. She took a breath. And another. “Okay, think. Where would Holly go? Where would she take two people that she didn’t like?” Alice walked back out the room and down the stairs. She paused next to the phone. “Who can I call? The police?”

Mickey followed. He grabbed a notepad and hurried to her side. ‘They won’t let you do anything after they arrive, and I can’t reveal myself to them to help you.’
She frowned. “Your people’s justice system is ridiculous!” She sighed. “Who else cou--Of course!” She picked up the phone and quickly called. Mickey blinked.

“Pick up, pick up, pick up!” Alice chanted like it was prayer.

A groggy, “Hello?” came from the other line.

“Yes! Hello? Is Felix there?” Alice asked.

“Sure, but it’s one in tha mornin’,” the other person said.

“It’s an emergency!” Alice said.

“Okay,” the indifferent tired voice said. “Hey Felix!”

“Hello?”

“Felix! Holly put a sleeping spell on everyone and kidnapped Cup and Mugs! She’s disappeared with the cog! I don’t know where to look for her!” Alice said in a big rush. “I’m worried that they could be in danger!”

“I’ll be there in a four minutes.” The line went dead. Alice rang up another call. This time Mickey had no idea who it was. “Wiston, I need to talk to you and your brother. Yes, I’m sorry it’s late. It’s an emergency.”

She waited a moment. “Hello,” she explained the whole thing again in one breath. “Do either of you have any ideas where she might have taken them?”

There were quieter answers. “You think?” She paused. “I don’t know, after she saved me?” She nodded and nodded. “The warehouse? You don’t think--Okay, yeah...Alright.” She bit her lip and glanced at Mickey’s notepad. “Pete? No, I heard a little but--So you think she could be at the docks?” She sighed. “No, Pete...makes sense.” She glanced at Mickey again. “But the warehouse fire? None of this is like her.” She pursed her lips. “Yes, I understand. Okay, I’ll go. You and Wiston come to the house. See you later.” She hung up the phone and rushed outside.

“Xedo thinks she might be at the docks. She might be trying to do something to the cups. We have to hurry, Mickey!” Alice said as she started to run down the street. Mickey tripped, the shock of hearing his name causing him to lose focus on his feet placement.

Alice stopped and winced. “Sorry.” Alice had a ghost of a smile before it disappeared. “With Pete’s ‘curses’ and you missing with a name like ‘M,’ it wasn’t that hard to figure out. Glad you’re okay though,” she said. “Well, mostly,” she admitted.

Mickey picked himself up. No time for all that. They needed to go. Just then a motorcycle came around the corner. “Mr. Felix!” Alice waved. He pulled up to the curb.

“If you’re out here, you must have figured something out. Hop on!” Felix offered her a helmet. She took it and then glanced toward the invisible Mickey.

“Can you make a sidecar?” she asked. Felix blinked then nodded. He tugged the side of the machine. It stretched a little, snapped like a rubber band, and there was a sidecar. Alice smiled, stepped in, and buckled the helmet. She motioned for Mickey to jump in next to her with her eyes.

Mickey grimaced. Oh, he was going to barely fit. Whatever! He couldn’t let that witch hurt any more people! He hopped inside next to Alice, doing his best to ignore the close contact. “The docks! We
think she went to the docks!” Felix revved the bike and they shot off. Mickey clung to the side so he didn’t fall out. Lucky for him, it didn’t take long with that driving and mostly empty streets. The water was soon in sight.

All that was left of Bill Sykes’ warehouse was ash. The docks were empty this late at night, and much to their dismay, they could see no one. Only the endless docks and a row of boathouses lining the ocean.

“Oh no,” Alice murmured.

“Where else could they have gone?” Felix asked. Mickey scanned the line of boathouses. There wasn’t anything at the warehouse unless she somehow made a whole building invisible. So that left boathouses. Mickey hopped out of the sidecar and hurried along the boats.

There were six little boat houses clustered around the Sykes’ warehouse, three on either side. The three on the left were brand new, obviously made to go along with the warehouse. The three on the right, however, were old. Barnacles were growing up the side of one and the other two had graffiti scratched into their sides.

That’s when Mickey heard it. The sound of something heavy dropping into the water from the far right end of the boathouses.
"It's up to Alice, Felix, and Mickey to save the day!" Mic said excitedly. "Will they make it in time or will it be too late? Find out!"

Mickey didn’t even think, he just ran. He looked back to see Alice heading toward him, Felix behind her. Mickey reached the edge of the dock and scanned the boat and water and saw ripples coming from around the middle house. She had thrown something into the water. It wasn’t hard to imagine what. Mickey dove into the icy dark waters.

Being able to see through his eyelids was actually really useful now. Underneath the water he saw endless shades of grey and black. But as the bubbles swirling around him cleared, he saw two forms below him. One had already hit the sea bed, and the other was sinking rapidly.

Mickey went for the one at the bottom. He had been there the longest. Mickey swam with all the strength he had. He ignored how quickly the water numbed his fingers and toes. When he reached Mugman, he saw a large rock had been tied around the toon’s waist. His eyes were closed, and his hands were drifting upward slightly as the stone kept him anchored. He pulled at the knot that tied him to the stone with no success. Mickey looped an arm around his torso. He pushed off of the sandy bottom and kicked up, dragging the weight of both Mugs and the stone with him. He spotted Felix swimming toward Cuphead. Mickey focused on reaching the surface and the burning in his lungs.

He struggled. Mugs slipped out of his hands. Mickey turned, flailing, and grabbed him again to keep pulling. Finally he broke the surface, Felix right next to him.

“What in the world?” Felix gasped at Mickey. Mickey didn’t have time for that. He pulled up the unconscious man. They were inside the boathouse. Oops, well he wasn’t going down again. He couldn’t feel his hands, and he was losing his grip. He swam over and dragged Mugs behind him.

The boat itself bobbed lightly a few feet away to his left. To his right was a deck.

He pulled himself, then the ceramic man, onto the deck. Feewu! Maybe Donald was right, and he should start doing workouts with the strongmen in the circus. Felix was right behind him. He pulled up Cuphead and nearly collapsed. Felix leaned over Cup, ear perked. He held his breath.
“Stars.” Felix gulped and started compressions on the unconscious man with a determined set in his brow. Oh no. Mickey fumbled up and leaned over the other one. He listened for breathing. Felt for a pulse. There was a heartbeat. Thank the stars! No breath! Mickey thought of all the ways he knew how to do the heimlich. He was already unconscious so...Mickey moved his hands in what he thought was the proper position and applied pressure.

He was so focused on what he was doing that he missed the fight going on behind him. He registered that Alice was arguing with Holly but not what they were saying. Then, he heard the sound of Cup coughing up water. Mickey looked over and saw he was still not waking up. Felix moved to his side and reached for Mugs, only to touch Mickey’s arm instead. Felix jumped back with wide eyes, his wet fur puffing up.

“What is going on here!” Felix demanded. Mickey really really wished he could answer that. Felix cautiously stepped closer, searching for the mouse that was there but unseen. Finally, Mugs jerked and coughed up a gush of water. Mickey silently sighed in relief and moved to turn the fella on his side. Felix flinched but didn’t jump away again.

“What are--” And then Mickey was blinded by light. He didn’t have a way to block it. Closing his eyes, raising his arm, nothing like that worked. He could only turn his head away. Felix covered his eyes. Before the light dimmed and Mickey could figure out what had just happened, he was surrounded by water again.

He flailed before he slipped and slammed back into the wall. Then, he was propelled back into the bay water. He splashed for a moment in half a panic before the water calmed. He figured out which way was up and pulled himself back out. Felix had been able to hook his arm and save not only himself from being washed away but the brothers too.

“Alice!” Felix shouted indignantly.

“Oops! Sorry Felix!” Alice called from the boat. Mickey looked over, and his jaw dropped. Alice stood, hands raised and moving swiftly in a pattern he didn’t understand. A halo gleaming over her head.

An angel? An angel? She was an angel! He followed her line of sight to the witch. She was slumped against the far wall, face twisted in rage and black eyes glaring death at the angel. Wet hair dripped in her face.

“Are you so blind that you would defend your enemies?” she sneered. Lifting a hand, a symbol on the wall glowed and suddenly sucked her in.

“Stop!” Alice shouted in dismay. Too late. The witch had vanished. Mickey silently huffed. Well--he looked at the brothers--at least no one died.

Alice jumped over next to Felix. He was leaning over Cup, trying to wake him up. “Are they okay?” Alice asked.

“They’re breathing, but they won’t wake up.” Felix rested an arm on his knee. “Is there anything you can do?”

Alice frowned and knelt to touch Mugs’ cheek. “I can’t break the sleep rune. It’d be like setting off a bomb. That magical energy would explode everywhere. I’m not sure what to do to wake them,” she admitted with a glum look at the cat.

Great. So they had a house of these people, he was still invisible...Well, at least they had Felix and an
“We best get them back to the house,” Felix reasoned.

“Okay,” Alice said. She lifted Mugs like he was a sack of potatoes, reaching for Cuphead next.

“Are you sure you can carry both?” Felix asked, wringing water out his hat.

“I’m fine,” she answered as she pulled Cup onto her other shoulder. “They aren’t that heavy.”

Felix chuckled. “You and Bendy…” He lost his smile. “Alice there was something else. Some invisible--”

“Yeah, that’s Mickey,” Alice stated casually as she headed back out.

“M-Mickey!” Felix gasped and looked around. “What happened!”

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“He was cursed by Holly. Mute and invisible.” Alice struggled with the door. Mickey reached around her and opened for her. “Oh, thank you, Mickey.”

“B-but you-He’s been missing for days!” Felix exclaimed. He looked around the boathouse like it was haunted. Heh. Haunted.

“She threatened to hurt his family if he contacted anyone. He’s been at the house the whole time, probably trying to figure out how to stop Holly,” Alice said as she walked down the docks. Yep, he might as well have been their personal poltergeist for the last few days.

“That long! Threatened his family!” Felix threw his hand to his head. His flabbergasted expression changed to horror. “Oh no! Mr. Oswald! The kids!”

Alice sighed and nodded. “I know. And he can hear you, you know.”

Felix nearly tripped and just managed to save himself. “I-I so sorry Mr. Mickey! You’ve been through so much, and I didn’t even--I mean there wasn’t--I didn’t expect for--”

“Felix, a vehicle?” Alice asked patiently. “We have to get back to the house. I’m worried about everyone else.”

Felix stared at her before seemingly coming to his senses. “R-right!” Felix’ flushed face turned away from the burdened angel. He pulled off his bag and tossed it in the street. It changed into a rather luxurious full car with enough room for all of them. “Hop in.”

Well, at least Mickey didn’t have to worry about falling out this time. Everyone safely buckled in, the group raced back to Oddswell’s house. Sadly, Mickey’s bad feeling was back. The lights were now on, and the front door had been left wide open.

“Oh no,” Alice said grimly. She jumped out the door before Felix had even fully stopped it, racing inside.

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“Felix called after her. Mickey pushed open his door and hurried in. Felix flinched. Alice was kneeling next to an unconscious fox, Xedo, the mouthpiece of the phone hanging from the wall to the floor.

“Oh no, oh no,” she fretted. She lifted her head. “Wiston! Wiston, are you here!” she called. Mickey didn’t hear anything. The house stayed ominously silent.
Felix came in, dragging Cuphead behind him. He laid the fella on the couch. “Xedo and Wiston?”

“I called them the same time I called you. They must have shown up after we left.” She bit her lip. Mickey went to bring in Mugman as the two talked.

By the time he got back in, Alice and Felix were searching the house for the other fox. He saw scorch marks in the upstairs hall. Dawnlight filtered into the house, revealing the ugly black burns on the walls and floor. Mickey paused at the window. Good heavens, it’d been a full night. He walked down the hall just in time to hear an exclamation. “Wiston!”

“A-Alice!” sobbed the fox. Mickey headed toward the noise. He found Alice hugging the younger fox on the floor in front of a closet. He was covered in dirt and dust. “It was Ho-Holly! She-She!”

“We know, hon! We know!” Alice comforted. She brushed his furry ears and head, getting cobwebs and dust off of him.

“Bendy!” Felix gasped. Wiston turned to pull Bendy out of an opening in the closet wall, a crawl space? Felix helped him get the demon out and onto the empty bed.

“She threatened to kill him! She threatened to kill me! She has the doll and the cog! She-she had Boris!” Wiston was stammering, and his words running together in his panic to explain. “I couldn’t grab them both! I-I couldn’t--I wasn't strong enough to--”

“It’s okay, Wiston! You were very brave.” Alice gently cut him off, her dark eyes full of warmth for the fox.


“Xedo’s asleep like the rest,” Alice said. Felix rushed out of the room, bumping into Mickey as he went.

“Sorry Mickey!” he said quickly.

“Mickey?” Wiston tilted his head looking toward the not-so-empty doorway.

Alice stepped in. “It’s a long story.” Mickey approached the bed and looked down at the demon. He was covered in dirt and dust, face relaxed and smooth. He looked so young! He was so young! Was this really the same demon that had seemed so threatening at Pete’s restaurant? The same demon that commanded so much respect in this odd and amazing circle of people Mickey had been watching the last few days? The same person that had spoken with such strength about the Blue Fairy’s sacrifice and death? This...child? A lump formed in the pit of Mickey’s stomach.

Now here he was, completely vulnerable and unaware of the evils around him. Felix came back in. Fireball was tucked underneath one of his arms. She was dripping water, eyes fierce as she shivered. Felix’ face was grim. “Found her,” he told the fox and turned to Alice. “It’s just as he said. The doll, cog, and Boris are gone.” He offered the strange bird to the fox who hugged it close. It ‘ahhed’ at him gently.

“Good girl. Good girl. You saved us. You’re such a good girl,” he cooed at her with tears in his eyes. “Thank heavens you’re okay.”

Alice bit her lip. Glancing between Felix and Wiston. “What should we do, Felix?”

Felix took a deep breath. His eyes hardening with determination. “We have to stop her.”
“How?” Alice almost pleaded.

“I’m not sure,” Felix admitted grimly. “If we just knew a way to wake them, maybe someone would have an idea on what to do.”

“Why is she doing this?” Wiston asked.

“I think it’s the cog,” Felix said. The three headed to the door. Mickey gave Bendy one last glance before following.

“The cog?” Alice asked baffled.

“Yes, she doesn’t have this much magic on her own. She has to be getting it from somewhere,” Felix reasoned. “The cog also made Cala extremely aggressive.”

“Holly would never do this. Even if she didn’t like people, she was never this angry before,” Alice agreed. Her face fell. "I should have done something sooner. I knew something was wrong."

“So that gear thing what? Corrupted her or something?” Wiston frowned, confused. They went downstairs. Mickey hoped so. After days in this place, he couldn't see this group letting in such a...Well, he had his own opinion.

“I believe that’s what happened. And if she has the doll, Bendy isn’t safe yet.” Felix crossed his arms and glared at the floor. “The question is how do we find and stop her?”

Alice bit her lip. “I have a way to detect strong magic, but I worry that she’ll be prepared for that. Her room had several traps.”

“That’s true. She’s smart. She has a hostage. Technically two. We have to assume she will have traps set for us,” Felix agreed.

He tensed. Mickey turned to see what got his attention. A man was coming down the walkway toward the house. He knocked on the door. Alice blinked. Wiston ducked. Mickey frowned. What now? Who would be knocking at a time like this? It was barely past dawn!

“Hello! Is this Dr. Oddswell’s house? I was told my fiance may be staying here! Hello!” he called and knocked again. “My name is Ferdinand Charming! I’m sorry it’s so early.” The group shared a look. Felix shrugged.

Alice answered the door. She smiled...Well, it was almost a grimace to Mickey, but points for effort.

“Hello, I’m looking for Snow White. Is this Dr. Ryan Oddswell’s house?” Charming asked politely.

“It is,” Alice said haltingly. “But I’m sorry to say you won’t be able to see Snow right now.” Mickey crept up and peeked over her shoulder. The man was handsome enough to be Snow’s. Dark hair, bright eyes, a strong jaw, almost perfect skin, and his very name was ‘Charming.’ Mickey snickered. One good thing that came from being mute. He didn’t have to hold back his emotions for the sake of manners. Ozzy would have loved to tease this guy. A real 'Prince' Charming.

His face fell. “Is she okay?” he asked with so much worry that Alice faltered. “I know what Oddswell works on. I can’t imagine she’d be here for a common cold.”

“No, no, i-it’s not that Mr.--uh--Charming.” Alice stumbled over the name.

“Then what is it?” he asked. “Can I help?” There was a sincerity in his tone that took Mickey off
“Not unless you know how to wake people from an enchanted sleep,” Wiston called from behind Alice. He came forward, and Mickey almost tripped to get out of his way. Charming seemed surprised but then smirked, humor glittering in his eyes.

“How enchanted sleep?” he asked. He sounded like he was holding back a snicker. Mickey frowned. He didn’t know what was so funny. “I may know a thing or two about it.”


Alice opened the door further. “Please come in,” she said quickly.

Ferdinand stepped in and immediately glanced over the bodies in the front room. He whistled. “You’ve had quite a time I see.”

Felix crossed his arms. “I’m sorry, I don’t mean to rush you, but we have a serious problem and not a lot of time. If there’s something you can do, I suggest you do it.” He sounded all business. Mickey was amazed at how different the cat looked when he got serious. He would believe the toon was a completely different person from the one that the kids tackled whenever he visited.

“Oh hey! You are Felix the Cat! It’s an honor, but I guess I will have to wait on talking. All of you look rather grim. Take me to Snow. Explanations can come later,” Charming said.

Felix nodded and led him upstairs. They entered Snow White’s room. She was resting like an...angel...Mickey glanced at the real angel in the room. That saying was somehow strange with a real angel around. Amazingly though, Snow and Alice looked like they could be related, so maybe the saying held some ground. Mickey shook off the distracting thought.

Charming sighed. “My, oh my, dear Snow. This is the second time I’ve had to do this. Are you trying to make a habit of this?” Mickey gave him a confused glance...not that anyone could see it. But second? When was the first? Charming leaned over the woman and kissed her on the lips.

“Oh,” Wiston muttered and looked away. Felix watched carefully. Alice blushed but didn’t turn away. Charming pulled back after a moment, gazing into the beauty’s face with calm adoration. Mickey felt his own face heat up. He felt like he was watching a personal moment. For a breath nothing happened, then her lips pursed and her eyelids fluttered.

“Good morning, gorgeous,” Charming said gently.

“Ferdinand! What are you doing here!” Snow gasped gently.

He grinned. “Seems you took another enchanting vacation while I was gone,” Charming said...well, charmingly.

Alice let out a surprised chuckle. Snow gave him a confused look and slowly sat up. “Enchanting?” She looked past him to everyone in the room...except Mickey...obviously. Her eyes widened at the dirty sight of Wiston and the still damp Felix. “What happened?”

“You were spelled. Everyone in the house is. Charming came just in time to wake you,” Felix said.

“Spelled?” Snow looked stricken. “By whom?”

“Holly.” Alice lowered her head.
“Holly? But--”

“I’m sorry Snow. We don’t have a lot of time,” Felix cut in. “How do we wake the others?”

“A kiss. A kiss of love,” Snow said.

Alice choked. Felix frowned. Mickey swallowed.

“Whelp,” Wiston stated flatly. “My brother is doomed.”

“It doesn’t have to be romantic,” Snow said gently. “I’ve been in the house long enough that I think I can wake most everyone here.”

“Most everyone?” Felix asked. His gaze flickering between her and Charming.

“I don’t know the questers well. I have only known you all for roughly a week, and most of you are in and out of the house. It’ll have to be someone else for them,” Snow explained. She looked at Alice. “I think you can do it.”

Alice’s face exploded. “Wha--! Me!”

Snow giggled. “Yes, dear.”

Alice wrung her hands together. “Bu-bu-I’m not. I can’t ju-just--”

“You’ll do fine,” Snow promised with a wave of her hand.

“If you don’t, Bendy, Mugman, and Cuphead won’t wake up,” Felix said. “And we are losing precious time. Holly has proven that she moves ever quickly.”

Alice pursed her lips, her face still dark with a hot blush. “O-okay. They saved me from Hat. I c-can do this.”

Snow smiled and got up. She moved to Sneezy’s room and kissed him on the forehead. “Wakey-wakey my old friend,” Snow sang. Sneezy groaned.

“We don’t have to kiss them on the lips then?” Alice asked in a small voice.

“No. Like I said, it just has to be a kiss of love. There are many forms of love. Parental, sibling, friendship, romance, and so on.” Snow didn’t wait. She moved to next room and kissed Red on the cheek and Oddswell on the forehead.

Alice lifted her chin and headed downstairs. Mickey decided to follow her. Felix did too. Wiston stayed with Snow White and Charming as Granny opened her eyes.

Alice headed for the front room. She stood in front of Cuphead on the couch, biting her lip. “Oh dear,” she muttered uncomfortably. “I hope this works.” She bent down and pecked his cheek. “For fighting a demon to save my halo.”

She knelt to Mugs and pecked his forehead. “For coming with Boris, for getting me, and turning around for everyone else.”

She went to Xedo. Mickey was a little surprised. He didn’t know if she was close with the fox brothers or not, but she must be if she thought this would work. “For helping me, Bendy, and everyone else by sharing the truth.” She pecked his forehead and stood up. It took a moment longer before they were all groaning and waking. Mugs sat up so fast that Mickey jumped.
“It’s okay Mugs, it’s just us,” Felix said.

“Uh? Mr. Felix? What are you doing here?” Mugs asked. He looked around. “Then again, what am I doing here? This isn’t the bedroom.”

“Ugh, why does my throat hurt?” Cup groaned. “And what happened?” He sat up. "And why am I cussing wet?"

“Holly put you under a sleeping spell. She stole the cog and the doll. We don’t have a lot of time,” Felix said quickly. That had the two of them up in an instant. “We still need to wake Bendy.”


Felix ignored him and turned to Alice. She blushed and nodded.

“Questions later?” Cup asked as they headed upstairs, eyes piercing. He was just as intimidating as at the dinner. Mickey could see why he made Donald nervous.

“Questions later,” Felix confirmed with a single bob of his head. They hurried to the last room. The others were up, looking confused and alarmed. “Head downstairs. Dining room. We’ll explain there,” Felix told them.

Alice entered the last room. Felix, the cups, Xedo, and Mickey followed. Alice went up to his bedside and paused. Cup leaned over to Felix. “What about Boris? And why is Bendy in here?”

Felix gave him an annoyed glance. Cup ducked his head, an annoyed frown on his face. “Questions, right.”

Felix sighed. “Holly took Boris.”

Mugs gasped wide-eyed. Cup grit his teeth.


Alice leaned down. She hesitated. The angel swallowed, her cheeks flushing again. Mickey raised a speculative brow. Seemed she was struggling with something. Mickey stared curiously. She was an angel, and she was about to kiss a demon. He wondered if this was breaking a rule or something. She pursed her lips again and took a deep breath.

Bendy was having a nice dream. He wasn’t completely sure what was going on. He had his dream cabin. Boris was swimming in the pristine lake, but he didn’t really know anything beyond that. He didn’t really care either. He was simply happy.


Bendy turned. “Yes?”

Suddenly, warm lips were on his. He returned the kiss. This was heaven. He couldn’t be happier...until it suddenly faded. The warmth spread to surround him comfortingly. Don't leave him. He felt another brush of soft lips on his cheek. He wanted another. A reassurance he wasn't alone. He turned to the lips to steal a kiss.

“Eek!” The warmth and lips were gone. Bendy struggled to open his eyes. Ugh, why? It had been
such a nice dream. Maybe if he shut his eyes he could get back to it. Maybe he could be lucky and have five more minutes of--

“In your sleep! That is some nerve!” Alice squeaked. Bendy’s eyes flew open again. He shot up.

“Alice!” Bendy gasped and fell off the bed with a loud thump.

Cup roared with laughter. Bendy pulled himself up. The questers plus Alice stood in the room around his...Wait. This wasn’t his bed. Alice’s face was bright with a blush. She was touching her lips with a stunned, slightly horrified gaze.

Mugs was blushing and looking at the wall, his scarf pulled up to his round nose. Felix was even looking away. What? What now! It was too early for this!

Cup finally got control of himself. “Man! I can’t believe you actually stole a kiss in your sleep! Who does that?”

“Cuphead, please, we have a situation.” Felix sighed exhaustedly.

Bendy’s eyes widened. He had...What? He glanced back at Alice. She turned to look anywhere but him.

That kiss had been...Oh stars!

“Look at his face!” Cup cackled. He wheezed. Bendy was going to kill that glass man. He was going to break him into a hundred little pieces, put those pieces in a box, ship that box to the nearest volcano, and then pay a palooka to dump that box in the lava!

“Not the time Cup. We have to stop Holly,” Felix said and headed out. His face was determined.

“Holly?” Bendy snapped out of his murderous thoughts. “What’s wrong with Holly?”

He was ignored as everyone went to follow him. “Hey!” Bendy called. He scratched his head and a cloud of dust fell into his face. He coughed. “What?” He looked down at himself. Dust? Cobwebs? Why? “Why am I dirty?” The room was empty. “Hello!” He jumped over the bed and headed after the group. “Does anyone wanna answer me!”

Bendy didn’t know how long they sat around that table, but it felt like an eternity. It was probably two minutes. Where was Boris? Alice explained everything. Mickey, invisible and mute, picked up a notepad and wrote what Holly had done to him. It was impossible to believe at first. Bendy also wasn’t thrilled at the idea of the mouse invading their home as he had, but what else was the schmuck supposed to do? Then came Pete, the warehouse, and so on. Everything lately was because of her. Oh, stars. Holly had done all these crimes?

Then Alice went to explain the attack on the house, how they were all spelled, and how Holly had attempted to murder Cuphead and Mugman. Bendy turned stunned eyes on them. Mugs passed the look to Cup with huge eyes. Cup grit his teeth, eyes flashing red. The angel continued to explained how she, Felix, and Mickey were able to save them in time. Great. Now he had to be thankful for the mouse that snubbed him! Cussing great!

"So the little tree princess was out to off us.” Cup sneered. Bendy didn't like the look in his eyes. Mugs looked worried too.

"Not just you. Let Alice finish," Felix said, indicating for Alice to continue. Alarms went off in Bendy's head.
The horror story wasn’t over yet. Just when Bendy thought it couldn’t get worse and his nagging worry about his brother not being at the table ebbed as he waited patiently, it turned so much worse.

Wiston explained the last of it. How she broke in. How she stole the doll. How she threatened him and his brother. How Wiston was able to save him and hide. How she flew off with the cog. And...Boris. Oh, stars!

Everyone at the table turned to him, eyes full of worry and pity. Why? What the hell were they expecting? He didn’t have anything to say. She took Boris. She took Boris.

He stood up. A couple of people flinched. Bendy turned and walked out of the room. “And where are you going?” Cup growled, crossing his arms. He and Mugs were still pale after learning about their near brush with death. They had stayed silent after that. Probably planning Holly’s end.

Bendy paused and glanced back.

“What do you think? I’m getting dressed. I want her found before I get back down here. We head out as soon as she is,” Bendy said coldly. No one took Boris and got away with it.

Bendy went upstairs. He washed off the dirt and dust and pulled on his clothes. He snapped his goggles in place. Glancing at the mirror, he saw his eyes were red. Strange. He didn’t feel like he was using his powers. He took a deep breath, and the red faded...mostly. He creased his brows with concern. What was going on with him lately? He didn’t have time for this! He had to get Boris!

Heaven help her if she did anything to him.

Bendy headed back downstairs. Alice was muttering over a map. There were a few points of light glowing on the map.

“Well?” Bendy asked impatiently.

“There are only a few things as strong as that cog,” Felix said. He pointed to different lights. “This is Black Hat, this is the school’s mural, all those are different buildings, that’s the museum, and that old oak tree has an angels charm on it,” Felix explained. "This here is us."

“And those two must be the other angels,” Alice added.

“So which one is Holly?” Bendy stepped up to the table. Alice shivered, her dark eyes widened, and she glanced at him nervously.

“Now wait a moment,” Dr. Oddswell cut in. “Why is she doing this? How are you planning to stop her? There is a lot we still don’t understand."

“It doesn’t matter,” Bendy snipped.

Dr. Oddswell lifted his snout. “I believe it does, young man. If we understand her motivations and goal, we can plan ahead. The reason she succeeded in bamboozling us so thoroughly is because we have been behind her this whole time. We must move ahead of her.”

“He’s right, Bendy. We can’t afford to go in blind. People could easily get killed,” Felix stated, almost sounding business-like. Bendy bit back a growl of frustration.

“So why is she doing this?” Dr. Oddswell asked.

“Well she hates us.” Cup indicated himself and Mugs with a wave. “She hasn’t trusted us since the
moment we set foot in here.” He still looked very vengeful.

Mickey lifted the pad. ‘And she said this was my punishment for treating Bendy the way I did.’ Bendy raised a brow. He had treated Bendy like he wasn’t there so she turned the mouse invisible? Poetic justice? Mouse ghost?

“So what? She’s getting rid of things she doesn’t like?” Bendy asked. Then why touch Boris?

“And Pete, and possibly the Sykes,” Felix added.

“Anyone that she saw as a danger to you and Boris,” Dr. Oddswell muttered.

“But she threatened to kill us! She’s taken Boris!” Bendy slammed his hands on the table. He was wasting time here!

Alice shrunk away. Her face paled, and she wouldn't look at him.

What was he even doing? Nothing! He was just angry! Why was she acting like he was going to rip someone's head off? Well...depending on what Holly had done...

Suddenly there was a hand on his head. “Calm down Bendy. We’ll save him.” Felix ruffled his head. Bendy blinked warily. He looked up at Felix’ determined eyes, his sure smile. He took a deep breath. Felix was right. This was probably the cog’s doing.

“Yeah, okay,” he muttered. He stuffed his hands back into his pockets and turned to the worried angel. “I’m sorry Alice.”

She opened and closed her mouth, rubbed her arms, and took a step toward him. It seemed to take her conscious effort to approach him. He didn’t like it. If she had such an issue--Her face softened, but her eyes were still strained. “I’m worried too,” she said softly. “But we can get him and Holly back.” She hesitantly patted his shoulder. He needed to talk to her about this. This...whatever she was struggling with. But right now, she was setting it aside to help his brother. Bendy tried to smile his appreciation. She had done a lot for them today. He didn’t know how well he managed it.

“So something had to have changed,” Xedo mused, tapping a finger to his chin.

“Well, Felix and I stopped her from hurting the Cup brothers.” Alice turned to talk to the fox. She had goosebumps on her arms, but she didn’t step away from Bendy again.

“And that coulda changed her view of things!” Finley added with a snap of his fingers.

“So she went from seeing us as allies to enemies.” Felix frowned and put his hands on his hips.

“But if she just wanted to kill us after that, why didn’t she?” Bendy inquired. “Why put Xedo to sleep instead? Why take Boris? And the doll?”

“The machine parts?” Cup guessed. “I mean. If she wanted you dead Bendy, you would be, right? That doll thing can do that right?”

Bendy felt a chill race through his veins. “Yeah,” he agreed softly. He had almost forgotten about that. He might be right here, but in a strange way, he was just as much a hostage as Boris right now. Holly could do anything to him.

“So she wants the parts,” Cup concluded. He leaned forward with a hand on the table.

Bendy frowned. Where did he get that? She had the parts, sure. “But then Boris--”
“Man, how do you find the parts?” Cup frowned at him like he was an idiot.

“The map.” Bendy snapped his anger flaring again.

“No, that’s how you find them. We have to follow you. We can’t see it!” Cup threw back at him with a pointed finger. He almost looked ready to shoot. Bendy’s eyes widened. Wait, the map...

“And where is that map anyway?” Cup continued, dropping the hand to his side again.

“...with Boris.” Bendy felt the dawning horror settle on him.

Cup nodded sagely. “So she has the map and a map reader too.”

“Then he should be safe for now, right?” Mugs asked with a hopefully glance around the table.

“I think so.” Cup shrugged.

Bendy sighed. At least there was that. “Thank the sun and moon.”

“But why the parts?” Oddswell asked with a sharp glance around the table.

“Power?” Cup suggested. The table fell quiet as they all tried to puzzle it out.

“It’s the cog’s influence, right? What does it do to people?” Alice asked.

“For Cala, she was turned into a giant sea monster,” Mugs explained with a shrug.

“For Holly, it seems to have given her an unending supply of magic,” Alice said. “Mickey's curse, a house-wide sleeping spell, floating herself and others, instant travel. That’s a lot of magic.”

“Okay, but we haven’t had time to figure out what it does,” Bendy said. “If only we had gotten that page figured out.”

Felix gasped, his tail sticking straight up. “Oh my stars! I’m an imbecile!” He reached into his bag. “She gave it to me days ago, but with everything that’s been going on, I haven’t had time to read it!” He pulled out a stack of papers. “It was before we went to save Alice,” he explained. Felix offered a page to Bendy. He snatched it and skipped to the cog, reading through it quickly.

(Step 3) As when working with the instrument, while using the cog, one must be cautious. Used in the machine, this part will kill the illness within the individual after it’s growth has been halted and before it has been cleansed. The cog is an especially dangerous item. If it is placed into the machine wrong the effects could be catastrophic. The placement of this part will be explained in the next section. Nevertheless, the cog’s reality changing abilities fight the illness unlike any of the other parts. The reason for this is still unknown. There are some theories about this in later sections, but for this informational segment what’s important to know is that without it there is no way to remove the illness from the individual without killing them. By itself, the cog is very dangerous in that it can change the bodies of those exposed to it. It is unclear if this item acts only on the mind and senses or if it truly does change the fabric of reality. Regardless, the effect on the sufferer is the same, complete madness. Some individuals have even disappeared after acquiring the part. These are the reasons one must be very cautious while handling the cog.

It was still useless and vague! “Why is that part underlined?” Bendy asked. He fought the urge to crumple it and throw it away.

“I don’t know.” Felix shook his head.
Bendy looked again and there was a note written to the side. Handwriting and style are slightly different. Also the jump in topic is sudden. Could it have been added by another writer?

“So it’s changed her? Because I did not fight an illusion at the boathouse,” Alice said.

Bendy growled. “It’s too vague! Even translated correctly, it’s useless!” He dropped it to the table.

“Translated? What’s going on?” Cup asked.

Felix picked up the page. “It’s a page from Wilson. Bendy and Boris gave it to Holly to translate. It was written in the ancient Micco language. It’s about the machine parts.”

Cup and Mugs shared a wide-eyed look. Cup turned back to him. “And that’s the page? Can we really trust anything from her?”

“No, she didn’t give me the original, just the translation,” Felix muttered. He scanned the words. “Regardless, there is some useful information here. The cog can change reality? And it does say it changes people.”

“May I see it?” Alice asked. Felix passed it to her. She only looked it over for a minute.

“Holly and I were testing its energy in the days you three were unconscious. She and I believed it was safe enough,” Oddswell admitted to Bendy weakly. Well of course you did. Bendy bit his tongue to stop himself from snapping at the doctor.

“We don’t have time for the blame game doc,” Finley said, waving him off.

“Agreed, but I just feel responsible that I did this somehow.” Oddswell shook his head warily. No kidding.

“We all are,” Cup said. Bendy gave him a surprised look. “We brought it into the house. We let her fiddle with it. We figured since it didn’t do anything to Mugs or Felix, it was fine.”

“So, you’re saying we turned her into this?” Bendy narrowed his eyes.

“Yes,” Alice said.

“What?” Bendy turned on her. She lifted her chin resolutely, though she shivered again.

“It has a mental link with its victims and, for her specifically, a magic one,” Alice explained. "It makes sense."

“Of course it’s magic--”

“Not like that Cuphead.” Alice cut him off. “It’s linked to her magic. And where does common magic come from if there isn’t a contract?”

“Runes and the…” Felix eyes widened. “You don’t think?”

Alice nodded. “Her soul. It’s binding itself to her soul. We have to act fast to save her.”

“But how?” Mugs asked. “It’s not screwed on her. It’s not gonna be like last time.”

“I don’t think just getting her away from it will be enough,” Felix said.

The notepad lifted off the table, making Bendy jump. That was just creepy! He forgot about the
mouse! ‘She cursed me without that thing around.’

Bendy huffed and rolled his eyes impatiently.

“Bendy.” Alice sighed disappointedly. “He helped save Cuphead and Mugman’s life. Show him a little respect. He wants to help.”

Bendy frowned. “Why should I have to show him anything. He certainly hasn’t shown me much.” He looked at the pad. “And he can’t show me much now either.”

Cup snorted and covered his mouth. The pad dropped to the table. Felix crossed his arms disapprovingly. “Bendy. That’s low.”

Bendy didn’t care.

“That still doesn’t solve the Holly problem,” Cup cut in.

Alice bit her lower lip. “It’s a mental link and a magical one.”

“We’ll have to break both at the same time.” Alice turned to the group with certainty in her eyes.

“But how!” Mugs sounded exasperated. They were going in circles. Bendy glanced at the front door.

“I can get in her head,” Alice said. “But I won’t be able to break the link. My magic and that cog’s...It’d probably kill me and her.”

“Oh great!” Cup muttered obnoxiously. “So what can?”

Alice looked at Bendy. “A demon.” Bendy’s eyes widened.

“B-but I don’t even know how to use magic! I hardly have control of my powers as is! And I’ve been off ever since we got back. We still don’t know why I changed, and I don’t remember anything!” Bendy shook his head so hard he got a little dizzy. “I’d probably just up and kill all three of us!” No! No! Nonono! Not a good idea!

The room grew quiet. “May I make a suggestion?” Xedo spoke up. Bendy almost forgot that there were others around. Felix nodded for him to go on. Xedo took a deep breath. “Now, I know in light of...recent events this seems a disfavorable approach. But with Boris and the items at risk, I think extremes are necessary. That’s why I suggest we contact the other demon we know is in town.”

“There is no way in hell I’m goin’ to Hat!” Cup snarled, slamming his fist on the table.

“You don’t have to,” Alice said. “I’ll go.” She lifted her chin, determination in her dark eyes.

“We can’t trust him.” Mugs crossed his arms and shook his head. "He'll stab us in the back."

“We don’t have options.” Alice walked toward the front door.

“Hold on Alice. You’re not going alone!” Bendy scrambled to catch up to the angel. He didn’t need another hostage situation on top of this one.

“We’ll still need to capture her. Those of you that want to help Bendy and me, come on. We’re leaving now. The rest, your job is to catch her!” Alice commanded.

“Is splitting up the best plan here?” Bendy asked uncertainly.
“All of us don’t need to go to the casino,” Alice stated. “Hopefully, we’ll catch up with everyone else quickly. We need to catch her and then break her link.”

Wait!” Mugs called after them. “There’s one last thing.”

Alice and Bendy paused. Mugs cleared his throat, his brows knit in concern. “I think she took Cala’s pearl so...she could be in danger too. I don’t know.”

Alice nodded. “She probably knows the most about the cog since she was with it for so long too.”

“Well, this just gets better an’ better,” Finley muttered.

Xedo approached them with a bag over his shoulder. “I am coming with you.”

The floating pad turned toward them. ‘I’m coming.’ Oh joy. They’d have a ghost mouse.

Oddswell adjusted his glasses. “I will try to pull together a tranquilizer to use on the girl. Miss Hood?”

“Yes doctor.” Red got up from her seat.

“Guess that leaves us three to fight the witch for now.” Cup smirked. He seemed almost excited as he stood and stuck his hands in his pockets. Felix nodded as did Mugman, giving his brother a measured stare. Cup shrugged.

“Be safe you three,” Alice warned. “Her spells are only going to get stronger. Just hold her off until we get there with Hat.”

Cup gave her a mock salute. “Will do.”

With that the four waved down a taxi and headed back to a casino Bendy was less than excited to see again so soon.

Chapter End Notes

Mercowe here! Aaaaaaalso! We got an adorable art from Tringamer360!
(Holly's prolly not happy if meep?)
Checking Out

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

“Welcome ladies and gentlemen!” Mic greeted the crowd. “Cuphead, Mugman, and Felix go after Holly. It’s a promise for a swell battle! Let’s go!”

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello readers!
What a week! So many of you have surprised me with your heartfelt comments, your amazing art and even a story inspired by Inky Mystery! You have blown me out of the water! I (or more likely Mercowe) will add links to the bottom to the tumblr and other story, but for now enjoy the madness!

Cuphead was itching to go. He hated waiting, but that’s exactly what he was doing. The lizard finally came out with a needle in hand. It was enough to knock her out quickly. They all agreed that Felix would take it. Cup didn’t care, and if she gave him a reason, he’d gladly take the shot. Cup and Mugs were more used to magic shots anyway, and they didn’t have a second chance. One needle. Felix told them if they had to retreat, he had the escape vehicle.

Grand. Cup agreed knowing full well he wasn’t planning on running. That little girl wanted a fight? She was going to have one.

So with that and all prep work done, they headed out. Felix turned his bag into a car. The streets appeared normal, everyone going this way and that. No one suspected that a crazy girl was possessed by a horrible demon cog. Mugs was wringing his hands. Cup could understand. With that pearl gone, he lost his way of contacting the mermaid...and Holly had it. Who knew what she was thinking of using that thing for.

Sadly, the pocket that he had started to check often was now empty too. He just hoped the little puffball was safe somewhere and not in her grasp. Just another reason to take that shot really.

Everything was normal until they got closer to the school. Felix slowed the car as a group of security guards raced across the street. Cup stuck his head out just in time to see a giant eagle fly above the buildings in pursuit of the men. It let out a shriek that made several people cover their ears.

“Ah, seems Holly has been causing a stir,” Cup commented lightly.

“Reminds me of Wally Warbles,” Mugs added. Cup raised a questioning brow at his younger brother. He guessed it looked like the giant bird from the islands. At least this thing didn’t have an evil genius son. Or a smart mouth.
“Shouldn’t we stop to help them?” Felix asked. He tensed like he wanted to get out and do just that.

“No. We need to focus on her. If we go after every little thing she pulls out, we’ll never get around to fighting her. If we take her out, they’ll disappear,” Cup said. Focus on the boss.

“They will?” Felix asked.

Cup shrugged. “Cala fell apart.” And most minions in other groups ran around like their heads were gone with the boss was down.

“And if they don’t, we’ll deal with it then. At least no more will get to join the chaos after she’s taken care of,” Mugs stated reasonably.

Felix sighed. “True. I hope they can escape.” With that, they continued. The chaos only got worse as they got closer to the college. Waves of students were running away from the library, shoving in their hurry to make a distance. There were a bunch of unconscious students that had been stacked haphazardly in a pile, all asleep like the people at the house had been. Enormous gouges had been taken out of the pavement. A tree had been torn out here. A statue of Yen Sid had been embedded headfirst in the ground there. Just outside the library, several older women in large spectacles held each other, staring at the open doors in horror. When Cup got close enough, he finally saw why.

There was an enormous nest standing squarely in the center of the shelves. It was on top of three large wooden beams crossed together like a teepee. In the nest were two large eggs. Resting squarely on top of one of the eggs was the cog, Holly sitting on it.

But that wasn’t all. Books were flying through the air everywhere, lining up to the girl’s left. They would stop for a brief couple seconds in front of her face, a rune would light up overhead, and the pages would flip too fast to catch. Then, the book would move to the right, where they were abruptly dropped into a stack. The pile on her right was much larger than the line of her left. She seemed to be nearly done...with every book in the library.

Cup figured that was enough of that. He lifted a finger and shot the book next in line. A burning hole went through it. “Times up! All books off limits. The library is closed until further notice!” he smirked. Mugs rolled his eyes. Felix tilted his hat up, eyes gleaming with determination.

Holly didn’t turn, though the books paused for a half second. She sighed. “I really had hoped you were dead. But this allows more opportunities, I suppose.” A series of glowing, golden runes appeared next to her head, and a second after that, a blue rune lit up on the ground next to Cup.

An enormous trunk burst from the ground, rising higher and higher. Boney wooden shoulders and arms emerged and finally two thick, trash can sized legs. The tree monster creaked, turning and seeing them. It slammed a boulder sized fist at Cup. “Well, cuss,” Cup muttered and jumped away.

Mugs turned his bullets to the building, raining debris down on the girl. The chunks of plaster and glass came down but then slid away as if an invisible orb were surrounding her.

“We have a way of breaking that thing?” Mugs asked in annoyance. He snapped his fingers. Just then, the tree monster swiped at him. He disappeared in a puff of smoke and reappeared on the creature’s other side, just inside the library doors.

Instantly a rune glowed blue where he had landed and an enormous surge of electricity shot up his body, making it jerk. Mugman fell.

“Mugman!” Felix called out. He pulled out a rope and lassoed the fallen cupman. He yanked, but just as Mug’s form started to move towards them, several green tendrils crawled from a row of
shelves, wrapping themselves around Mugs’ legs and dragging him back.

“Mugs!” Cup called out. Felix looked around. Cup followed. What they hadn't noticed before was that the inside of the library was covered in vines. And they were still growing. Cup lifted a finger to shoot the vines tied to his brother.

“Wait! These are amazonian chokers! If you shoot them, they'd just grow back faster! There’s a nerve center to them. If we want to save him, we have to kill the center,” Felix shouted, pulling the rope with all his strength. More vines grabbed onto Mug’s torso and legs. Felix stumbled forward a few steps in the tug of war.

The tree monster slashed at Cup, who dodged back, avoiding the library entrance. “Well, what does it look like! Where is it!” Cup shouted. It continued swiping at him, and now Cup could see that it had been trying to back all of them into the library the entire time.

Cuphead had enough of this. He snapped his fingers, dodging the tree’s limbs. He fired a roundabout shot. The spinning, crescent-shaped shot cut through the tree and then turned back for a second hit before passing Cup and into the room behind him. He fired a barrage of shots at the the beast, cutting it down as the shots turned and spun past him and into the library.

The wooden monster collapsed just in time for Cup to turn and see Felix yanked off his feet as an enormous cluster of vines wrapped around Mugs’ torso, arms, and legs and dragged them into the library.

“Great.” Cup grit his teeth and snapped his fingers. Felix’ eyes widened for half a second before he landed face first on the library floor. Immediately, electricity ran through him, making him jerk. His eyes rolled up. Felix’ grip loosened on the lasso, and Mugs was dragged back into a row of bookshelves. More vines reached out, wrapping around Felix’s arms and chest and dragging him back towards the shelves as well.

Great! He had no idea what he was looking for! Nerve center, nerve center. What the hell would a nerve center look like? Cup scanned the vine-covered room, finger charging with energy. They were going toward the shelves under that nest thing. Would a mouth be near a nerve center? It was a dense cluster of those things. Hell, what did he have to lose? He glanced at Mugs and Felix. Okay, bad question. Cup fired the fully loaded charge shot at the vine cluster. The fire licked up the plant cluster like it was paper.

Cup jumped into the room and landed on top of a row of shelves. He clung to them, waiting for the zap. It didn’t come. Holy cuss it worked. He was right! Yes! Now to get Mugsy!

The fire beside him spread quickly. It climbed up the vines, which clenched back, trying to keep away. But the flames had already caught and were burning shelves, books, vines, and furniture all alike.

Cup jumped from shelf to shelf, getting closer to Mugs and Felix as the vines dragged them farther and farther into the library. It didn’t take him long to realize that they were all going toward Holly. As the entrance grew small behind him, he got a clearer view of the giant nest she was sitting on. More importantly, he saw what was underneath it. It looked like a cross between a cabbage and a shark. Sharp teeth ringed a hole at the center of the plant. Well that was going to ruin salads for Cuphead for a while.

If that wasn’t a nerve center, then he wasn’t a cup. Mugs appeared from in between two shelves, Felix not far behind him. He was dragged just under the giant nest as Cup charged another shot. Stardust! Not fire then. He snapped his fingers and let loose his regular peashooter bullets. The blue
hit the killer cabbage dead center.

The plant burst into blue flames, vines whipping about wildly. Cup had to dodge back as the air filled with violently thrashing plant life. Good stars above! He looked for Mugs and Felix. They had stopped moving, but the blue fire was spreading quickly towards them. Cup looked around for anything he could jump on to reach them. All of the other shelves were several feet away. The only other option...was the nest.

But that would put him right in front of the witch. Ah cuss. Today just wasn’t his day. Felix had the dart, but Cup doubted they’d get close enough to get that into her. Guess it was his plan then. Shoot her. Wait, that cussing forcefield! What could he...the nest! But with what? Fire? Cut...Oh wait! He snapped his fingers and pointed behind himself. Time to do something crazy. He ran toward the nest, firing the roundabout shot behind him. The spinning, blade-like projectile sailed back and then around to race in front of him and toward one of the supporting stilts of the nest.

The ax-like shot sparked as it brushed up against Holly’s barrier, but then it sailed lower, slicing through a stilt. The nest tilted and started to fall. Above, Holly gasped for a moment, turning towards him. A blue rune appeared on the cog a moment later, and it started to float. Cup fired a burst of roundabouts that sail back and then forward. He snapped his fingers after that, preparing a little surprise for the witch.

The other two shots slices through the nest. It had already started to fall, but now it simply collapsed into a pile of wood, shavings and eggs; falling on the cabbage-shark and putting out the blue flame in an instant. From the corner of his eye, Cup could see the other fire was already nearing them though. He didn’t have long.

Holly stood, a book slamming shut as she turned to look at him with a glare. Wait. The last book, he realized. Golly, he heard of fast readers but good heavens above! It dropped with a dull thud on top of one of the eggs.

This could be very bad. He fired another barrage of bullets. This set was lobber shots. The purple balls sailed toward the witch, curved, and then hit the floor. They bounced and knocked into each other, shooting off in crazy random directions. Holly’s eyes flickered to them, and she raised her arms as several flew at her face before bouncing off the shield. Cup then dove for the branches, using her distraction so he could grab Mugs and Felix.

Cup landed on the nest, one foot on the twigs, one foot on the side of an egg. His foot slipped, sliding down the egg toward Mugs...and the floor. Cuss. He pin-wheeled his arms and pulled his leg back, barely keeping his balance. He gently set his foot on another pile of twigs and leaned down to reach Mugman. If he woke up, he might get shocked again. He needed to get him off the floor. He grabbed his shirt and dragged his brother toward him.

Mugs was barely on the nest when a rainbow of runes lit up above Cups’ head. Cup started to float into the air. No! He flailed his arms, trying to reach Mugs and missed. He twisted his head to glare at the cause of his predicament.

Cup choked in surprise. Her eyes were black. Holly wasn’t looking at him with hate anymore, or annoyance, or any sort of negative emotion. In fact, she looked pretty...happy? She tilted her head, a small smile forming on her lips. Creepy. Way creepy.

“You know, you two really are the most interesting living things I’ve ever seen,” she said. That’s when he placed her expression. It was the same kind of expression Black Hat had had when he’d done his tests. The same excited gleam in Flug’s goggled-eyes when he pulled out his tools. A fear that Cup wished he had gotten rid of bloomed in his chest as the similarities brought back a cascade
of memories.

“Then stop trying to kill us!” Cup barked. Mugs, wake up! Please wake up!

Her creepy black eyes widened in a slightly upset expression. “I really, really want to,” she said, biting her lip. She hummed, putting a closed fist to her mouth. “Maybe if I…?” She reached out a hand towards him. He saw a golden rune light up next to his head. His vision blurred as his head began to go fuzzy. Cuss. He snapped his fingers and shot. Green, star-shaped bullets shot out around his person. The bullets danced around him before coming in contact with the rune. The rune twisted and flashed. The light changed from gold to lime green. That probably wasn’t a good thing. There was a sucking sound, like a vacuum, then he felt a tingle pass over his head, before a flash and the rune and bullets vanished.

Cup blinked blurry eyes. What happened? “Mugs?” Cup groaned. His head felt funny. He raised a hand to it. There was something coming from the top of it? He’d worry about it later.

“Shhhh.” Another rune appeared next to his head, making it spin even more. His vision blurred to black. Cussing witch.

Bendy shifted uncomfortably next to Alice in the car. They...Well, it wasn’t pretty. Alice would blush and turn away from him. She didn’t joke much. Mickey was mute. Xedo tried to ease the tension, but it didn’t really work. Bendy wasn’t in the mood to talk either. He just didn’t have the energy.

The door opened, and they were back. The casino was less busy than he had ever seen it. Alice didn’t bother with looking around. She lead the group straight to the back of the building and into a secret basement behind the wall. Bendy wanted to take a moment to look at some of the devices that littered the room, but Xedo dragged him away. The hallways were covered in papers and blueprints. It cleared up the further they went.

Alice turned down a hall that invited an instant chill to his skin. Ah. He could tell that was Black Hat. It had to be. He’d never felt such dark cold from anything else. Xedo’s fur fluffed out a little. He seemed a bit confused but didn’t react to the arua beyond that. Who know what Mickey thought.

Alice didn’t even knock. She marched right into the room. “Mr. Hat, we need your assistance.” Bendy blinked in surprise. So did Xedo. Hell, maybe Mickey if he were visible.

Hat turned around in his huge, fancy leather chair. He closed a pocket watch and put it back in his pocket. “Alice Angel. You’re ten minutes later than I expected.” He grinned his sharp fangs, which glinted in the light. Bendy felt another chill race down his spine.

Alice frowned and crossed her arms. “So are you going to help us or not?” Was that normal? Ten minutes? What?

Bendy looked between Alice and Hat. How did he know what was going on?

“Well, your little pet tried to poison me with White Egret Flower extract. I wonder where she would get a thing like that?” Hat’s visible eye went from Alice to Bendy. Alice paled.

Bendy gasped. “Holly we--”

“Yes, and she did a pretty poor job of it. I could practically taste her hatred in the room.” Hat grinned at Bendy. “She didn’t even wait to see if I would drink it.”
Bendy’s eyes widened in horror. Holly did that? Hat laughed. “And I can smell your little invisible friend’s fear too.” His eye went to a blank spot on the other side of Alice. “So if you are planning to attack me or set a new trap for me, you’ll fail.”

Bendy took a step back. Okay, major misunderstanding! He shared a dumbfounded look with Xedo.

“We’re not trying to attack you,” Bendy said slowly.

“Oh yes.” Black Hat rolled his eyes. “A young wild fledgling like you? Of course you’d want to take my territory and send your little pawns to play me.” He tsksed and waved his hand. “And do a rather poor job of it too.”

Bendy took a couple of steps forward. His brows still furrowed in confusion. “Uuuuuh, no? Mickey is cursed, and Holly is the one we want help stopping.”

Hat blinked, his wicked cocky smile dropping along with the temperature in the room. “You aren’t here to wage a great battle with me? You don’t want the casino?”

“No.” Bendy shook his head quickly, face scrunching in distaste. “I don’t. It’s not my style anyway, and I have too much to do to look after this place. We just want help saving our friend.”

Hat looked from Bendy to Alice to Xedo and to well, Mickey. He growled. “You must be joking!” He slammed a hand on the desk.

“No.” Bendy put his hands in his pockets. The nervousness was subsiding after surprising the older demon. “You are completely wrong. Holly did that on her own. She attacked my friends. She is possessed by an ancient item.”

Alice stepped up next to him, right across from Black Hat's desk. “It’s binding to her mind and spirit. I can get us in, but to break the bonds, we’d need your power.”

Hat’s eyes widened. “Me? You really expect me to help you?”

Bendy shrugged. “Well, figuring that this thing gave her unlimited power, and she’s at the library with a perfect memory talent looking at all those facts on spells and such…”

“And the fact that she never gives up and will go after someone until she thinks the job is done,” Xedo added.

“I mean, it’s only a matter of time until she comes back here when she learns that you’re alive.” Bendy smiled.

Hat narrowed his eyes. His monocle flashed. “Don’t think you can threaten me, boy.”

“And she almost killed the cups without any struggle,” Alice said quickly.

Hat blinked, taken aback. “The cups? With no fight?”

“None,” Alice said. “She is too smart for that. She’ll learn your weaknesses and use them.”

Hat raised an eyebrow. He didn’t even seem to consider it. “You already have a demon. Use him.” He waved a hand at Bendy. “If you want my help, I’ll just kill her.”

Xedo choked. Alice groaned in exasperation. “What do you want?” She sighed, beautiful face twisted in a grimace.

“Please, Mr. Hat. If you didn’t want anything, you wouldn’t have let us in your office,” Alice argued. Uh?

“Not true.” He frowned. “I may have let you get this far to kill you.”

“You don’t want blood in this carpet, and there’s still the chance of war.” Alice lifted her chin.

Black Hat laughed. “It’s been a while since I’ve had someone talk so bluntly.” He lifted a hand to something under his desk. “Alright Flug, deactivate it.”

“Awww, but Mr. Hat.” Dr. Flugg’s voice crackled over a hidden speaker.

“Now Flugg!” Hat barked, his eye flashing red.

“No boom-boom?” a female voice asked. The radio cut off.

Bendy shared a worried look with Alice. Seemed he had planned for them. Creep.

Hat adjusted his tie and smiled. “Alright. I think we can work something out.”

Alice pushed away what just happened. “We want you to help us save our friend. What do you want in exchange?” Alice asked with an oddly disdainful frown. Bendy didn’t think it matched her personality much.

Hat smirked. “One more session with your magic.”

“Deal.” Alice offered her hand.

“Woah, wait a minute. Weren’t those really dangerous for your health?” Bendy put a hand on her arm.

She smiled at him. “I’ll be fine with my halo now.” She turned back to Hat, losing her smile with her hand still raised. “So is it a deal?”

Hat looked between Bendy and Alice. He had lost his smile as well. His visible eye sparkled with some distant emotion Bendy couldn’t quite peg. Was that disapproval? Disdain? His narrow pupil studied them for a moment before he leaned forward. “I want you to come back with her. We need to talk, fledgling.”

Bendy bristled. That sounded more like an order than a request. “Only if you explain what you are doing with Alice’s magic.”

Hat scoffed. Bendy put his hands on the desk and leaned forward. “You want to talk? You have to answer some of my questions too.”

Hat raised his brows. Alice spoke up before the tension could build more. “That’s our offer, Mr. Hat.”

The demon huffed. He looked back at Xedo and the empty space that was Mickey. “Fine, but only you two are to come. That’s my final offer.” Hat rested his elbows on the desk and tapped the tip of his fingers together.

“Fine,” Alice said.
“Fine.” Bendy crossed his arms.

“Then, it’s a deal.” Hat grinned and offered his hand. Alice reached over and shook it. Bendy noticed goosebumps raise on her arms. Xedo cleared his throat.

“I think it’s best we go then,” the fox said.

“Now?” Hat pulled his hand back.

Bendy frowned in annoyance. “We aren’t gettin’ any younger.”

Hat rolled his eyes. “Fine, fine. The sooner we get this done the better, I suppose. Shall we take my car?”

The ride to the library was a new level of awkward and bizarre that Bendy didn’t know he could reach. He almost would have rather walked. Hat drove his car like the road was his own personal driveway. Alice snipped at him and he snipped back. Bendy thought he was going to die a number of times, either from the other demon’s driving or from the angel and demon being on the verge of attacking each other.

Honestly, he was sure the second was moments from happening. Hat seemed to be begging for Alice to take a hit at him. She had a lot of self control. He just kept needling at her with comments and actions. Any time he or Xedo tried to speak up, she would stop them. Maybe Bendy should just punch the mook. He wasn’t nearly as patient as Alice.

Finally, they got there. Xedo and Bendy and probably Mickey--Maybe he fled, Bendy wouldn’t blame him--were out of the car and kissing the ground the moment they pulled up to the curb. Hat glanced at them in annoyance. “Oh please.”

“You should never be allowed to drive. Ever.” Bendy sighed in relief. Who gave this guy a license? Did he threaten their soul if they didn’t? Bendy could believe that. He could absolutely see Hat giving some poor DMV schmuck a deathly red glare.

They didn’t take long to find the building...since smoke was pouring out the windows. Bendy shared one look with Alice and Xedo before rushing to the building. Off to one side, he saw a giant eagle trying to descend into a rather large hole that had been made in the library roof. It got close but then suddenly screeched and darted off to the side as something bright glowed from the hole. Bendy reached the open doors only for flames to burst out and block the way. Oh no. Were any of them in there?

When Bendy stared into the blaze all he saw was a jungle of burning vines, bookshelves, and an indiscernible heap blazing intensely near the back.

A window shattered. Alice went around the side of the building. Bendy went after her. There were two people on the grass. Mugs was on his knees, panting and coughing. Felix was out cold on the ground next to him. Both were stained with smoke and soot.

“Mugs! What happened? Where’s Cup?” Bendy asked with wide eyes.

Alice knelt next to Felix and started checking him over.

“I don’t know! I went in, was electrocuted, and don’t remember anything else! I just woke up to the fire. I--I didn’t see him or Holly. I don’t know where...or if...” He struggled to get up again. His light eyes were wide with panic. “I need to go back.”
“I’ll check,” Bendy offered.

“No need. No other living thing is in there.” Black Hat stepped up beside him.

“WHA! Hat!” Mugs fell over in surprise, arm raised like he expected to be attacked.

“Oh, we got his help,” Alice offered meekly.

Mugs and Hat eyed each other. “Great,” Mugs muttered unenthusiastically. “So she took Cuphead?”

Hat shrugged. “Or he died.” He said it so matter-of-factly.

Mugs flinched. “No, she had to take him.” He shivered.

“Hold on to your little hope then,” Hat commented carelessly. Bendy glared at the mook. He didn’t want to believe Cup was dead either. There was no proof! She took Boris. She probably took Cuphead too.

“We’ll get him back,” Bendy said. “Him and Boris. We have to find them first. Alice?” Felix was blinking awake and suddenly jumped up.

“Wha--How?” He looked around.

“Careful Mr. Felix, you were shocked,” Alice said.

“We’re outside,” Felix murmured. He turned to the burning library. “Oh stars.”

“And she took Cup,” Mugs said grimly. Felix closed his eyes, and his ears dropped.

“But we’re going to find her now, and with Hat’s help, we’ll get her,” Bendy said. Felix glanced at the tall, thin demon.

“Ah, good,” he said simply but eyed him warily. Hat scowled. In the cries of the emergency sirens and roar of the flames, the group collected around a map. Alice murmured her spell and the marks appeared on the map. There were a lot more than there had been before.

“Oh no,” Alice murmured. Her thin brows knit together in alarm and worry.

“She’s throwing magic around to cover her tracks,” Felix said grimly. “I’m sure one of those is that giant bird.”

“This may be a bit harder than we had thought,” Alice admitted with a wince.

Oh man. This was bad. Bendy frowned. They looked back at the library as there was a loud crack of wood. Part of the roof collapsed. How long before it was the rest of Toon Town?

Cala sighed uncomfortably as she swam toward the city. The dark sea before her showed no difference from the dark sea behind her. Still, she swam with single minded determination. She felt like a fool. She knew that trusting a Surface dweller was against the laws of sea, let alone actually allowing one to carry her away from the coast. But Cala never left without a backup plan. A way to escape. To her great dismay, she had had to use that escape when Holly threatened to keep her in that dusty building. She had started to demand information on the Cup brothers that Cala wasn’t willing to offer. When Cala had refused, the girl had refused to return her to the ocean. Cala huffed, a stream of bubbles escaping her mouth. She had revealed her true nature to the girl by mistake. But at least she had destroyed the evidence Holly had gotten against the two cup brothers. That also
confirmed her own fears. Those two were still working for him. But then, why let her go? They should have turned her in or taken her contract again. They hadn’t. But why?

Cala shook her head, Paul’s tentacle falling into her face. She gently brushed it aside. She had always liked the cup boys. She knew they were not evil. Even when they had been children and took her contract the first time, Mugman had apologized again and again. She had only been a young mermaid herself. She had been too distraught to care at the time, but now she knew better. And this time they weren’t doing what they were supposed to. There had to be a reason for that. Her heart burned with hope. Maybe, just maybe, they had found a way out.

But none of that would matter if Cala didn’t get back in time to save them, warn them about the girl. It had to be the cog. She knew that it must be...And she would be able to fight on even ground this time!

The sea witch had taken longer than she would have liked. With the gear still active and the girl showing signs of attachment to it, every moment counted. She wished she had had a way to warn Mugman! She hadn’t thought that she would have something to tell him before she got on the Surface. It would still take her a few hours to swim there. Oh! Curse her luck! Why did her shell have to take her so far from the city!

A light appeared above her. She paused in her quick swimming. She looked up to see a Surface portal. Mugman! He must have used her pearl! Was it because of the Holly girl? Was he okay? She quickly came toward the portal but paused before breaking through. She couldn’t really see anything through it. No sky or dock edge, no Mugman peaked down at her. Red flags went up. She inched away from it. What if it was a trap? Mugman wouldn’t do that though! But what if it wasn’t him? She did have another escape shell at least! She had learned from a young age to never just trust a friendly face. So was the life of a monster. She could trust Mugman, right?

She looked up at it again. The edges were already shrinking. If she went, it could be a trap. If she didn’t, it would still take her hours to get there. And she would have broken her promise to Mugman. She bit her lip. Oh no. Oh no. The portal was already half the size it had started as.

She couldn’t wait hours knowing what she knew! She recklessly burst through the water, breaking the surface and appearing wherever the pearl had been dropped.

She burst through to complete darkness. She only had a moment to orient herself before several gold symbol burst to light before her eyes. She gasped and tried to move back. Too late, the portal was gone.

Every muscle in her body stiffened, freezing into place until all she could do was breathe and blink. She sank a little and felt cement underneath her tail a few feet under the water. A light above her flicked on. Cala blinked, the sudden light blinding her for a moment. She was in an indoor pool. It looked recently made, with a cement walkway going all the way around. Oh no. Oh no. It had definitely been a trap. Where was Mugman? Were he and Cuphead okay?

Holly stood at the bottom of a set of stairs, her hand on the lightswitch. She was standing on the cog, floating just inches off the ground. It was the worst case scenario then. The cog had gotten to her. Holly watched Cala with large black eyes. A wide, excited smile spread across her face. “You’re here!” she said. Oh sea scallops. Had she looked that terrifying when she had the gear?

“Ah, u-you,” Cala gulped. This was bad. Very bad. “What did you do to Mugman?”

Holly moved along the walkway towards her. “ Dumped him in the bay.” Horror knifed Cala through the heart.
“No!” she cried. He was okay. He had to be! He was one of the cups! He and Cuphead were some of the strongest beings she had ever meant! And she knew King Triton!

Holly shrugged. “Don’t get your fins in a twist. Alice fished him out.”

Thank the waves! Cala felt tears build up in the corner of her eyes. The pool water carried them away.

Holly knelt next to Cala’s prone form. She reached out, starting to pat her down. “That shell you used to escape the last time we talked was brilliant, by the way. It caught me completely off guard.”

Cala whimpered. Holly pulled out Cala’s sea charm, a bag of sponges, a veil of deep sea liquid ice, and her last escape shell. She also found Cala’s locket. “Not the locket! Please!”

Holly paused for half a second, tilting her head at Cala. “Now, why wouldn’t I take it? There’s no reason for me not to.”

“It’s not magic or anything! There’s no reason for you to take it. Please,” Cala begged. Her eyes and voice betrayed her desperation.

Holly’s face scrunched up, and she stood. “I don’t care.” Gathering everything she had found, Holly left the room for a moment. Cala sobbed. Ebi. Ebi. Her only picture of Ebi. She had taken it away.

Paul became agitated, but he couldn’t do anything, like Cala. He brushed at Cala’s tears comforting. It was that dark hell room all over again! Trapped, unable to move, to escape. Alone.

Holly reappeared and sat down on the cog next to the stairs. Or worse. Not alone. “So,” she said, leaning forward. “How do you feel about picking up where our conversation left off before? Where exactly do you and the Cups come from?”

Cala whimpered again. “Why do you want to know?”

Holly put a hand to her mouth. “They are singularly unique. Unlike any other living thing I’ve seen before. So are you, miss gorgon. I am a connoisseur of knowledge. I need to know how it all works.” Her black eyes lit up as a wicked smile formed on her face. “I want to see what other strange things, people might be on that little island of yours. Not to mention, I’m curious about the devil you three seem to be hiding.”

Cala sighed. “He is a terrible person that we are unfortunate enough to know. I broke my deal and am in hiding from him.” If she wanted knowledge, Cala would give her as much round about knowledge she had. “Not that different from your average villain that you could find anywhere.”

Holly’s eyes narrowed. “You know, you did this last time we spoke. You think that by talking a lot about absolutely nothing, you can get by?” She stood up, lips pressed and eyes now holding a dangerous, ready look in them. “Which is why I prepared.”

She picked up her bag and started to rummage. After a moment, she pulled out three different sets of herb bundles and walked over to a little tin burner in the corner that Cala hadn’t noticed before.

Holly put on a mask and carefully combined the herbs in the burner, striking a match to light the fusion. She straightened, waving her hand. “I’ll start the full spell in a moment, but I have one more bit of motivation I’d like to share.” Cala eyed her warily.

The next moment, Cala saw a limp Cuphead float down the stairs. He was covered in ash and had a head full of...roses? A lime green symbol floated just above his head. Holly tapped her chin. “He looks kind of ridiculous right now, doesn’t he? After I sent the two of them seaside, they came after
me again. I probably should have killed him like I was trying to before, but I’m oh so curious about what sort of tests I could do with him, so I changed my mind.” Cala’s eyes widened. She had caught him! How! They were the best! She remembered when she’d had to fight them in the sea—the sea, and she had still lost to them and their biplanes! In her element! How had Holly beaten him?

Holly allowed him to drop on the staircase with a thud. Cala winced in sympathy. Holly seated herself, waving a hand.

A bright ray of symbols burst to life above her. The smell that had slowly been wafting from the burner seemed to triple in intensity. Cala’s head went light, and it suddenly became very hard to remember exactly what she had just been doing. She wasn’t upset any more. She wasn’t sure why she’d been upset in the first place.

“Cala?” Holly’s voice was a bit distant. “How do you feel?”

“Tired,” Cala mumbled. Her mouth felt like it was full of cotton. What was going on? It was hard to focus on anything.

“I’m sorry to hear that. In just a little bit, you can go to sleep. But I need you to answer a few questions first, alright?” Was it alright? Cala couldn’t remember. Holly had a pen and a paper. Was she going to write something?

“Yes?” she guessed quietly. Why couldn’t she lift her hand? Her nose itched.

“So Cala, what is the name of the island you’re from?”

“Not from an island. Born in the Mediterranean near the Strait of Gibraltar. Lived in Atlantis, where my sister was born.” Cala mumbled. She remembered the smell of salt and greenery in the Mediterranean. Why did they have to leave again? Hunted? She couldn’t remember. She just pictured her mother’s scared face. Mother. She missed her so much. Oh, she was crying.

“Interesting.” Cala heard a scratching sound. “Then, what was the name of the island you went to later, the one that the Cup brothers are from?”

“The Inkwell Isles? They aren’t that much. The land dwellers are odd looking and some have strange habits, but it’s a calm, boring place. I was bored. There wasn’t much at the docks there, a pirate sailor, a nice turtle.” She blinked owlishly. “I saw them fishing once. They were so small.” It really had been a boring place around the docks, but she heard stories of what happened more inland. That had been the first time she had really wanted to go further on land than the coast.

More scratching. Holly was looking at her paper intensely as she wrote. “Hmmm. How did you meet the Cup brothers?”

“Heard of them first.” Cala chuckled weakly. “Saw them in passing when they walked by the docks or were playing in the water. Didn’t really interact until they came for me on their planes.” Like little flies with biting stingers. She still couldn’t believe she lost. Such little things. They wouldn’t stay stone! She had never met anyone that could turn back to normal.

“Planes? Why did they come for you?” Holly looked up.

“They chased me into the sea. They couldn’t follow on boat. I, or the fish helping me, would have sunk them, so they flew. Annoying little flies. They were great fliers. I could hardly hit them. Ran into a cave where they cornered me.” She sighed. “I broke my deal. So they came for--”

There was a flash of purple. Holly let out a yell. Cala blinked as her world became a little clearer.
She felt the water disturb as the girl splashed in. Cup leaned weakly against the wall behind her with a raised finger gun, the last of a bouncing ball bullet disappearing. “Cussing witch,” he panted. Cala shifted and realized she could move. She dove under the surface to get away from the strange herbs that made thinking so difficult. Her mind cleared even more. She saw Holly turning in the water to push herself up, feet still connected to the cog somehow. With a powerful kick of her tail, Cala lunged to grab the witch.

Holly’s face scrunched in anger. She thrust out both hands and the room filled with gold light. The pool exploded.

Water flew everywhere, and Cala suddenly found herself on cold cement at the bottom of the pool, tail flailing uselessly. Holly coughed, whirling towards the cup man now.

He didn’t say anything. He just let loose another barrage of bouncing projectiles. Holly immediately called new runes into existence and a blue barrier shimmered to life around her, stopping the barrage from hitting her. He snapped his fingers and brought his hands together. A spray of green stars appeared, encircling him. He clicked his tongue.

“I’m done holding back. You ain’t a zany, so if I kill ya, it’s your own damn fault!” He pushed away from the wall. With a twist, he jumped in the air and spun on his side. Cala’s jaw dropped when a torrent-like blast shot from his head and nailed Holly’s shield. The blast engulfed the shield in light so bright Cala had to turn away. The next second, when the light cleared away, all that she saw was a black scorch mark on the cement.

“D-did you kill her!” Cala called out in alarm. Oh no! She was attacking them, but she had been possessed by the cog! She didn’t deserve to die! The poor thing!

Cup landed clumsily. He teetered and nearly fell over, dropping to a knee to save himself. “No. She musta escaped! The gear isn’t here anymore.”

Cala gulped. That...was a scary power. She was glad that in her fight she had faced the planes’ weapons instead of the magic, and when she had the cog, she wasn’t the one fighting anymore. Sweet trident, Cuphead could be scary! He did that in this condition!

“Do ya need help?” Cup called down to her. Cala blinked. There was barely any water in the pool now. Only a few inches, nothing that she could swim in. She bit her lip.

“Let me try something.” She told him. Besides, he looked like he needed more help than her. She took a deep breath, looking at her tail. The sea witch had told her to will her legs to appear, that it was like when she used her giant stone form. She had to focus. Cala pictured legs appearing where her tail was. She felt an uncomfortable pulling sensation. She grit her teeth and tried to imagine two legs with knees, ankles, heels, toes; the works. The pulling grew more intense. She groaned as pain laced up her fin. There was the sound of ripping paper, and her tail split.

She gasped. Cup gaped. She nearly panicked until the the split shifted into knees, ankles, everything Cala had thought; all the way down to her toenails. She blinked in amazement. Her skin was still a bit scaly on close inspection, the scale translucent to show the same skin tone her upper body had. Wow. She wiggled her toes. She had legs. She had legs!

Cup choked. “You could do that!”

Cala looked up as a coat suddenly landed on her head, blocking her view. “Uh, um, not until recently.”
“Cover up,” Cup muttered. “If your walkin,’ at least be decent.” His face was averted but was also dark with a blush.

Walking. She could do that now, right? She pulled the coat off of Paul and wrapped it around herself. It was heavy, thick, and nice. There were smoke stains on it and a couple of holes.

“Well? Are ya comin’? We need to hurry. Who knows when that crazy dame will reappear,” Cup called down to her. He was on his feet again. It seemed he’d gotten his balance back. Cala rolled onto her new knees and pushed up. To her surprise, she didn’t even stand before she fell over.

“What in the--Oh brother!” Cup huffed above her. She heard a splash as he jumped into the pool to help her. She sat up again and looked up at the man. He gazed at her in annoyance, offering her a hand. “You weren’t kidding about it being new.”

“S-sorry.” Cala felt her face warm and gingerly gave him her hand. Without warning, he yanked her up. She gasped and stumbled, her shakey new limbs barely doing anything to help hold her weight. Cup grunted as she fell into him.

“Calm down. I ain’t gonna drop you,” Cup muttered. “Put your legs under you and push up a bit to hold your weight.” Cala did as she was told. Her new knees bumped into each other as they shook. She winced at the pain. “Can’t you keep them still?”

“How?” Cala asked. Cup sighed exasperatedly.

“Alright, to walk it’s one foot in front of the other. You shift your weight as you go.” Cup shifted her so he was standing beside her, still holding most of her weight. He took a step forward. She followed him. He shifted forward. She tried to and nearly fell. He caught her.

Cala’s face warmed in embarrassment. “I’m sorry. I’m slowing you down.”

“Hey, it’s your first time walking. All of us had to learn and stumble and fall down. Don’t worry. We’ll get outta here,” Cup said in a surprising show of patience. “Just don’t stop.”

Cala suspected that he’d just pick her up if he wasn’t so weak himself right now.

With that, the two shakily made their way to the edge of the pool. Cup hoisted her up and then jumped up himself. It was graceful. Cala wondered when she’d be able to do that. He helped her stand again, and they reached the door. Cala was starting to get the weight shift Cup was talking about. Gravity held one to the floor on the surface. They didn’t have that problem in the water. Yet, instead of drifting in a weird position if balance was lost, they simply fell to the floor. It was frustrating. Yet, Cup caught her every time she lost the little balance she was learning to get.

“There has to be an exit somewhere,” Cup muttered more to himself than her.

“Wait! She took my things somewhere,” Cala exclaimed. “I have to find them.” She couldn’t leave her sister behind!

Cup heaved a deep sigh but nodded. He opened the door and groaned. There were cut squares that led up. “Um...stairs?”

“If you can barely walk, I doubt you can climb stairs.” Cup sighed. “C’mon, I’ll carry you.”

Cala pouted. She didn’t want to be a burden. How hard could it be? She leaned her weight on one foot and lifted the other. She nearly fell back doing it.
“Look. We don’t have time, and I don’t wanna risk dropping you down these things,” Cup said
catching her again. She opened her mouth to protest, but he suddenly dropped a little and scooped
her knees out from under her. Cala squeaked in surprise. Cup swayed a little at first but then steadied
himself. “We gotta move.”

Cup started up the stairs. Cala turned her head to see how he did it. She turned back to face him and
lifted a hand to one of the roses that were still sticking out of his head. “So, did she spell these on
you?” Cala asked.

“What?” Cup glanced at her. She dared to pick one of the buds, careful of the thorns, and showed it
to Cuphead.

“Your head is full of them,” she said twirling the flower in her fingers.

Cup scowled and glared at the flower like it had insulted his brother. “That cussing little witch.”

“You know it’s not her fault, right?” Cala asked gently, a little afraid of his answer.

“I know, but it’s easier to aim at a face.” Cup sneered. Cala felt a chill go down her spine. Did his
eyes change for a second there? She must have imagined it. They reached the top of the stairs.
Before them was a tiny kitchen, a little wooden table in the middle of it with two rickety chairs
pushed in neatly. A window was at the back. She saw they were in the woods.

There was a hallway just outside of the kitchen that connected to a front room with an old floral
couch. Cup carried her into the front room. A glance around proved that her things weren’t there.
They headed into the hallway. There were two rooms. One was a bathroom. Cup set her down to
take a moment and pluck the flowers from his head. Too bad, she was sure that Mugs would have
found them funny.

“Cup, what happened to Mugman?” Cala asked.

Cup frowned as he dropped another stem to the floor. “Don’t know. The building was burning. But I
think he made it...I hope he did.” Cup wouldn’t look at her. Cala gulped. Oh waves and sea foam,
she wasn’t sure she wanted to ask for details.

They made it to the other room. There they found--

“Boris!” Cup stepped into the bedroom quickly. The wolf was asleep on top of the bed. He was in
sleep clothes, a t-shirt and shorts. He seemed fine. Cala looked around to see a lockbox on the side
table. She took a little step toward it, proud of herself that she stayed upright and grabbed it. It was
locked, of course, but she could pick it up at least. Cup grabbed Boris. “C’mon Boris, wake up!
Everything’s nuts, and we need a get outta here!”

Despite Cup’s shaking, the wolf remained asleep. Cala sat on the bed. “If it’s like everything else
she’s done, he’s probably spelled asleep.”

“Any idea on how to wake him up?” Cup asked. Cala shook her head.

“Great,” Cup scoffed. “Well, I can’t carry both of you out!”

“Well, what did you do to wake up?” Cala asked with wide eyes.

“Me?” Cup gave her an incredulous look.

“You were spelled asleep too, right? What did you do to wake up?” Cala asked again.
Cup blinked and looked to his hand. “I don’t know what it might do to him though.”

“Is it worse than being caught by a girl possessed by a magic cog and spelled asleep?” Cala asked half kidding.

“I could hurt him.” Cup shifted uncomfortably, eyeing the unconscious pup.

“I don’t believe you will. But like you said, we don’t know how much time we have,” Cala gently reasoned. It was a risk, but people like her and Cuphead were used to risks.

Cup pursed his lips. His eyes warily turned to her and back to the little wolf. “Okay, but if something goes wrong, that guy is gonna kill us both.” He snapped his fingers and a green star appeared from his pointer. Cala froze. Guy? Which guy? Him? Or someone else? She shook out of her fear and watched. The little green star drifted and weaved around in the air for a minute before turning and flying lazily over the wolf.

Then, it sucked into the golden rune that appeared, glowing above Boris’ head. The rune ripped and seemed to wriggle, turning a neon green. Then, it burst with a little cloud. When Cala blinked, Boris’ fur had been poofed up in several places. It almost made him look like...a poodle. His normally short ears were huge and fluffy; as well as his head, chest, and hands. But his neck and portions of his legs were still normal.

“Oh stars!” Cup covered his mouth but still ended up laughing. The laughter seemed to wake the wolf. Boris groaned and opened his eyes.

“Cuphead? What are you doing?” Boris sat up and moaned. “Are you pranking us? Can you do it later? I have a headache.” He lifted one of his fluffy hands to his head and froze. He pulled back his hand and looked at it. “What did you do to me!” he yelped.

“Calm down.” Cup struggled to swallow his laughter. Cala found it hard to not giggle herself. “We’re in the middle of a situation.”

Boris looked at her. “Cala? Why are you wearing Cup’s jacket? Why are you here?” He looked around and blinked a couple of times. “Where is here? Where’s Bendy and Mugs?”

“We were all kidnapped. We’re trying to escape. You were spelled asleep and this was a side effect of waking you,” Cala reviewed matter-of-factly. Cup and Boris stared at her stunned.

“We what!” Boris yipped.

“You’re pretty good at a recap, Cal,” Cup said. He turned back to Boris. “Forget your bad hair day. Holly went off the deep end with the cog. She’s nabbed us, and we gotta make a run for it!”

Boris eyes widened. “Bu--”

“Questions later.” Cup stood up and pulled Cala to her feet. “Run now.”

He turned and helped her out the door. She clung to the box, sure her things were in it. “Cala! You have legs!” Boris exclaimed behind her. She smiled over her shoulder.

“Later!” Cup said and rushed them into the front room. He reached for the front door but paused.

“What’s wrong?” Boris asked.

“I’m not sure if it’s boobytrapped.” Cup scowled at the door.
“Then blast it open!” Cala said. Cup nodded. He passed Cala to Boris and aimed his finger gun at the door. He snapped his fingers and fired a blue bullet at it. The bullet blasted a hole through the door. Smoke rose from burned edges. Cala gulped. Again, she was glad she was an ally...Maybe...As long as that person didn’t find out she was back.

“I think we’re good.” Cup turned the knob and opened the door. It swung open without a problem.

A breeze floated in from the woods. There wasn’t a hint of sea salt anywhere. It seemed earthy instead. Cala took a deep breath, amazed at the smell of the plants and ground. It was so different from what she knew.

“Any guess as to where we are?” Boris asked, looking around.

“For all I know, we could be in China.” Cup stuffed his hands in his pockets.

“We should try to get somewhere high up to see if the city is nearby or anything,” Boris suggested. Cup nodded.

Just then, there was a rustle in the underbrush. Cup aimed at the spot. Boris tensed, holding Cala in a tight grip.

“Come out unless you want to get shot,” Cup growled. A strange man with dark grey skin and a sharp grin stepped into the clearing in front of the house. The cold air seemed to become freezing. Cala felt goosebumps rise on her arms. Boris gasped. She knew what that was. She could never mistake the fear and dread she felt around those people.

“Now, you wouldn’t shoot me, Cuphead. I came to rescue you after all.” He snickered.

“Hat,” Cup growled.

A demon.

Chapter End Notes

Mercowe here! This is the link to the story. It is called "The Dark Nights of 1947," written by ashipnerd.

Also! We got many beautiful arts recently that we have neglected to post. Here are some of them. First off is an art of Bendy glaring at Pete at the diner. Run and hide! It was drawn by @animenerd&geek on Instagram!
Also, fantastickingdomus drew and posted on tumblr a series of Witch Holly pictures as she descended farther into the evil madness!
Feel free take a look at more of the beautiful art on the Inky Mystery tumblr. Also! If you want to draw and post art here on AO3, but you don't know how to, feel free to email us the art at mercoweeditor@gmail.com. We can post it here for you. See you next week!
Chapter Summary

"Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls! I have a WARNING for you today." Mic announced. "Today's episode features graphic violence that may disturb some viewers. It's rated T for a reason ladies and gentlemen! Please proceed with caution and enjoy!"

Chapter Notes

Hello Hello!
Welcome to the update! And boy is it a doozy! First though! Some business. So I had a comment from a reader that had me thinking. I decided to go ahead with this idea, but I'm still figuring out the bugs. XP If you want to know what in the world I'm talking about, head over to the inkymystery tumblr. I'm really excited about some of the things I hope can happen. XD But I have to still figure it out. =w= Otherwise I get to enjoy Mercowee's company this weekend and it's wonderful. We have so many ideas! XD

Anyway, more beautiful art at the end of the chapter! I am not sorry for any of the insanity you are about to witness!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy was so relieved when Black Hat reappeared with Cuphead, Boris--and surprisingly--Cala with a pair of gams! He took note of that odd fact but focused on Boris first. The pup was fluffed. “Boris! Are you okay? What did she do to you? What happened to your fur?” He hugged the pup in a tight embrace before stepping back.

Boris pouted underneath the fluffy puff on his head. “I was asleep. Cup was able to wake me up, but my fur did this.” He sniffed.

“Hey, it’s fine!” Bendy said.

“It’s ridiculous!” Boris exclaimed.

“Don’t worry Boris. I have a brush right here, and if we need to trim it, I have that covered too.” Felix came up beside Bendy. He ruffled the wolf’s head. “We’re so glad you’re alright!”

Boris’ tail wagged. “How did you find us?”

“There was a huge spike of magic in the woods. We sent Mr. Hat there to check it out,” Alice explained with a smile. “Has there been any other altering magical effects? I might be able to help.”

“You should have seen the rose bush that grew out of Cup’s head.” Cala giggled.

“A what?” Bendy snickered.
“Leave it!” Cup snapped, glaring at the mermaid and then Bendy. A bush? Of roses? He would have paid to see it!

“I’m so glad you two are alright!” Mugs hugged both Cala and Cup. “I was so worried!”

“We’re fine! It’s good to see that you and Felix got out of the fire.” Cup smiled. Mugs nodded, the relief coming off of him in waves.

“And Cala! You have legs!” Mugs exclaimed, turning to her.

Cala blushed. “I said I’d follow you.” She shifted a large metal box in her arms.

Mugs dropped his head. “Sorry I lost your pearl.”

Cala shook her head and rest a hand on his arm. “No, it’s okay. Cup saved me. Everything turned out alright,” she said, smiling at him warmly. Mugs smiled. Oooooh, they were so head over heels.

“Do you need any help with that box?” Mugs asked.

“Oh, yes please! I think she locked all my things in it.” Cala offered it to him eagerly, almost shoving it into him.

“No problem! I’m a great locksmith.” Cup gave her a prideful half smile. Bendy sighed as another wave of relief went through him. Everyone was here and okay. Boris was fine. Cuphead was fine. Thank the stars.

Bendy regretted the thought instantly as a grotesque snap echoed in the room, and suddenly Bendy was on the ground, clutching his leg with a shriek. What the hell had happened! What the hell!

He looked at the odd angle of his foot. Oh stars! His stomach turned. His foot wasn’t supposed to face that way.

“BENDY!” came from several people. Boris was next to him, Felix on the other side. Cup and Mugs stared aghast. Cala gasped.

“What happened!” Alice demanded. She pushed Felix aside and surveyed Bendy’s broken leg.

“I-I don’t--” Bendy was cut off as his other leg snapped loudly, and he shrieked again.

“Don’t let him flail!” Felix ordered and grabbed one of his shoulders. Boris sobbed but grabbed the other.

“What is this?” Hat asked in mild interest. Xedo was shaking his head. Bendy gasped for air as he felt ghostly pressure on his arm. That was it!

“The doll! IT’S THE DO-AH!” He screamed as his upper arm twisted. Boris flinched but held tight to Bendy’s shoulder.

“That cussing little scumbag!” Cup hissed angrily.

“Oh no!” Xedo gasped in horror.

“What doll?” Hat asked with a hint more interest.

“None of your business!” Cup snapped at him.
Black Hat frowned with a bored glance at the brothers. He then looked at Bendy.

Bendy grit his teeth, tears stinging his eyes as his limbs burned with pain.

“Hang on, Bendy!” Felix said at him tensely. They both knew what was coming. The crack of his other arm followed, Bendy did his best to swallow his shriek. The bone pressed against the skin, threatening to pierce through. Bendy thought he was going to be sick.

“What the hell is she going to do next! She got all his limbs!” Cup growled. “Can’t anyone here do anything?” He looked at Alice.

She shook her head. “I’m afraid to use my magic on him! He’s a demon! I don’t know how he will react! Besides my healing magic is--” She choked and sobbed. “I don’t know what to do!” Alice fretted apologetically.

Bendy groaned. This was moonrocks. If this ended up being the way he died, he would be so disappointed. Killed by a possessed college girl playing with a cussing doll. What a way to go.

At least it wasn’t the suffocating burning. He just focused on breathing slowly as the people around him scrambled to do something. Then he couldn’t breathe. He choked and inhaled, but no relief of oxygen came. He coughed. Nothing. He tried to breathe again, nothing! W-was he drowning! His skin felt cool. Had she stuck it underwater? What in the hell! He grabbed Boris’ arm, ignoring the screaming pain in his own arm as the panic of suffocation settled over him like a death shroud.

“Bendy, wha-- Bendy breathe!” Boris’ eyes widened. Oh stars. No one was going to be able to do anything, were they? Of course not. They’d all have to watch as he was drowned in open air!

“Bendy! What now!” Felix demanded, worry in his eyes.

“I-I don’t know!” Boris sobbed.

“He looks like he’s suffocating!” Mugs shouted. Now Cala was sobbing with Alice.

Suddenly Bendy gasped as oxygen rushed into his burning lungs. He coughed violently. “Be-Ben-Bendy!” Boris dropped his head, sobbing. Bendy’s heart twisted at the sight. He was so calm during the attacks but now that calm was replaced with fear and panic. It hurt to see his brother so stricken with fear for him.

“What was that Bendy?” Felix leaned closer.
“Fire. Doll’s near a fire,” he choked. Felix’ eyes widened.

“Oh stars, no,” Felix whispered. He was shaking, his face was pale. He lifted his head and called back. “Have you found her yet!”

“YES! We have her!” Alice shouted.

Bendy heard a rumbling sound. At first, it was distant, but then it grew louder and became deafening. The earth rippled like it was a wave, toppling trees as it came towards them.

“What cussing now!” Cup shouted as everyone fought to keep their balance. Cala clung to Mugs as they swayed. Hat just looked annoyed. His frown was sinking further and further into a scowl.

In the distance, Bendy saw a portion of land raise up like it had been pinched to bulge from the earth. The buildings were all mostly still there as the earth curved upwards until the buildings jutted out to the side, horizontal from the vertical landscape; other bits of land in the city started to turn.

Then, the earth beneath them started to lift and tilt too.

Everyone fought to stay up and failed. Bendy grit his teeth as his broken limbs shifted from all the shaking. The heat was growing unbearably hot, but not so much that he would scream. Boris threw himself over Bendy. Felix held both of them as still as he could.

But the ground continued to tilt.

Black Hat growled. His eye went black, his slitted iris glowing red. “I’ve had enough!” He stomped his foot, and the floor suddenly stopped moving. The ground in the surrounding areas continued to turn around them, but everyone within a circumference of Hat was in a calm. The ground around them turned vertical as they stood on a open ledge. They were lifted into the air.

When it all stopped, the city was a jagged landscape, sticking out in odd places like a crooked set of teeth. Some buildings stuck out to the side, others stood at the top of the plateau. A few buildings were even upside down.

But the magic in the air wasn’t finished yet. In the distance, dark clouds rolled in like waves of the deep sea, covering the city in black. Bright bursts of gold light lit up the dark sky, and things were being summoned. Bendy thought he saw in one flash the outline of something large with several long, thin legs.

Black Hat growled. “Chaos, discord, madness, and power and all of it from a puny mortal girl! I think not! Not even a proper villain! No! And to have one of my own withering in pain from that simple foolish puppet of a fleshbag! No more! This stops here!” He walked to Bendy. The air was freezing. The burning heat and freezing cold gave him a confusing sensation.

“What are you doing?” Felix demanded.

“Move. You wanted my help? You have it! That little weasel is done!” Black Hat waved his hand. Shadows pulled Boris and Felix from him. They both let out sounds of shock and protest.

“Hey! What’re ya gonna do to him!” Mugs demanded.

“Sit up! Stop humiliating your race!” Black Hat nudged his side with a polished shoe.

Bendy grunted. “I don’t know your race.”
Black scoffed. “Come now. Even most budlings know how to against their forms. Fix your limbs and come.”

“What the hell are you talking about!” Bendy barked angrily. He was in too much pain to care about cryptic mumbo-jumbo.

“All demons know that their forms are fluid!” Hat snapped back. “As long as one has the energy to sustain it, a demon can be whatever they wish to be. Now sit up!” Hat threw his hand out agitatedly.

“Well, I cussing can’t!” Bendy roared back, the heat causing him to sweat and his skin to tingle uncomfortably. “You said help. Then cussing help, ya pile of stardust!”

Hat sneered. He waved his hand, and suddenly the pain of his limbs were gone. The unbearable heat was suddenly comfortable. Bendy blinked and sat up slowly. He looked at his gloved hands and then up at Hat.

“What did you do?” Bendy asked.

“Loaned you my power. It’s pathetic! You’re a demon! You should be mostly fireproof too! What kind of demon isn’t? You don’t look like you’re from the sea or a river! You can mend and shift your body to several forms. You’re not a budling anymore! You’re a fledgling! Your powers should have awakened, so cussing us them!” Black Hat hissed in annoyance and leaned over Bendy.

Bendy shrunk down a little. Wh-what the cuss? What did he do? He didn’t know anything about being a demon. How could this schmuck just expect him to know? How messed up was that? Bendy lifted himself up and stood. “Go jump a cliff! I have no clue how to use them, and I never needed to before! You wanna go at someone? Take it up with someone else that cares!”

Black glared but then laughed. “You have potential.”

“Bendy! You’re okay! Thank the stars!” Boris was almost wringing his neck in his tight hug.

“I’m okay,” Bendy promised hoarsely. “I’m okay Boris.” Bendy returned the hug a little more gently.

Felix joined the hug. “Thank heaven.” He sighed. Alice was next, sobbing her relief.

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry I’m so useless!” she wept. Bendy’s eyes widened.

“Alice, what do you mean? You aren’t useless! Calm down. I’m fine now!” Bendy gingerly placed a hand on her shoulder. She threw her arms around him.

“What good am I if I can’t even heal my friend!” she continued remorsefully.

Bendy stiffened before he hugged her back, her warmth joining the ghostly heat from the doll. The scent of rain and greenery coming from her gave him a hint of peace. “That’s not your job Alice! You always give it your all. You do help.”

“Enough of this! We need to stop that little weasel,” Hat cut in. He seemed disturbed for some reason. He waved at them to move.

“Y-yes.” Alice wiped at her eyes.

“Let’s go before Bendy gets attacked again or that,” Cup pointed to the storm and the center of the now twisted town, “gets worse.”
“Agreed.” Black sneered. He snapped his fingers. The ledge they were on sprouted wings and the rocks shook and roared.

“Woah!” Mugs wobbled with Cala as the rocks shifted. Whatever Hat did seem to change the ledge into some kind of flying monster, because next thing Bendy knew they were all soring toward the center of town.

It got harder to see the farther into the city they got. The clouds above them stopped any ray of light, and underneath them, any electric lights were going out quickly. All that was left were the distant specks of activated runes and the flashes of more summoning circles.

The giant, long-legged creature he had seen before came into clearer view. It was an enormous spider, spinning a web between two buildings. Suddenly he heard howling from down below. Other voices joined in, moving together underneath them. He peered down into the darkness to see if he could spot what was making the awful sound. There was a group of growling, furred figures racing down the street, chasing a group of wailing pedestrians. Werewolves. Boris covered his ears with his hands and whimpered. Good heavens. Bendy gulped.

Several figures moving in fast formation whooshed by them on brooms. Bendy heard cackling and more magic sparked into the air. A cat clinging to the edge of an open window was suddenly turned into a bat.


“Be careful,” Felix warned. His hand inched toward his bag slowly.

One witch turned. She raised a skeletal hand, her long pointed nose high in the air as she pointed at them. She cackled and the other witches turned toward them too.

“Witch! Think carefully before you cast your spell,” Hat hissed threateningly. His eye changed to the black and red that easily sent a chill over Bendy’s skin.

The witches stopped, their leader seeming to really see him for the first time. Her hand faltered. Just then there was a scream from one of the buildings. She turned and the group trailed after her, more screams followed from a horizontal building to their right.

“This is terrible!” Alice whispered hoarsely as she looked from one side of the city to the other. “Can’t we do anything?”

Only silence and the distant screams and roars answered her.

They continued along. One building had been entirely engulfed by sand that swirled in the formation of a giant mummy. Bendy had to hold his breath as they passed, because the air was filled with rot so bad that it made him gag. Another had so many skeletons clambering around chasing people that they kept falling off. The sound of rattling bones clattered through the air.

That’s when Bendy saw a tall, skeletal figure with a pumpkin on his head walking up the side of one of the horizontal buildings. Three grown men chased him.

He burst into flames, cackling as he turned. It was unsurprising that the men turned and fled, the flaming one now chasing them. Bendy had never heard such screams. He glanced at the horror stricken expressions of his companions.

“Do you think the house is okay?” Xedo asked, staring out into the horror.
“The house? This whole place is a nightmare hellscapе!” Cup waved his hand out. A bat with the body of a baby carried off a car of screaming people past them.

“Now, now, Cuphead,” Hat tsked gently. “You know hell is worse.”

Bendy gave Cup a baffled look. Cup pointedly looked away from everyone to glare needles at the back of Black Hat’s head. There was a story, a story Bendy wasn’t sure he wanted to ask about.

A dark feeling entered Bendy, and his eyes turned to a small speck on the ground near them. A demon? Here? Now? That was a demon, right? Black Hat perked up. He flicked his wrist, and the stone beast tilted down toward the ground in an easy descent. The closer they got to the ground, the louder the screams became. Felix winced, Alice was covering her eyes and humming to herself. Boris leaned into her comfortingly, still covering his own ears. Xedo stood close to them as well.

The demon was a small, skinny character who hunched over as he watched a clown on a unicycle with no face and a monster with a long snout and snakes for fingers use axes to chop down the door of someone’s first floor apartment.

He turned as they approached, showing horns; a pointed tail; a long, hooked nose; and a small goatee. He wore a long black cloak.

The great stone beast landed in front of him. Black Hat strolled down the creature’s head. Bendy glanced back to see his friends frozen and staring around themselves. He could practically smell their fear. Cup and Mugs had their hands up and ready with shots on either side of the group. Felix was tense, next to the Alice cluster. The space between him and Xedo hinted that Mickey was still there too.

Well, Bendy wasn’t just going to let Hat do as he pleased. If everyone was scared stiff, then he’d go. Bendy followed him down the beast’s head.

“Bendy.” Boris weakly reached for him.

“It’s okay Boris. I’ll be right back,” Bendy promised. The wolf stood there reluctantly. The stone beast lowered its head, and Hat stepped down to walk up to the other demon guy. At least, Bendy thought he was a demon. He had the spiked tail at least...and that darkness Bendy was starting to recognize as a demon’s.

“Good afternoon, sir! How is your frightening?” Hat smiled pleasantly to the demon.

The demon straightened, leering at both of them. “Awful. Just awful.” He grinned. “Two Halloweens in one year, twice the scare.” Halloweens? Did he just say Halloweens!

Hat grinned a fanged grin. “How frightful! I’ll let you get back to it. Just one question, have you seen a girl on a gear? She’s been throwing around some rather bothersome spells, and it’s just ruining the fun.” Hat gestured in a what-can-you-do manner.

The demon cackled. “The angry little summoner?”

“Sounds about right.” Hat rested a hand on his chin. “You know where she is?”

The demon raised a thin, boney arm, finger pointing down the street. “Follow the hungry vines.”

Hat’s grin grew frighteningly large. “Thank you. Happy scaring.” He made to turn away, but the other lifted a hand to stop him.
The demon glanced back at Bendy and the others. “What are those? Do you and the fledgling need help?” he said, sounding excited. “They don’t smell like they’ve had enough scare yet.” His tiny pupils dilated more, and he leered at the group.

Hat raised an eyebrow and glanced back, like he was considering. Bendy growled at him threateningly. If Hat thought for one second he was gonna pull anything on the others…

Hat turned to look down at Bendy with an annoyed frown. He reached up and adjusted his monocle. “No, not this time. Thank you for the offer.”

“What the hell is a fledgling!” Bendy barked. He was getting annoyed being called that all the time. Hat rolled his visible eye. He sighed exasperatedly.

“Later,” Hat said dismissively.

“If ya aren’t gonna explain it, then stop calling me that!” Bendy grunted.

The other demon blinked his round eyes in surprise. “What are you looking at?” Bendy retorted.

The other demon turned to Hat, cackling a little. “Not yours, I presume?”

Hat shook his head laughing. “Not in a millenia!” He scoffed good naturedly. Bendy scowled.

“Oh? Did you get on the Devil’s bad side?” He gave Bendy a curious look. “I thought I knew all the demons topside.” Devil? As in the Devil? Wasn’t he just a myth? The demon continued to murmur. “And he’s a fledgling too.” His eyes flicked to Hat, this time with a question he obviously expected Hat to know without having to say anything.

Hat shrugged. “He wandered his way into my territory. Claims he’s never been to hell.” He turned his always-somewhat-threatening smirk on Bendy. Bendy felt a warning flag raise in the back of his head. He looked from one demon to the other. He knew he was no match for Hat. Two? He didn’t have a prayer if this turned into something ugly. “If he is on punishment, I haven’t seen horn or tail of any other demon watching over him.”

Hat shrugged. “He wandered his way into my territory. Claims he’s never been to hell.” He turned his always-somewhat-threatening smirk on Bendy. Bendy felt a warning flag raise in the back of his head. He looked from one demon to the other. He knew he was no match for Hat. Two? He didn’t have a prayer if this turned into something ugly. “If he is on punishment, I haven’t seen horn or tail of any other demon watching over him.”

Have you reported this? the other demon hissed, clearly looking agitated now.

Hat turned back to the other. “I’ve been a bit busy. Besides, if I lay claim, it’s not against any laws right? Besides.” He waved a hand at Bendy almost dismissively. He stepped up to the other demon’s side and gestured at the youth like he was on display. “He doesn’t kill, he doesn’t fight, he can’t even shapeshift! He is so small and undertrained! He can hardly be called a demon. Taking him down to Hell like this,” Hat sighed and looked to the other sadly, “why, he wouldn’t last five minutes.”

The other demon’s pointed head turned towards Bendy. He gave Bendy a wide eyed stare, as if Bendy had two heads. “I ain’t deaf ya mook,” he growled, but really he didn’t know what he should say. No thanks? Go jump a cliff? And report him? To cussing who?

That made the demon blink and then give a quiet cackle. He continued talking to Hat as if Bendy hadn’t spoken. “Do you lay claim to him?” He sneered. “Because if you don’t, he’ll probably skin you both alive if he finds out.” He gave Bendy a slightly grossed out look. He cleared his throat. “Even if he’s practically a human…” The demon shuddered. Excuse him! Bendy lifted his chin. He’d take that as a cussing compliment, thanks! “He’s a fledgling. I had to eat the last fledgling that lost control on my watch. Tasted nasty.” Bendy’s eyes widened. H-he what? Eat! Demons eat each other! Nope! Nope! He was done with this species! If he had to change his name to cussing Bob and move to the most boring town in the country, he would! He wanted off the psycho train now.
“Oh, he has promise.” Hat narrowed his visible eye. “I don’t think I’ll have to worry about that. He shows amazing signs of self control. If his powers prove strong, he could be one of the greats in my opinion.” Hat grinned. Great what? He didn’t like the look in Hat’s eye. Was this guy gonna try to eat him later? Oh stars, what had he gotten into now! He should have stayed on the cussing rock!

That seemed to settle the demon. His shoulders lowered, although one of his long, pointy fingers went up to his goatee. He grinned at Hat; a long, pronged tongue coming out to lick his lips. “Well, if you say so. I’ll have to come back and visit the carnage he brings later.” His eyes flickered back to the apartment where the other two monsters were working at the door. "But the smell of fear is so tasty that I must be going soon.” He looked hungrily at the apartment door, which was half demolished. The snake man was reaching his hand inside, grasping at something. Bendy twitched to stop it. But if he did, it would turn into a fight. They didn’t have time for that.

Instead, he asked. “The smell of fear?”

The other demon paused, his expression incredulous. He glanced at Hat. “Doesn’t even know the smell of fear? It’s the milk of babes.” He shouldn’t have asked.

Hat chuckled. “See what I mean? But watch how quick he is.” Hat turned to him, his eye sparking with amusement. Bendy scowled at him. This schmuck kept acting like Bendy couldn’t hear him! Bendy crossed his arms. “Here fledgling. Let me point out something for you.” Hat leaned down and point back at the group. They stood in a circle, facing out to the city of nightmares. The stone beast, which looked like something roughly between a lion and dragon, sat crouched and unmoving. “Can you smell that tang of fear from your pets?”

Bendy gave him a baffled look. The other demon seemed to get it though. “Or,” the other demon pointed at the house, “in there? It’s stronger.” The clown and snake man had broken through the door. More screams rang through the air. Bendy grimaced. He turned and could smell...something. It was sweet and fruity. How...disturbing.

“Fruit?” Bendy guessed weakly, watching the open doorway warily. Hat and the other demon exchanged a look and chuckled.

The stranger spoke up again. “Close. That’s fear.”

“How does it make you feel?” Hat prompted. “Excited? Hungry?”

Creeped out! Bendy shook his head, pulling back his lip. “Nothing. We’re wasting time!” This was messed up! What the hell!

Hat tilted his head. “Really? Nothing?” Bendy shrunk under that fanged smile. “You don’t feel any urge to rush in and attack? Any desire to hunt at all?” Bendy shook his head quickly. “But...it does smell good, right?” The grinned softened to something closer to pleasant. Should he answer that honestly? He shrugged instead, feeling a bit...disgusted with himself. Hat smirked and turned to the other. “Do you see what I mean? Even a budling would hunt down fear. He’s an interesting case.”

The other devil stroked his chin. “Maybe his mother dropped him as a child. Even talking about this makes me hungry. Eating the fear is tasty, but it’s nothing like...the full course.” Fu-full course? Bendy wasn’t dumb enough to ask this time. But now they ate fear! What was with these guys!

The pointy nosed demon continued to chuckle. “Maybe I’ll get some contracts tonight,” he mused cheerfully. He glanced at Hat. “Are you sure you don’t want to join? Show the fledgling what a true demon looks like?”
Hat sighed remorsefully. “Sadly, we are on a schedule. Maybe next time, and who knows! We could be in your neck of the woods someday. Might drop by just so he can have a few good examples of our kind on the Surface.”

That seemed to make the demon happy. His hand dropped. He grinned, showing shark teeth much like Hat’s. “Oh, if you drop by, you’ll get far more than just a few good examples of a nice scare. Jack’s planning something special for next year.” They two laughed like old friends. Bendy was disturbed, disgusted, insulted, annoyed, and a few other negative emotions on top of that.

“Oooh! Jack always does put on the most frightful show! I am excited to see what he has in store. By the way,” Hat raised a hand to his chin. His smile falling. “Have you seen Boogie around? He was gambling at my casino and didn’t pay his bar tab.”

The demon laughed. “You know Boogie. He likes the kids to find the nice ripe ones and bring them to him. I haven’t seen him since the fun started. But I’m sure if you catch one of his kiddies, you could squeeze some information from them.”

Hat nodded. “Thank you and good scaring. We will be seeing you again. Black Hat Casino’s doors are always open for a fellow demon, if you are ever in city again.”

The beak-nosed demon raised a brow in surprise. “Anything for a pair of fellow demons. I’ll be sure to take you up on that offer at the right time.” He chuckled as he glanced at Bendy one last time and turned, his hooves clopping on the ground as he entered the house.

“Shouldn’t we do something about that?” Bendy asked, eyeing the now silent home.

“You’re the one that insists that we don’t have time for any fun,” Black Hat said in a snippy tone.

“I meant helping the people they’re attacking!” Bendy barked with a glare. This guy was sick! They were both sick! Sick disgusting monsters!

“Isn’t that what we’re doing, going after the girl? Besides, they’re having fun. Leave them to it. Everything will be back to boring once we get the little summoner girl,” Hat grumbled as he stepped back on the beast’s head. Bendy sneered. He didn’t like this creep at all. Nope. Hat was on his never-want-to-see-again list. Once this business was done and their deal was over, Bendy was washing his hands of schmuck! Forever!

“Bendy!” Boris cried out in relief. “You’re okay!” He hugged the demon. Hat rolled his eye and waved his hand. The beast lifted its wings, and they were flying again, but lower now. Bendy hugged the wolf back. He blocked the sweet smell, not wanting to think about it.

As they moved out of sight of the place, Bendy saw the three monsters drag several limp figures from the house. Would they really be able to fix this? Was that guy gonna eat them?

Lower to the ground, they saw the vines. They were growing out farther into the city. Felix muttered ‘choker’ when they saw them. Unfortunately, they were also able to see more: the vines grasped at anything that moved, encasing the toons in green and dragging them in the direction the stone beast was taking Bendy and his group; a cloaked figure hunched over the neck of an unconscious victim, blood streaming from his mouth; a man shaped like a cone with two faces watched three small children in masks. At first, Bendy was afraid for the children, but then the three of them dragged a screaming pigeon to a cage resting inside a bathtub with feet. It started to walk. Hat paused the beast near them, but kept them in the air.

“Children!” Hat called down to them. “Where is Oogie-Boogie?” The group stared at him in shock.
Cup scowled. “Really? Now Hat?” Hat lifted a hand to shush him.

The small girl giggled, her witch hat bobbing. “Is that you, Mr. Hat?” She grabbed a short, round headed boy next to her in mock fear.

“I have no time for your games, Shock. Where is Boogie?” Hat sneered.

The taller boy exchanged a glance with his sister. “Where is the Boogy man ever? He’s under the bed, under the bed, under the bed!” All three burst into giggles together.

Suddenly Hat was gone. Bendy looked around. Wait... he turned to the kids. A shadow split right behind them, and Hat was suddenly looming over them, fangs bared and eye and monocle red. “I won’t ask again,” he growled. The three kids gasped, huddling together suddenly. The cone man fretted, but Bendy couldn’t hear him.

Something snapped shut loudly. Hat jumped back as a bear trap went off in his face. The three of them scattered in all directions, laughing wildly. They disappeared in a flash.

Hat roared.

“Oh knock it off Hat! We gotta go!” Mugs called down to him. “Hunt them down later!” Alice, Boris, Felix, and Xedo all looked affronted.

“No, those are hell spawn that are the definition of evil,” Cup said. “Trust us. You ever see them, run,” he said completely serious. Bendy blinked owlishly. He shared a concerned look with Boris. All he could do was shrug.

The bathtub, meanwhile, had stalled in the middle of the road, as if uncertain what to do without direction. The pigeon from before and five other toons were squished inside the cage. A cat made pleading eyes at the group, gripping the bars. Felix shifted as if he was going to do something. Bendy lifted an arm to stop him. He didn’t even realize he had done it until Felix gave him an imploring look.

“We can’t attract attention to us. If we start fighting here, we’ll never get to Holly. If we stop her, we’ll stop all of this,” Bendy explained with a dry throat. Felix dropped his head in grim resignation.

“Cussing toss that to the stardust.” Cup stepped up next to them. He lifted a glowing finger.

“Cup?” Bendy questioned.

“Hat’s already made a scene,” he fired. “Might as well have some sorta revenge, right?” His light blue bullet nailed the tub and cage, cracking them. The toons spilled out, scrambling to escape. Hat reappeared on the dragon thing, and they were off again.

Cala watched with wide eyes, Mugs standing grimly by her side. Cup stood a little away from them. Bendy slipped next to him. “You okay?”

“No,” Cup growled. “Look at this mess.” He gestured out. “This is from just one of the parts, and we want to get five? I think we’re the truly insane ones here.” Bendy sighed. He couldn’t really argue that. Give it to Cup to get right to the heart of the matter. “And you are starting to sweat again. It getting hot over there?”

Bendy blinked. Now that Cup mentioned it, he was feeling a bit hot. He brushed his hand across his
forehead. “Maybe a little,” Bendy admitted reluctantly.

“What’re we gonna do if the other parts end up bein’ this problematic?” Cup asked stuffing his hands in his pants pockets.

“I have no clue.” Bendy sighed exhaustedly. It wasn’t like he wanted to do all this! He just had to!

“Swell,” Cup snarked. “At least it’s never boring.”

“Bendy?” Felix asked. They turned to the cat. “Any guess on how close we are?” Bendy shook his head. Felix frowned but nodded.

Their heads all turned as a building came into sight, a building covered in thick, moving vines coming from the top.

“How do we get in?” Felix asked. The answer quickly revealed itself as they neared the top of the building. A chunk of the building had been ripped out of the center...all the way to the bottom floor. From the bottom floor, Bendy saw a plant with an enormous mouth and razor-sharp teeth gaping towards the sky. It was almost as big as the building it rested in. Vines slithered towards it’s center. Several screaming toons were being dragged up the building and towards the giant mouth.

“Alice,” Hat called.

“Yes.” She stepped up beside him. “I’m ready.” She looked pale but determined. “Be ready to catch people.” Bendy winced as he leg started to sting. Looked like the doll was close to the fire, wherever it was. Alice lifted a hand. She made two gestures with her hand and gold runes appeared on either side of the plant. Ten tree thick vines thrashed, slashing at them amidst literally thousands of other vines. An elephant wrapped in vines slammed into Felix and Xedo, knocking them both clean off.

“Felix! Xedo!” Boris cried out. Bendy clung to his brother to keep him on. He lost sight of the cat and fox. More vines reached for the flying stone creature they rested upon, grasping its legs.

The golden light from the symbols doubled in strength. The thick vines dried up, creaking as they stiffened and snapped. Hat lifted a hand, and black shadows slashed the vines that got too close to the beast. Bendy gulped. They seemed so calm about it, like it was just another day, not a life and death fight with a killer plant. Alice moved her hand, the runes moved closer to the plant's mouth. It withered and dried in the intense light. Several toons screamed as the plant withered. They started to fall. A young toon girl managed to grasp the edge of a window and hung there by her arms. Cup jumped off the dragon and onto the slowing vines to reach her. He managed to reach her just as her fingers slipped, and she dropped. He caught her and started to head down. She stared at him with wide eyes, a blush spreading across her face. Several vines reached out for Cup and the girl, as if seeking vengeance. She cried out in alarm.

Mugs lit his finger and fired shots at the vines as Cup moved as quickly as he could to the ground. When they reached the street, Cup let the girl down. She hesitated and then said something, leaning up to peck him on the cheek before running away. Cup scratched the back of his head and shrugged. Mugs chuckled.

“Heads up! There’s more!” Bendy said, watching an elderly man slowly slip away from the drying vine’s grasp. Bendy hopped off and headed toward him. The vines were quickly becoming brittle. Bendy could break them with his hands if he wanted. His leg was getting itchy with pain. He almost reached the old man when the vine completely crumbled. Bendy barely managed to grab the back of the guy’s shirt and latch a nearby flag pole with his arm.
The man looked up, and his eyes widened in terror. “Oh no! Please! Just let the plant take me!”

Bendy scowled. “Calm down, ol’ man. I’m getting you to the ground.” He slid slowly down, hand hot with friction. When they got to the bottom, the old man scrambled away, his eyes wide with disbelief.

“You’re welcome!” Bendy called after him. Cup came up to his side laughing.

“What did you do? It’s like he saw death!” Cup laughed.

Bendy shrugged disgruntled. “Shut it! We have more people to save.”

Cup slapped a hand on his shoulder. “Alright hero. Maybe we’ll find you a ‘thank you’ somewhere.”

Several other people fell, but Bendy and Cup managed to catch them as they dropped. A shaken and very confused goat even managed to mutter a hurried ‘thank you’ to Bendy before hopping away madly. It seemed that they were nearing the end of the vine’s fight when they saw the elephant from before dragged over the edge of the top of the building by a vine and disappear.

“Cup, did that elephant just get...animal nabbed?” Bendy asked.

Cup lifted his head and looked at the building. “We are seriously saving an elephant?”

Bendy shrugged and gestured for him to go.”You would if it were a kitten.” Cup rolled his eyes heavenward before taking a deep breath and heading toward the building. Bendy smirked. He didn’t even deny it.

Less and less vines were flailing around in the air, clearing away slowly. When they moved inside the building, they saw the remnants of an office. Desks, chairs, and broken glass were scattered everywhere. There was a trumpet of alarm. The elephant was being dragged towards the weak, gnashing mouth of the plant.

“Seriously? Ya dying and ya still wanna eat it?” Cup raised a disgusted brow and lifted a blue glowing finger. “Well, whatever, you freaky plant.” The vine was suddenly cut. The plant shivered, shaking it’s leaves. Felix stood with a large sword in hand.

“Mr. Felix!” Bendy cheered. The cat turned and smiled. Cup’s finger wilted a touch.

“Cussing show off,” he muttered with a frown.

“No, that’s you. Felix is just that good.” Bendy grinned.


“Bendy! Cuphead! Glad you both are okay!” Felix called to them. He was trying to calm the animal, who was confused and scared.

The elephant had swept Felix into a desperate, bone crushing hug. “Thank you! Thank-you-thank-you-thank-you. Thank you so much! I’ll never eat another salad in my life!” he sniffled, his large trunk wiping at his eyes.

“You’re welcome,” Felix wheezed.

“Great, but you best get out of here. It’s still dangerous,” Bendy said, tossing a thumb over his shoulder toward the exit, his other hand on his hip.
The elephant let go of Felix, and the cat stumbled back weakly. “You’re right. Thank you big cat, small cat, and cup person?” He seemed to confuse himself looking at Cuphead, then he rushed by them and back out the building door.

“Aww look.” Cup bumped his shoulder. “A real big thank you there.” Bendy rolled his eyes and turned back to the plant.

“Small! He called me small!” Bendy growled.

“To be fair, everyone is small ta him. He’s an elephant.” Cup snickered. “Besides, there are worse.”

“Don’t you start Cup!” Bendy pointed at him warningly.

In the moments they had spoken to the elephant, the plant had withered the rest of the way. The greyness of death spread down its vines into the city. One side of the room looked like it had been a lobby, the other visible side of the bottom floor looked like it had been a conference room. There was a long table crushed up against the wall and covered in vines.

Bendy turned to Felix. “Glad we found you. Have you seen the others?”

The cat shook his head. “I lost Xedo outside of the building. I haven’t seen anyone else from our group. I figured the best place for me to help was in here in case it got...close.”

Bendy nodded. That was his hero alright! Running toward a killer plant to save others! Felix tucked the long sword back into his bag.

“So that only leaves us with one question. Which way?” Cup asked as he looked around the remains of the building. Dead vines obscured half the view of the destroyed rooms.

The three of them moved around, looking. Bendy took a step to the side when a light exploded beneath his feet. Six sets of runes lit up in a circle around him. A white horn, followed by a glittering mane, rose from each circle, and last of all, sharp pawing hooves.

At first the unicorns seemed confused, but then all six heads turned towards Bendy. “Uum, hi?” Because what is one supposed to say when unicorns suddenly appeared out of the ground?

One of the creatures pawed at the ground. It lowered its horn and charged, magic sparking from its horn at him. Bendy let out a little less than manly cry and dove to the side of the charging beast. “Stars above!” However, that didn’t help much as three more converged on him, tightening their circle so he couldn’t escape. “Look! I’m sorry I crashed your horse party, but I haven’t done anything to any of you! What’s with the attack!”

“They’re unicorns Bendy! Creatures of light! They attack any creature of darkness that approaches,” Felix called to him, digging in his bag.

“Oh c’mon!” Bendy groaned as a second one charged him. Then one caught him close, cutting into his side with its spear-like horn. Bendy hissed. It burned! There seemed to be another horn every direction he turned.

“Bendy!” Felix called out. He pulled out a lasso and twirled it over his head.

A large, scaley, fanged head darted out of the darkness, biting into Felix’s side and yanking him back. The cat cried out.

“Felix!” Bendy shouted in horrified shock. What the hell was that! It just got Felix! Cup looked
between Bendy and the darkness that had swallowed the creature and adventurer. “Save Felix! I’m fine!” He shouted just as another horn grazed his back.

A inhuman shriek filled the room. Out of nowhere, a huge feathered lion dived past him, plucking Cup off the ground before he could even make the decision and shooting back into the air.

“Cuphead!” Bendy lifted a hand toward his friend before he was gone from sight too. A horn stabbed him through the shoulder. “Agh! Knock it off!” Bendy kicked at it violently. The unicorn danced back warily as more approached him from other sides. This was bad. What was he supposed to do? They were too fast for his reach and deceptively nimble for their size. He was already starting to feel like a pin cushion, and his leg was starting to really hurt from the not-so-ghost-pain of the doll slowly burning. Boris would be mad, but it was time to use his powers. He reached for the shadows around him. They withered in excitement from the violence in the city.

Two of the unicorns reacted immediately, horns slashing at the shadows before he could even move them far. The light at the tip of their horns cut through the darkness like a knife. Oh come on! “Are you kidding me! Who cuts through shadow! Who cussing does that!” Bendy exclaimed. He threw more shadows at them, but the same thing happened. “Look! I don’t have time for you hotheads! I have to go help my friends!” The unicorns didn’t seem to hear him as they pressed closer and closer. In another moment, he would have no room at all, and it would be over.

“Back off!” Bendy growled. His stomach twisted. This was one hell of a way to go. Speared by a five year old’s dream pet! A unicorn huffed, but they held steady, moving forward with a scary determination in their eyes. Pain laced up his spine. For a second, he thought it was from a horn piercing his back, but then the familiar and dreaded burn bloomed in his chest and coiled his stomach. “Oh for the love of--Now! This has to happen now?” Bendy mumbled as he coughed into his hand and drops of ink splattered from his mouth. The pain doubled, and Bendy found himself on his knees, coughing and gagging. Hoofs stomped around him nervously. The burning grew and grew, passing the burn on his leg by far.

His stomach lurched, and he threw up a gush of ink on the floor. No! Not now! Not again! Why did this happen when everyone was in danger! He reached for his wrist, the band around it lit up with the Joy rune Holly had made him. His mind cleared enough for him to think past the waves of crippling pain that pulsed with every heartbeat. He looked up at the circle of death around him. These things were between him and his friends, his brother, and the girl they were trying to save! Damnit! Another gush of ink spilled from his mouth. Ink dripped down his face.

He couldn’t die here! He had to move! He had to get up! A thought came through his panicked mind. It...was a terrible, horrifying idea, but he didn’t have another choice. He hesitantly reached for the shadows again. But instead of pushing them out to the closing in unicorns, he pulled them in. He focused on the burning, the pain, and forcing his shadows to hold it down, to smother it, to get him on his feet. He growled.

He had to get up. He had to save everyone. He coughed again, and his mind swirled as his vision darkened. Ah cuss. Was he gonna black out again? He pushed back up on his feet. The heat shifted, pain mixed with power. He roared at the creatures in front of him.

Chapter End Notes

Hello friends! Mercowe here!! We got more pictures! And they are beautiful.
First off, we got a picture from Blookyberry. This is what might have happened if Sammy had walked in on Finley having that attack back when he, Bendy, and Wakko were helping test out the runes.

This next one is another art from fantastickingdomus. Holly in the library with the cog.
Also, because we couldn’t resist and fantastickingdomus graciously gave us permission, Tap and I made this.
Last of all. Here is the tumblr post Tap was referencing earlier.
Heroic Actions

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, today is not for the faint of heart! There is VIOLENCE is the chapter. Please be aware." Mic smirked. "That being said, please enjoy!"

Chapter Notes

Guys! Guys! Oh man! I have something awesome to share! Once you are done here, go over to Inky Extras! If you have any curiosity for angels or Alice's family, head over there when you are done with here. We did a thing! A really cool thing!Thanks Aura Creed! XD

Thank you all for the art and comments! You are all amazing! I am floored with the talent and creativity! You guys are the best! Thank you so much for loving this crazy story!

Oh and one last thing! If any of you ever want to write your own stuff, mirror universe or further expanding the Inky Mystery world, I'd say go for it! You want to do art or a comic or an au of this au, have fun! Just mention me and let me know! I'd love to see it. XD I haven't even shared half the world I have planned for you yet! I'm excited for the future. Thanks for reading again! Have a great day! And remember to check out Inky Extras!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mickey skidded into a wall with a painful thud. He glanced behind him and dove to his right. The slam that hit the wall behind him shook the hall. The giant snake hissed angrily as it missed him. It raised its head, searching for him. Mickey didn’t wait around. It had already proven that it could somehow see him even though he was invisible! This thing had chased him away from everyone else when Hat had landed the stone beast next to the building.

It wasn’t the only monster that had appeared the moment they landed. A giant spider had loomed above them unexpectedly, plucking Boris up with its fangs. Mickey and Mugs had panicked, jumping into action to fight the thing as it moved away. Unfortunately, a three-headed dog had lunged out from a nearby building, catching Mugman midleap. Mickey didn’t have much time to think after that. Alice’s magic had started to glow, but then a summoning circle had blinked to life underneath her. She’d vanished. The snake had appeared. Mickey had darted to the side, fully expecting the thing to slither past him. Instead, it had bitten his arm, and he’d been barely able to get away. And if he’d seen correctly in the half second glance he’d been able to get, a basilisk had gone after Cala. The last he’d seen, only Hat had been left in sight, and he had been surrounded by a group of unicorns. Unicorns!
Mickey had been running for a good ten minutes now, barely dodging the thing and feeling blood run down his arm from the bite. He didn’t even know if it was venomous or not. For all he knew, he was going to drop dead any second now.

He caught sight of a stairwell. Up or down? Up? Down? The mouse grit his teeth. If he was the bad guy, which way would he hide? Up. The ground floor was too easy to reach and with very little defense beyond the walls. Up would buy more time before being found but less to escape. Then again, she could fly and teleport, that might be a moot point. So Mickey ran up for the stairs, two at a time. A moment later, he heard the soft, slick sound of the snake follow after him.

How was he going to escape that thing? Oh heaven help him! When he reached the top of the stairs, he saw that he was in the middle of a hallway that stretched both directions. There were doors every few feet but most had shattered glass and were obviously empty. He didn’t really have time to check anyway, so he ran. Unfortunately, he didn’t get far. Barely a hundred feet around the first corner he took, he had to stumble to a stop as he reached a gaping hole. It was where the building had been hollowed out.

Sunblazing cuss! Mickey—surprisingly—swore silently. The snake hissed behind him. He looked back to see it had slowed down. It eyed him, victory flashing in its slitted pupils. Its head bobbed back and forth as it moved closer and closer to him slowly, giant fanged mouth opening.

Mickey clenched his fist, his other hand over his bleeding wound. Bring it on fang face! He may get eaten, but he wasn’t going to go down nicely!

The snake leaned back, preparing to strike. Suddenly a person leaned out of a doorway. In a blur of motion and blood, the snake shrieked as one of its eyes was pierced with a pen. Xedo rolled out in front of Mickey. He turned in Mickey’s general direction, hands searching. It took a second, but Mickey realized Xedo was looking for him.

Reaching out, Mickey grabbed Xedo’s hand. The fox yanked him back into the room, dodging the thrashing snake. The next second, he pushed a desk across the door, barricading them in.

“Mickey! I’m glad I found you. Holly is on this floor, but I am unsure how to get near her without alarming her,” Xedo said in a single rush of breath. “I can handle this creature. Snakes are easy prey for a fox. Do you think you can get close enough to Holly to save Bendy or grab the cog?”

Mickey grabbed his wrist and drew a ‘y’ on the back of his hand. Xedo nodded in understanding. There was a loud bang on the door. The frame, no the whole wall, shook. Xedo turned to the door. “Good. She’s down the other hall, take a left, third door on your right. She’s facing the door. Be careful. The doll is behind her, and it’s almost fallen into the fire she has tied it over.” He knocked on the door. Another loud bang shook the wall. He ran down the room and knocked on the wall. Surprisingly the next bang was at the knock. “When I leave, count to five, then go.” Mickey watched, stunned, as the fox reporter pulled the desk aside, opened the door, and raced out.

There was a series of crashes, bangs, and hisses that sounded before they receded. When Mickey peered out the door, the hallway was empty. That was one brave fox. Mickey cautiously followed Xedo’s directions. The halls were now cracked, and bits of plaster had fallen everywhere. There were dead vines all over the floor. He turned down the corner, tiptoeing down the hall and counting the doors until he reached the third. Here’s to hoping the angel’s spell worked and the witch couldn’t sense him.

When he peered inside the door to the room, he saw a small office. The room had been wrecked like the rest. The window had been shattered, dead vines trailed through the open window. A cabinet stood open behind her. The doll hung from a bar at the top, swirling a little. Holly sat on the cog on
top of the desk, her deadened black eyes staring right at him. He felt a thrill of fear race up his spine. Adrenaline dripped into his veins.

It took him several seconds to realize that she didn’t see him. She continued to sit there, eyes on the same spot, fiddling with something in her hands. It was a shiny, ornate pocket watch. Then, she flinched and carefully touched her shoulder, wincing again. The mouse narrowed his eyes. This was his chance!

Bendy roared at the unicorns, heat running through his skin. Several balked, neighing and backing away a few steps, but to their credit, none of them ran. They would come at him from behind, and when he turned to lash out at the ones behind him, the others would strike. He felt off, hot and uncomfortable, the pain in his leg had spread. He had grown taller. He could now look over the beasts’ heads to the dead vines and shadows beyond. His gloves had ripped, and his clothes felt a bit too tight. Ink dripped down his limbs and face. He brushed it away from his eyes. The shadows weren’t completely dark anymore. Still, he couldn’t spot Felix or Cup. Somehow, every time his mind started to cloud over it cleared just as quickly.

“Damnit!” he growled. His voice had a strange deep echo. “Back off!” Geez, even his mouth felt weird. His mouth was full of fangs, far more than he was used to. He swiped his long tail around. His spike struck one of the unicorn’s legs, who reared back and whinied. Bendy took a chance and dove under it. The others stomped and pushed to chase him, the rearing beast nearly falling over at the movements of the others. Bendy was able to slip under the back legs before it could land on all fours and trample him. He dove for the shadows and darkness. The unicorns took a moment to straighten themselves out and chase him. Ha! Like they could keep up with him now! He practically flew through the building. He heard the clomping of hoofs behind him.

Suddenly, his leg burst into flames, and Bendy winced. Cuss! The fire spread quickly. Bendy tried to desperately pat it out but to no avail. He cried out in pain as he was completely engulfed in mere seconds.

Then, a crushing grip went around his waist, and his body was beat hard by an invisible force. Bendy winced, nearly tripping. The flames diminished before going out completely. The crushing grip tightened though. Bendy lost his footing on a vine. Since he was going full speed, he flew and skidded across vine covered floor painfully, his burnt skin screaming even after he came to a halt.

“Bendy!” Felix cried out. Bendy groaned and lifted his throbbing head to see Felix diving away from gnashing, needle-like teeth. He was at the far end of the room, almost hidden by the giant monster plant’s now-dead mouth. Another scaley head, almost identical to the first came from the side, making Felix duck. His chest and back were bloody, his movements slowed by the wounds. “Bendy! Can you get up!” Felix called out, lifting the dagger he had to keep the head striking at bay. There were three of them, all attached to a single framing that was trying to pin Felix into a corner.

Bendy grunted and pushed himself up on unsteady legs. His skin hurt, his wounds burned, his breathing was hard but not impossible. He could push it all aside to move. “Felix duck!” Bendy started to move toward Felix.

“It’s a hydra! You can’t just cut off the heads! They’ll grow back and multiply!” Felix shouted. Well great. So what? Go for the heart or something? He leapt into the air and landed on the monster’s back. It hissed, one of its head swiveled around to hiss at him. Oh boy, those were some big teeth! He snarled back at it. The head paused.

“Back off!” Bendy barked at it. A second head turned to gaze at him. “Leave him alone or else!” The heads hissed and reared back. Bendy gulped and jumped up just in time to dodge one but not the
other. Teeth were suddenly around him. He grabbed two fangs and jammed his boots into the lower jaw to keep it open. He winced as the teeth cut into his palms.

The sounds of hoofs could be heard as the dang glitter horses had caught up. He didn’t have time to check what was happening as the pressure above him grew. “I’m not lunch!” He jerked straight, wrenching the monster’s jaw as wide as he could. There was a disgusting crack, and the jaw dropped limp. Bendy tumbled back and landed on the ground on all fours. Several of the horses whinnied at his appearance. The beast’s head above him shifted to the side awkwardly, jaw broken as it bumped into its fellow head. The horses had surrounded Felix and were goring the hydra heads every time they came near. Several took turns to charge at the creatures chest to stab and kick it bloody. Bendy grimaced.

One of the two remaining heads snapped at a unicorn, but the spry creature danced back, just out of reach. Another unicorn jumped in, taking to opportunity to gouge the hydra from the side as it tried to attack.

Bendy almost felt like cheering...until one set of those beady hateful eyes turned to him. “Oh come-cussing-on! Give me a break!” Bendy growled. Luckily, this time when the unicorn lunged for him, the hydra head he was riding snapped at it. Unluckily, the motion disturbed Bendy’s seat and sent him flying head over heels across the room.

He grunted when he came to a stop. “Bendy! Are you okay?” Felix called out to him.

“Yeah.” Bendy rubbed the back of his head. “Are you?”

“I will be with their help, but they attack any creature of darkness. You have to get away!” Felix called out. “Alice should be able to help you if they come for you, but this should keep them busy.”

“Fine! I’ll get Alice, and we’ll stop Holly!” Bendy called out. He got back up and raced away from the fight. The unicorn seemed to be taking care of the beast. He went through a broken wall and a down a hall. Where was everyone? He heard a racket and headed towards it. He found a window and peeked outside. The vines around buildings had dried up. Besides a creature or person running here or there he didn’t see—Wait! Hat flew back and rolled on his back before popping back up on his feet with a growl. His usually perfect clothes were rumpled and ripped...except for the hat on his head, which was still pristine.

He had been with Alice, so Bendy was getting close, right? He broke the window with his elbow. Oh look, he had a spike there. Weird. “Hat!” Bendy called out. The other demon looked over, his eye widened, and then an annoying familiar white form bowled him over.

Cussing fairy ponies! Where did they come from! The sky! Cuss! He crawled out the window easily despite his large size. As soon as his feet were on the ground, he looked over the area. Something like a dizzy spell hit Bendy, and his vision blurred for a moment before it cleared again. A warmth came from him wrist. He glanced down to see the Joy rune glowing, still active. Was that what was keeping his head clear? He didn’t have time to think about it.

There were dead vines everywhere. The only light visible was the ever present white glow of the unicorns. Hat had somehow managed to get up again, and he was using a car as a shield to keep the unicorns from coming at him from all sides. It looked like the unicorns had chased all the other dark creatures away from this street at least. A few toons huddled in a bit of rubble half way down the street, a single unicorn guarding them.

Well, that was a thought. “Hat! Head inside!” Bendy shouted and ran toward the single horse of annoying sparkles. The sparkle pony immediately gave him a warning whinny, lowering its horn as
he approached. Bendy stopped short of it. He looked to the other horses and whistled. “Hey! Glitter bombs! You’re not gonna come save your friend?”

Two turned their heads briefly as the other three continued to keep Hat pinned against the car. After a brief moment of indecision, they shifted, charging towards Bendy. The other three remained around Hat, and as Bendy watched, the older demon barely managed to avoid getting his shoulder impaled. Hat hissed, his body morphing into monster form full of teeth, scales, and claws. The unicorns didn’t seemed shaken.

Bendy reached down and twisted off a thick vine. He lifted it and tested its weight in his huge hands. Rather impromptu, but when one was facing down killer unicorns, he wasn’t complaining.

The first unicorn lowered its horn as it neared, aiming for Bendy’s stomach. Bendy took a batter’s pose and swung. The dried wood hit the creature on the side of the head just before the horn touch him. Its head was knocked to the side with a loud crack! The horse stumbled to the side, dazed. Bendy looked down to see the vine had broken. Well, stardust.

From behind him, the unicorn that had been protecting the toons neighed in fury and jumped forward, catching him on the side as he dodged. It was a good thing too, because the second charging unicorn at his front barely missed stabbing straight through his leg. Bendy grunted in pain. “What part of ‘we are good guys’ can’t you understand?” Bendy grunted in his odd voice. He jumped up and flipped onto the horse that had grazed him.

Bad idea. It suddenly became the most dizzying rodeo that Bendy had ever been on. The unicorn bucked madly, snapping his head forward so violently that Bendy headbutted his face into its horn. Ow! If he had a nose, it’d be broken for sure! He nearly grabbed at it but remembered the razor sharp claws on his hands last minute. It was bad to kill this thing right? Well, he didn’t really get a chance to consider it.

The next thing he knew, he was on the ground. His world was spinning. He had the vague, panicked thought that they would be upon him again in the next second, but his legs and arms weren’t listening. The world was spinning in ways it shouldn’t.

Then his vision cleared enough to see a flash of long white coming down at his neck. His eyes widened. This was it. He was dead. Dead and his brother would have to face the shame of telling people he had been killed by glitter ponies.

“MEEEEEEP!” A small white bit of fluff was suddenly on his face, standing on top of his mouth. The unicorn froze, blinking. He spluttered and nearly blew the little fluff away. The white wobbled and gave him a slightly offended glare. Snowball! Where had she come from! Turning back, Snowball started to speak rapidly. “Meep! Meep! Meep! Me-Meep-Me-Meep-Me-Meepity-Meep!” Snowball’s tone was furious, and her tiny little body puffed up to more than double her size as she threw angry...words?...at the unicorn. Wait. Did these two understand each other! How! What was this! Did Holly know ab--Oh, right, turned evil.

Both sparkle pony’s ears went back, and they shifted uncomfortably. No way. Snowball hopped off of his face onto his neck, continuing her rant. Bendy bit his lip to stop from laughing. Her little tuffs tickled his neck and chin with her every move. “Meep, meep!” She waved a tiny paw hard in the air, digging at the air. One of the unicorns started to back away, making a huffing noise. The other one neighed, as if arguing with the fist sized bit of fluff.

Snowball stomped her foot hard on his neck, making him snort. “Me-Meep-Meep-Meep!” she replied with vindication. The unicorn rolled its eyes, shifted its neck and slowly, sheepishly turned away, trotting down the street to follow the first. Th-that worked? The dazed unicorn took one look
at Snowball’s angry expression and followed them. That had actually **worked**?

Was he seeing this right? Was this puffball telling off the killer horses? Had his life just been negotiated for over squeaks and neighs? Was this reality? “Um, thanks?” Bendy said softly, even though the deep growly echo was still there. He was insane. He was asleep, or he was dead. This couldn’t be real.

Snowball preened her non-fur proudly and hopped off his neck onto the pavement to the side of his head. “Meep,” she said expectantly.

He blinked. “What?” He sat up, wincing as he pulled at his wounds. She bounced, catching some of his hair and settling on top of his head. There she stayed, pressed against one of his horns. “Okay, but we still gotta help Black Hat,” Bendy said, pulling himself back up. We. He was talking to the puff like...Whelp. Snowball had saved his life. She had earned the right for him to treat her more like a person than a pet at this point.

Wow. He really was nuts.

“Meep,” Snowball said from atop of his head.

With no clue what that meant, Bendy pulled himself up and glanced at Hat and the toons. Most of them had fled with the retreat of unicorns. Hat had moved away from the car but was having some trouble still.

They seemed to have gouged Hat a few more time while Bendy had distracted the other three. Hat looked shaky on his feet.

“Hat!” Bendy called and raced toward them. Last minute he remembered Snowball and lifted a hand to keep her from being blown away by the sudden movement. When he touched her, he realized that her paws had taken an iron grip around his horn. She gave him an appreciative meep. He jumped into the circle of unicorns, leaning over to help Hat.

“Get off me!” Hat growled angrily. “What the hell do you think you’re doing?” Bendy uncovered the puffball. Hat’s face fell in shock and then deadpanned. “What...is that?”

Snowball gave an offended ‘meep.’

“Hat, meet Snowball, savior of demons. Snowball, meet the guy we are hoping can save Holly from that thing.” Bendy huffed out quick introductions. “Now, can we worry about the killer ponies!”

As if to emphasize his point, one of the three unicorns lunged at Hat, making him roll to dodge. “What the hell do you mean **savior of demons**?” Hat popped back up, facing the unicorn with a huge crab claw as an arm. He slashed at it, but the damn thing just pranced away like it was dancing.

Snowball made a disapproving noise and shifted on his head. She sighed. “Meep!” she said, almost monotone. The three unicorns stopped, eyes still on Hat, but their ears had pricked up. Bendy whistled, now truly impressed. He stood up his full seven-something-feet so the little animal had a good pedestal to tell the glitter beasts off from.

“Me-meep-meep,” she continued.

One of the unicorns turned to look at Snowball. It gave a loud, argumentative neigh, using a hoof to paw at the ground.

“Wh-what’s going on?” Hat croaked, looking between the little girl dreams and the puffball on
Bendy’s head.

Snowball gave Hat a sharp ‘meep.’ Then she paused, turning back to the unicorns. “Meep-meep,” she replied, shrugging in a what-can-you-do sort of way.

The same unicorn huffed, tilting its head.

“Meeeep...meep.” Snowball’s tone was apologetic now. “Meep.”

The unicorn eyed Hat, who glared daggers back at it. The animal pawed at the ground again, glaring back. Bendy elbowed him lightly, making sure not to stab him with his elbow spike. “Watch it. She can only do so much to get them to back down.” The horse looked at Snowball one last time and seemed to deflate. Then, it shook its long white hair and gave a sharp neigh. The two other unicorns shifted sideways, eyes still on Hat and Bendy as all three backed away and trotted down the street.

Hat stared at the retreating horses, dumbfounded. “D-did that thing just--”

“Save your bacon?” Bendy smirked. “Why yes. Yes, she did. You’re welcome. Where’s Alice?” Bendy lifted a hand and gently petted the creature on his head. She leaned into his touch. Petting her, he realized she was covered in all sort of dirt and gunk. Bendy gently lifted her off his head to look at her.

“She was teleported away.” Hat scowled. “I’ll get her before you even have the chance to ask,” he huffed. Bendy gently brushed dirt off of Snowball as he spoke.

“Okay, let’s--” There was a flash of green fire, and he was gone. Bendy snorted at the burns on the road. He looked down at Snowball. “He has a weird way of showing little to no gratitude, uh Snowball?” he muttered. She gave him an attentive expression, tilting her head as he spoke. Where had she been? “And weren’t you with Cup? Why are you a mess?”

“Meep,” she replied exhaustedly. Licking her paws, she started to rub at her head.

“Have you seen any of the others?” Bendy asked. Snowball stopped for a second, paws hovering. He tiny little nose swiveled a little towards the street. He started to walk toward the building again. They had to be around somewhere.

“Meep!” Snowball jumped off his hand suddenly and started to scamper down the street.

“Oi! Wait! This place is dangerous!” Bendy followed the little creature as she scampered down the street. Three blocks away, she turned left suddenly, bringing him to an enormous park covered in spiderwebs. Bendy paused, his face falling at the sight of the webs. He remembered the thing that had made that and really didn’t want to meet it.

Suddenly an enormous, long, black leg came down in front of him, making him jump back. He was just about ready to fight again when the hourglass shaped body connected to the leg collapsed, nearly falling on him. He let out a somewhat less than intimidating sound. Luckily with his voice the way it was, it didn’t sound too panicked.

“You okay?” Mugs’ voice came Bendy’s way.

“Yeah, but I don’t think I’ll ever be able to look at a house spider the same.” Boris voice came next.

“Isn’t this the second spider I’ve saved you from?” Mugs asked.

“We ran from that one,” Boris said pointedly.
“Oh look! Snowball! What in the world are you doing here?” Boris gasped.

“Meep,” came her reply. When he turned to see the two, they were standing to the right of an enormous, hairy spider. Snowball was sitting next to Mugs’ foot, waiting patiently. The cup man leaned down to pick her up.

“Boy, you’re a right mess,” he said and gave her a pat before placing her on top of his head. She moved to huddle next to his straw, giving a weak, happy chitter.

“Bendy!” Boris gasped, finally seeing him. His jaw hung open in surprise. “A-are you--” He took a hesitant step forward.


“Oh, thank the stars!” Boris said. He pulled back and looked at Bendy. “But these cuts! The blood! And are those burns!”

“It’s fine, bro. Stuff that’ll heal quick and not leave a mark.” Bendy waved it off. “What about you two? Are you both okay?”

“I got paralyzed by that spider, but it was only temporary. Just my foot is numb now.” Boris waved his wave back and forth. He gulped. “Still, I never want to know what a fly feels like again. Webs are scary.” He shuddered.

Mugs stepped up. He had a limp. Bendy glanced down to see the blood stains and tears in the pant leg. Mugs chuckled and scratched the back of his head, shrugging. “I got dragged off by a three headed dog. It wasn’t so bad once I figured out it just wanted to play. Thank the stars for bouncing ball bullets.”


“And that’s where all this came from?” Bendy waved a hand at his chest and sides.

Bendy jerked a shoulder in a shrug. He withheld a wince when it pulled at a cut. “Mostly.”

“Any sign of the others?” Mugs asked.

Bendy frowned. “Cup got carried off by a flying, bird-headed, lion bodied thing. Felix was stuck with a hydra, but I was able to help out there.” Or the clomping glitter army did, but he lead them in. “And I saved--er--Snowball saved Hat before he disappeared to go get Alice.”

Mugs furrowed his brows. “Snowball did?”

“She apparently is a very convincing negotiator.” Bendy smirked.


Bendy gave her a pointed look. If she thought he was gonna come clean and say ‘unicorns’ then she had another thing coming. He couldn’t allow that to get Cuphead or Finley! Nope! No way! He'd
“Anyway, we need to get back to the building. Holly is probably still there, and Alice and Hat will be heading in.” Bendy hoped they were at least. “We need to catch up and find the others. If all of us have to deal with monsters, they could be in trouble.” Not that he really could consider the toy pony collection ‘monsters.’ They did save Felix and those other toons after all…

“Right,” Boris and Mugs agreed readily.

It was hard to see where they were going as they headed down the street. The bright light the unicorns had supplied was gone, and not a single lamp post had been left intact on the street. But even though there was hardly a ray of light, there was plenty of sound. Things crashed in the distance, there was a moaning coming from a nearby street, and beyond that there was an almost imperceptible scrunching noise that Bendy noticed now that he wasn’t distracted.

His eyes seemed to easily lock on any motion, little details he never would normally notice jumped out at him, the stain on a wall, the texture of a broken window, the smell of sweet fear behind him, the smell of ocean in front of him, the sound of his and Mugs boots on the ground, and the difference with Boris’ softer padded paws.

It was difficult to focus with all these distracting sensations going on, but the sounds of the monsters in the distance and the presence of his fearful brother helped. A good reminder of what he was fighting to save. The ground shook like a little earthquake went off.

“What was that?” Boris asked looking around.

“Heaven knows,” Bendy muttered.

The group of three were able to make it back to the building without anything jumping out at them. They were just reaching the front door when a flash of bright light blinded Bendy. He covered his eyes.

“Alice!” Mugs exclaimed. Bendy blinked his eyes a number of times to try and get rid of the spots in his vision.

“Mugman! Boris! And--” Alice gasped. Bendy turned to look at her. She had Hat’s arm over her shoulder, her pale, cut face twisted in horror. “B-Bendy?” She started to visibly shake.

“It’s okay Alice.” Boris jumped in front of Bendy. He felt his heart twist as the fear hit him in a wave. He took a step back, then another. “Bendy?” It was different than the others. It was the most delicious thing he had ever smelled. His mouth watered, his tail twitched. He hated himself for it.

“I’m fine,” Bendy murmured. He didn’t break eye contact with Alice’s wide-eyed gaze. “It’s fine,” he said. She swallowed, took a few deep breaths, and then nodded.

“What happened to Hat?” Mugs asked.

“H-Holly,” Alice stuttered. “She escaped though. I think she’s here now b-but not for long.” Alice flinched when something small and white jumped from Mugman suddenly. Snowball caught onto the sleeve of her arm, crawled up, and nestled between Hat’s arm and her neck. She gave a reassuring noise and chittered softly. “Oh, Snowball! Thank goodness you’re okay.” Her face relaxed marginally.

“If we don’t have much time, we’ll need to move,” Mugs said. “Here, let me take him. You’ll need your hands free to fight Holly.” He reached to take the unconscious demon.
“Thank you Mugman,” Alice said with a grateful nod.

“He won’t be any good for a fight,” Boris mumbled. “Will he even be able to help with the cog stuff?” the wolf asked.

Alice shook her head. “Even if he woke up, Holly’s attack took a lot of power from him.” She glanced at Bendy and away again.

“So what? Bendy has to do it?” Boris asked.

“Well cuss,” Bendy snipped. They were so doomed. Alice nodded stiffly. So very doomed. She wouldn’t even look at him. He couldn’t stand being too close to her. How the hell were they supposed to work together to save Holly? “Let’s get moving then.”

The small group headed inside. The building was eerily quiet after the sounds of the streets. As soon as they stepped inside, they smelt smoke. “That can’t be good.” Boris’ ears dropped. “If there’s a fire, maybe we shouldn’t be taking Hat in there. Maybe we shouldn’t go in.”

“We have to be sure no one is trapped in here if there is a fire,” Alice said. “But you’re right. You should take Hat outside and wait.”

“Me?” Boris asked in surprise. “B-but I can’t fight like all of you can!”

“What are you talking about? Of course you can,” Mugs said with a smile. He looked around for a second. He went over to a wall and tried pulling out something. “Here, this will work.” He grunted. Hat’s weight was causing him difficulty. Bendy came over and grabbed the pipe that was sticking out of the wall. He yanked harshly. There was a snapping sound and the pipe came free. Mugs grinned. “See?” He took the pipe from Bendy and turned toward Boris. “This is a perfect weapon for you. Keep the baddies away and everything.”

Boris looked at the pipe with a raised brow. “You’re kidding.”

Mugs shook his head. “It’ll give you a bigger reach. It’s heavy, but not too heavy, and it’s easy to use.” Mugs twirled it in one hand. “See?”

Boris took to pipe uncertainly. Mugs grinned. Bendy frowned but didn’t say anything. He wanted Boris safe, but the idea of him fighting any of those monsters out there didn’t sit well with him. “Boris and I will set up Hat somewhere outside. I’ll catch up,” Mugs promised.

“Don’t be long,” Bendy said. He and Alice shared a look and headed further in while Mugs and Boris went back out. “Think they’ll be okay?” Bendy asked.

Alice glanced at him and quickly looked away. “Boris is your brother. How reliable is he?”

“Absolutely,” Bendy said instantly.

“Then there’s nothing to worry about. We’ll be back in an instant if there isn’t anyone around,” Alice said.

“But then where’s Holly?” Bendy questioned.

“We’ll worry about that after we are sure she isn’t here,” Alice said. They didn’t get far when a strange scraping sound came down one of the halls. “What’s that?”

Bendy shook his head. Like he would know. He peered into the shadows for the source of the
sound. Something was moving back there.

“Don’t look!” Cala shrieked. Bendy jumped. He looked up to see Cala climbing a vine. “It’s a basilisk! Run! And whatever you do, don’t look!” Her legs were gone, replaced with a long scaly snake tail. Paul’s tentacles were snakes that hissed and twists together. Her and her snakes’ eyes were closed. Her forked tongue flickered out between her fangs.

“C-Cala!” Alice gasped. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine except for the killer monster that’s coming for you! RUN!” she hissed and coiled up. Bendy felt a chill down his spine. Something was right behind him. There was that scraping noise again. He grabbed Alice and bolted. He fought the urge to glance back. Cala threw herself the way Bendy was running from. There was an ear shattering scream from whatever that thing was. Thrashing and crashing was came from behind them.

Alice went to look. “Alice! Shut your eyes!” Bendy ordered. She flinched and closed her eyes.

“We can’t just leave her back there!” Alice said, her hands clinging to the arm Bendy had wrapped around her waist.

“I’m not planning to. Can you cast magic with your eyes closed?” Bendy asked.

“It might hit you or Cala if I try!” Alice said, panicked.

“What happens if I look?” Bendy asked, turning a corner and then another.

“You die. It can kill with one look, and it’s very venomous,” Alice said.


“I’m not sure. We’d need to blind it to see. I don’t think it’ll be any different than any other beast. We just can’t see its eyes or allow it to bite us,” Alice said. “Are you running with your eyes closed?”

“No,” Bendy said and stopped around a corner. He wasn’t winded like he should be, but he wasn’t going to complain about that.

“Bendy!” Alice said exasperated.

“Hey.” Bendy put Alice down, an idea hatching in his mind. “Can you put on a light show?”

“Uh?” Alice furrowed her brows.

“Can you, I don’t know, make yourself glow so bright it’s blinding?” Bendy asked. Her thin brows went up in surprise. “If you can, I think I can kill it.”

“That’s really risky Bendy,” Alice murmured. Bendy shrugged, not that she could see it.

“I’m a risk taker,” Bendy admitted easily. Alice sighed. “But what else can we do? We won’t be able to fight it blind right?”

Alice sighed and nodded. “Okay, but you don’t act until I say. I will be as bright as I can.”

“I will wait for your enlightenment,” Bendy punned. She burst into surprised giggles. Bendy watched her shoulders relax a little. Good. “So I guess we should head back.” Alice nodded.
“And remember, don’t look at it,” Alice said.

“Okay. Shall I carry you again?” Bendy offered.


“Ah, yeah, sure.” Bendy snorted. He knelt on a knee and guided her to his back. She wrapped her arms around his neck, and her legs hugged his waist. “Alright, let’s go.”

Bendy turned back, this time keeping his eyes securely on the ground, enough to move forward but not daring to look up. Who knew where it had gone. He hoped Cala was okay. What the hell had happened to her? He quickly retraced their steps. When he reached the room they had left Cala in, it was eerily quiet. Bendy fought the urge to look up. He crept up to the hall the shadow had been in, the one that Cala had dived toward.

“Cala?” Alice called. Her voice echoed down the hall. “Are you here?”

There was a shift. Bendy tensed, ready to jump back.

“A-Alice?” Cala’s weak voice whimpered. “You were supposed to run.”

“We couldn’t just leave ya here,” Bendy said. He took a few steps toward the sound of her voice.

“It’s still here somewhere. I-I think it bit me,” Cala said is a horse whisper. Alice gasped. “It’s okay! Most vemons don’t work on me, but I’m tired. My body is fighting it off, and I want to sleep.”

“Don’t fall asleep, Cala. We’ll get you out of here,” Alice said. There was a shift to Bendy’s right. But Cala’s voice was ahead. Bendy dove forward just as something brushed by his tail. Alice let out a try of alarm. There was a loud crash behind them. Bendy guessed the thing had hit the wall.

“Alice now!” Bendy ordered. A white light threw Bendy’s shadow out in front of him. He heard an angry hiss. He ran forward but tripped on Cala, who was laying right in front of him. He landed on her other side on his knees and clawed hands. He grunted as pain laced up his legs.

“I’m fine. Cala?” Bendy asked.

“Is that you, Bendy?” Cala whispered. Bendy stood up and turned around. Again, his eyes on his feet. The snake tail went slack around his ankle.

“Yeah, that’s me,” Bendy said. He couldn’t run without Cala. But he doubted that thing would give him time to pick her up. He could hear it moving again. It must have bashed its head good. “Alice?” He took a couple of cautious steps forward until he could see Cala. She was on her stomach, eyes closed, breathing ragged, and skin pale. There were two bleeding holes in her arm.

“Not yet,” Alice said. The light coming from her was almost too bright for him, and he was facing away from her. The creature hissed angrily. Alarm bells went off in Bendy’s head. It was going to attack. He couldn’t leave Cala like this, but he didn’t have time to pick her up. He made a split second decision. He threw Alice off his back. She screamed as she fell back. Bendy looked up just in time to see a huge mouth of fangs coming at his head. He kicked it to the side.

“Bendy!” Alice cried out. The head snapped, and it hit the wall again. Its sharp snout made a cracked and the wall crumbled. Bendy jumped and landed on its neck. He wrapped his arms around its scaly
throat and tried to choke it. The basilisk thrashed and pulled itself free of the wall. Bendy was slammed into the wall and ceiling. He kicked, trying to pull it away from the girls.

“I’m okay!” Bendy answered her. The basilisk withered and twisted, its scales scraped at Bendy’s skin and ripped at his clothes. This thing was not like fighting Cala’s snakes. Bendy tightened his grip, trying to strangle it, crush its neck, something to stop its insane thrashing. Flashes of Alice’s light put spots in his eyes. He closed them. It twisted and slammed him into the floor. Bendy lost his his breath and his grip. He reached out and sank his claws into its scaly skin, a bloody gashing opened up. It screamed in pain and wrenched itself free of him. Bendy lay on his back, disoriented and breathless.

He couldn’t stay like this. He sat up and dared to look up. It lunged at his face, fangs flashing in the angel’s blinding light. Bendy slammed a hand up as hard as he could. The monster’s head snapped up. Bendy pulled himself up. Its head crashed back down. He rolled out of the wall and was on his feet again. It withered and then lunged again. This time, Bendy locked his hands together and brought them down on the creature’s head with all his strength. There was a sickening snap as the basilisk’s head gave under Bendy’s strength. Two dying, golden eyes glared hateful death at him.

Felix panted as he leaned against a wall. The unicorns had left to help others. There were a bunch of other monsters and people. Felix understood. He would be fine. The creatures of light had healed his wounds enough that he could keep going. He would be grateful to them, if they didn't find Bendy again.

Right now, he couldn’t afford to worry about that. He was deep in the building now. If Holly was here, he would bet his tail she was around this section somewhere. He hadn’t seen any of the others, and that had him worried. He still had the shot from Professor Oddswell that was meant to put Holly to sleep. After the library events, he doubted she would allow him to get that close. He had opted to transfer the drug from the needle to a dart. It was a little heavier than he would have liked, but it would offer him a little distance from the girl. It was better than having to stand right next to her at least.

He had come across a rune trap here and there, affirming his suspicions that she had a base of some kind. He came around the corner and cautiously crept down the hall. The walls were cracked here and there. Office supplies littered the floor, hinting at the earlier chaos. Felix froze when he heard running footsteps pounding on the floor. He pressed himself to the wall and held his dagger up, ready for anything. Mickey slid around the corner. Felix had two seconds to stare dumbfounded as the very visible mouse passed him. A huge wolf appeared a half second later. A Dire Wolf? But they were supposed to be extinct! Felix moved and brought his knife up. The beast yipped in surprise, blood gushed from its throat. It howled in pain and wheeled around, racing away from Felix and back from where it came. Felix felt a pang of disappointment for having to injure such a rare and amazing creature. He hadn’t cut too deep. Hopefully, it would recover.

Felix made sure it left and then turned to see Mickey slumped against a wall, panting silently. “Mickey! I can see you!” Felix gasped. Mickey gave him a weak smile and a nod. “But how?”

Mickey lifted a hand, showing Felix a rather familiar face, a doll in the image of Bendy. It looked rough, burned in places, holes with stuffing showing in others. But if he had the doll then that meant... “You found Holly! She turned you visible again?” Mickey nodded. He pointed at his eye. “She did it so she could see you?” He nodded again. “Makes sense. So you were able to sneak past her and get the doll, but she noticed and turned you visible again so she could get you, but you managed to escape?” Mickey shrugged and smiled. That meant he was still mute, but it was good to see him. Besides a few rips in his clothes and dirt, he appeared to be fine. Felix wanted to ask how
he had gotten away from her, but Mickey didn’t really have a way to explain himself now.

“I have a dart to knock her out. Can you lead me back to her?” Felix asked. Mickey shook his head. He lifted a fist and flicked his fingers out. “She disappeared?” He nodded. His breathing calmed, and he straightened up. He pushed away from the wall and gestured to Felix’ dagger. He mouthed ‘thank you’ and smiled. Felix shook his head. “Don’t worry about it. Thank you for getting the doll and saving Bendy.” Mickey waved off the thanks. Felix sighed. He doubted they would be able to sneak up on her a second time. She disappeared. Could she still be in the building? Would she come for the doll? There were a lot more uncertainties than Felix liked.

Xedo walked around the corner Felix had come from. He looked up and smiled. “I thought I heard you, Mr. Cat. Glad to see you are okay and you Mr. Mouse. Congratulations on being visible.” Mickey grinned. He mouthed ‘thank you for’ and Felix couldn’t quite make out what followed that. Xedo chuckled. “I’m simply grateful it worked. Now, do we have a way to stop our troubled friend?”

Felix sighed. “Well, she’s clever. She’s already been snuck up on once, so I doubt we’ll be able to do it again.” Xedo nodded. “I have a dart that can knock her out. I’ll still have to get in close, but it’s something.”

“We’ll need a distraction then,” Xedo summed up. Mickey moved his hands together like jaws around the doll. “A trap?” Xedo asked. Mickey nodded and pointed at him. “But what would work on Holly? She has a seemingly limitless amount of magical power. She doesn’t touch the floor anymore. I think she’d figure us out rather quickly.”

“We don’t have to capture her, a trap could be distraction enough for me to take the shot.” Felix tugged his hat down. “But what to use as bait?” Mickey point at the doll and himself. “That’s a fair point, Mickey. She did break into the house to get it, and it’s one of the machine pieces. She’ll probably return for it.” Xedo flickered his fluffy tail back and forth. “We can’t make it obvious though.” The three became quiet as they all thought. Felix mentally went through what his bag might have that could help. He had a number of traps, but none that a flying magical girl would have much trouble with.

Not unless he went into his old stuff from way back when. It’d been a while since he had pulled out his more...wacky stuff. He tried to keep it under wraps as much as possible after all. But desperate times called for desperate measures. “I think I have something,” Felix said. He reached into his bag and dug around. It was really in there. He pushed almost half his arm down into the pouch. The others watched curiously. He finally felt it and pulled out the bottle. “Electric bubbles. If we put one around Mickey, it should act as a fair defense. The electricity is about as strong as a stun gun. Think of it as a personal electric fence.”

They stared at him for a silent moment. Felix didn’t let his nervousness show on his face. “May I inquire why you would have such an interesting item?” Xedo asked. Felix felt his ears fold back as his nerves went up another notch. Xedo was a news reporter, and though Bendy and Boris seemed to trust him as much as they did the professor or the Cup brothers, Felix had his reservations. Though Xedo proved he could be careful with sensitive information and hadn’t said anything about the parts and the boys, he had written about the illness and machine, making the public aware of a possible cure on its way. He also shared updates about the sickness, Oddswell’s work with the rest of the medical community now, and the politics in the city, along with the crimes. He was clever, well informed, and he had a lot of influence with the public now. This fox could ruin him with a few strokes of a pen, and Felix was painfully aware of that. Still, desperate times.

“It’s something that I’ve had for a long time. I don’t really remember where I got it from.” Felix
shrugged and smiled. Mickey and Xedo shared a glance. “So that’s one trap, but we should have a backup in case. You never can be too careful.”

“Agreed. If capture isn’t the main purpose, but distraction, I think something as simple as a net drop could work,” Xedo said, adjusting the glasses on his snout. “We can find a location that is open to the upper floors, and I can be in position to throw it if the bubble doesn’t work.” Felix and Mickey nodded. “Good. Then let’s find a location and set up.”

It didn’t take them long to find a good spot. They found their way back to the hole that the Amazonian Choker had created in the building. The dried vegetation sat silently in it’s center, the dead vines now hanging like bones from the walls and ceilings. It had crashed through all the floors, and the roof allow the midnight sky to peek in at them. Xedo went up to the third floor and positioned himself behind a desk at the edge of the hole. He had a large net with him that would easy swallow Holly and the gear in its grasp. Felix unscrewed the bottle and blew a large bubble. The bigger it got the harder it was to see.

“Now, you just step in quickly Mickey.” The mouse did so without hesitation. The bubble resisted for a moment before it gave. Felix let a silent breath of relief. If Mickey had popped it from the outside, he would have been the one that was shocked. Felix glanced at the doll still in Mickey’s hands and, in extension, Bendy too. “Now, you can pop it from the inside without an problem, but whatever pops it from the outside will have now nasty surprise.” Mickey nodded and gave Felix a thumbs up sign. Mickey went over to one of the large vines and carefully sank down and leaned against it. He look exhausted in that position, like he was going to pass out any minute. Felix was impressed with his acting. Then again, it had taken him a minute to realize Mickey's actions against Bendy what seemed like forever ago. Felix shook off the memories quickly. That was in the past. He was helping now.

Felix placed himself beside the head of the Amazonian Choker and took out the dart and the blowgun. The three now waited in tense silence. There was only a margin of possibility that she would come seeking for the doll and Mickey.

Minutes seemed to pass in hours. Something burned nearby. The smell grew. He saw flames grow on the far side of the building. That wasn’t good. They wouldn’t have much time before they had to abandon the trap and evacuate. Just as Felix was wondering if they should move, the air seemed to shift. A rune lit up next to Mickey. Mickey flinched and tried to move. He rose in the air. Out of nowhere Holly appeared, eyes black as she looked at Mickey. She was on the far side of the room, nowhere near the bubble yet. Her eyes were narrowed and angry, and she seemed more haggard than before. Her hair was a mess, she was holding her left shoulder with her right hand. She looked ready to spill blood at a pin drop. “There you are,” she said in a rough voice. She floated towards him. Mickey grit his teeth and glared at her in determination. “You’ve caused me a lot of trouble,” she said in a soft voice. He smiled and shrugged, doing his best to look proud of that fact. He pointed at her shoulder. Her eyes narrowed and the cog stopped floating towards him. “None of your business.” Her angry expression broke into a creepy smile. “But I knew it was you that told Alice, Mick. Did you think I wouldn’t figure it out?”

Mickey’s cocky smile dropped. He paled, but the determination didn’t disappear.


Mickey narrowed his eyes. Felix had never seen the mouse angry, but angry he was. Felix on the other hand felt his heart drop to his feet. Oswald? She had done something to Ozzy? His fist
tightened on his blowgun until his knuckles ached. Oh stars, let the kids be safe at least.

Mickey’s mouth was moving silently. Felix could only imagine what he was trying to say. She had to get a little closer, even if she didn’t touch the bubble Xedo and the net would be enough. Felix would only need her distracted for a few precious seconds. If he stepped out for the shot now she could notice and put up a blocking or shield rune in an instant.

“I sent him to the desert caves of the Unkbutt—the man-eating spider—in exchange for bringing one here.” She giggled like she’d just told a secret. “I’d send you right after him if I didn’t need you to get Alice to drop the barrier keeping me in this city.”

The caves of the Unkbutt! Oh stars and moon! Oh sun! Please let him okay! Felix felt a shiver go down his spine. How many spiders were there in the legends? A thousand? Even the great heroes couldn’t get through without a weapon of light!

Mickey shook his head back and forth in horror. Despair in his eyes. “Ha! You finally lost that persistent determination?” she asked, a sick sort of curiosity in her voice.

Tears rimmed his eyes, and he glared at her. His free fist shook, but Felix could see the drop of his shoulders and the grief in his eyes.

Holly snorted. “No, you’re still holding onto it like a dog with a bone. I wonder what it would to make you give up that annoying glint.” She started to raise her hand, looking at the Bendy doll. “Either way, I want that back.” Her hand went out towards Mickey, her magic pulling him towards her.

The next second the room flashed with electricity. Holly let out a loud yelp, and Felix heard her drop to the ground. He came around the corner, blowgun raised to his lips and ready to fire at the demented girl.

Somehow, she was already up, eyes furious. Mickey still floated in the air next to her. The moment Felix moved, her eyes flickered to him and in a split second she pulled Mickey between her and the cat adventurer. He froze. “If you move an inch Felix, I’ll crush his vocal cords. He’ll never speak again.” Felix grimaced. Mickey shook his head—or tried to. Silent determination pleaded for Felix to do it anyway. He accepted the possibility of losing his voice forever. Felix pursed his lips, but if he did that, how could he face Oswald again? And if Alice was able to save Holly’s humanity, how would she take it? Felix couldn’t do it.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Xedo moving. Felix lowered the blowgun from his lips. “What are you doing Holly? Why are you hurting all these people? This isn’t like you!” Felix called out to her. “The girl I met on the docks would never have done this!” Maybe he could distract her enough for Xedo to make his move.

She gave him an annoyed look. Gold shimmered next to his head, and he only had a split second to dodge away before the floor where he’d been standing exploded. “That girl doesn’t know half as much as I do. She couldn’t even do a tenth of what I can. Did you know that the Cup brothers are working for some kind of devil?” She snorted. What! He had to dodge again as more ground blew up. “Right under everyone’s noses and no one cares. That’s why I stopped trying to work with you lot. When someone acts nice to you and panders to your worries you’ll believe anything.” She considered herself a different person from her past? The Cup brothers where working for a demon? No wonder they weren’t able to instantly leave their work! But now wasn’t the time! He knew how to keep her focus on him now.

“You aren’t half the person the real Holly is!” Felix shouted at her. “Our worries involve saving
lives! An honorable mission if ever there was one! Something you’ve obviously forgotten!”

A flare of fire sprung up in front of him, and he had to back away quickly, turning his back into a heat resistant shield. She was faster on her runes than he was. He was already getting tired, but she didn’t seem that winded.

“People die all the time.” Her voice was flat. “From stupid, unexpected things. What we do doesn't matter.” She laughed. “Might as well get what I want now.” More fire was flaring now. She seemed to be pulling it from the building.

“It does matter!” Felix panted as he jumped back again. He couldn’t afford to get too far. “For every family that gets to keep a loved one. For every parent that can see their child grow and every couple that can keep their partner! Even if we only manage to save a single person, that’s enough! You used to believe that!” He made a gutsy move and dove forward, rolling toward her before popping back up on his feet. Xedo was ready behind her. The net in his hands.

“Not me. Her. And pretty soon, thankfully, what’s left of her weakness will crumble.” A rune lit up next to him as he landed, and Felix started to float. This was bad. “But before that, I’m going to kill you Felix.” She reached out her hand, eyes glittering. Another shimmer of gold started to form. The net was thrown out and fell.

“Not if I have something to say about it, young lady,” Xedo called from above just as the net was atop her. It hit her with an umph. The gold runes next to Felix dissipated, and he dropped to the ground. Mickey also landed heavily. Felix didn’t waste his chance. The moment his feet touched the ground, the blowgun was at his mouth. He took a deep breath and fired. Holly thrashed and the net went up in flames the next instant. The dart hit true just as she stood. For half a second, she stared at him, black eyes filled the genuine blood lust. A chill of true terror hit Felix like never before. Then the blackness melted away, and her eyes rolled up. She hit the floor.

Chapter End Notes

Mercowe here. We got so much good art this week. :D And a couple of them terrify me. So there's that. But here they are!

Done by @animenerd&geek on Instagram. We have some images of the terror that happened last chapter.

Hat teaches Bendy about fear.
Holly burn. O.o SAVE BENDY!!!
These next two are from xxbrindadarlingdemonxx.

Bendy as he transforms this chapter...
And! xxbrindadarlingdemonxx decided to start drawing the first chapter. Here is the first panel.
Well, that's it for today! Go check out the Ink Extras stuff Tap mentioned. *Winks*
Alice heard a stomach-turning crack and then a thud. She was terrified to move. The silence was ringing in her ears after all the horrible noises of Bendy fighting the basilisk. Alice held her breath, waiting for some sign of movement, some sign of life. Nothing. Just silence. She half opened her mouth to call out to Bendy. Was he okay? Did he kill it? Or had it gotten him and was waiting for her to move? To make noise and become its next target? She kept her magic going, summoning light to her halo to make it as bright as she could, hoping it still had an effect. She heard Cala shift a little in front of her, scales on the floor. Alice was still sitting in the position she had landed in when Bendy had thrown her off. She was growing cold, but her numbing fear pushed the sensation to the back of her mind.

What was she going to do? She couldn’t just sit here forever, waiting for death or rescue. Mugs and Boris would be here soon, and they had no idea what they were walking into. What would her father do? She swallowed, her throat as dry as sandpaper. “B-Bendy?” she called out hesitantly. She slowly pulled herself up. Nothing. “Bendy are you okay?” Alice asked. Her voice cracked. What was she going to do if he wasn’t? She couldn’t heal him! She couldn’t even help Cala! Useless! All she could do was stand up to the creature if it was still around. But again, she only had silence greet her.

“Alice?” Cala said in a strained voice. “Keep your eyes closed. I’m going to see what happened.”

Fear speared through Alice for the other girl. “But Cala, the crea--”

“It’s okay.” She cut Alice off. “My eyes are also cursed. It won’t kill me instantly…I think.”

“You don’t know that!” Alice hissed, her hands balled into fists in front of her.

“No, but it’s better then you looking,” Cala said. Alice could hear a smile in her voice. She heard
Cala shifted again, grunting as she moved. Alice opened her mouth to argue with her, but Cala’s bone-chilling scream made her heart freeze. “BENDY! BENDY!”

Alice threw caution to the wind. Her eyes snapped open, her light dimming with the loss of her concentration. Cala was withering at her feet, fighting to sit up enough to move toward the scene in front of them, her back toward Alice. There was a mess of blood and some black substance.

And the large, snake-like body of the basilisk.

It’s huge, crushed head oozed blood, and it was covered in the black stuff. Its curled body blocked most of the hallway as it lay limply. Before the snout of the dead creature was a mound of the black stuff. Where was Bendy? “Cala! Where’s Bendy!” Alice demanded from the gorgon. “I don’t see him!”

Cala froze. “D-don’t look at me! You’ll turn to stone!” She lifted a hand to cover her face. Her snakes turned more away from Alice.

“I won’t! I’ll be careful, but where’s Bendy!” Alice assured her impatiently. The gorgon pointed to the mound with a shaky hand.

“He melted! He melted! Ohsweetseawaveshe melted!” She dissolved into hysterical wailing. Alice bit her lip. She wanted to comfort the girl, but she had to check Bendy first. He...melted? That couldn’t mean what Alice feared it meant. She refused to believe that he just--just died!

Alice rushed to the mound of, well, it was ink. An ink attack? But he had been dripping with this stuff earlier. Not much, but she had noticed. Of course, she did. The image of that towering, dark demon, taller than Cuphead or Black Hat, was burned into her memory forever. All darkness and fangs and spikes. She hadn’t been scared, just on guard. He was nothing like the Bendy she knew with his warm, soft, furry arms or cocky smirk. Or at least, she hadn’t thought so, but she had been wrong. It had been Bendy. When she had flinched away, it had been the same hurt in his eyes as when she had yelled at him for saving her what felt like forever ago. She was such an idiot!

Alice dug her gloved hands into the ink without hesitation. The thick, cool liquid stained her gloves and arms. Please, please, let him be here. He couldn’t just be gone. Not after everything they’d been doing. Not after saving her at the casino and getting her halo. Not after showing her that demons could be good! She hadn’t even had a chance to really apologize for judging him again. And when she saw the goggles and knew it was Bendy, for being terrified for him. For not fully seeing him as a true, powerful demon that could handle himself and being afraid that he’d get lost to that darkness that all demons had. She hadn’t given him the credit he deserved, and now she might never get to!

“Bendy!” Alice called out. Her hand found something solid in the ink. She grabbed it and pulled. A small form came free. Alice lifted a shaky hand to wipe the ink away from his face. She pleaded with the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, and all the powers above that she could think of that he would be okay. If she had been in a better mood, she might have thought it was funny that an angel was begging for the life of a demon. Bendy’s pale face was revealed, lax and back to normal. No huge fangs, no black and red eyes. No, his eyes were closed. Was he breathing? She leaned her ear over his mouth, trying to hear or feel his breath. She held her own as she waited for what felt like an eternity. “C’mon,” she whispered. There! There was breath! He was breathing! She let her own breath leave her in rushed relief. “H-he’s breathing!” she cried out. “He’s alive Cala! He’s alive!”

“What!” Cala gasped wetly. “Oh, thank Triton!” She began sobbing again, this time in relief. Alice worked on getting Bendy out of the puddle of ink and away from the dead creature. She didn’t really have anything to clean Bendy up with, and she didn’t know how to wake him either. She was almost as overcome with relief as Cala.
“Cala, I’m going to turn toward you, is that okay?” Alice asked.

“Y-yesss,” Cala hissed weakly as her gasping sobs continued. Alice turned. Cala had her eyes closed and covered her face with her hands. The snakes that made up her hair and her octopus also had all of their eyes closed. She had finally sat up, but she was swaying like she would fall over at any second. Alice approached and rested a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

“I’m going to move you so you can lean against a wall,” Alice told her. Cala nodded weakly. Alice gently scooped her up and carried her next to Bendy. She set the gorgon down and pushed her shoulders back to rest against the wall. “There you go. I wish I had some water to give you.” Cala started to weep harder. Her snakes came in closer, nuzzling her cheeks and neck comfortingly. “It’s okay now, Cala. Bendy is alright. We all are.” Her eyes drifted down the other girl’s form. There were puncture wounds on her tail from the beast. The blood had stopped, but a strange clear liquid was slowly seeping from them.

“I-I-I thought he was dead, and it was all my fault! And that you were going to die next and that, if I looked, I’d turn you to stone! I was so scared!” Cala wept. Alice knelt between her and Bendy. She placed Bendy’s head on her knees and pulled Cala’s head onto her shoulder and hugged her.

“I know Cala. I was too, but we’re okay now. It’s okay,” Alice said softly, feeling a smile pull at her lips. Here she was, between a gorgon and a demon. Boy, her family would never believe this. Cala’s weeping slowed. Where were Mugs and Boris? Were they okay? She was starting to worry.

“Why are you so nice? Most people are terrified of things like Bendy and me,” Cala asked in a soft whisper. “I would think a person of...your position especially would, um, you know.” She trailed off weakly.

“What? Dislike you? Treat you poorly?” Alice smiled at her sadly. Cala nodded slowly. One of her snakes tickled Alice’s neck. Strange, gorgons were supposed to be highly venomous, maybe even more than the basilisk, but she didn’t feel an ounce of fear. “Well, I think at one point I might have, but Bendy and a number of other people have shown me that the world isn’t so black and white. I now know that there are people that should be good and aren’t, just as there are people that are supposed to be bad but are actually heroes.”

Cala hummed. “I’m glad. You’re really warm.” Cala relaxed against her.

Alice let her arms relax. One slipped to Cala’s arm and the other to Bendy’s head. His goggles were a mess, but so were the rest of his clothes. His hair was sticky with ink. Her gloves were already ruined. She gently ran her hand over his head and horns, a little curious of where one started and the other stopped. It seemed his horns might have a bit of fuzz on them strangely enough. But then again, the ink made it hard to be sure. “I’ve even had a few people tell me I’m hot!” Alice made her voice teasing and winked even if the other girl couldn’t see her. Cala burst into surprised giggles. Alice smiled proudly. A worry came to her mind. “So Cala, are you stuck like that or are you going to change back?” Alice couldn’t help but ask.

Cala hummed again as her giggles subsided. “I think I’ll change back once my body has finished cleansing itself of the venom.” Alice blinked but didn’t say anything. They were going to be okay. She felt another rush of emotion but was able to hold it in. They hadn’t stopped Holly yet. She couldn’t afford to breakdown here. She had to be strong. The sound of rushing footsteps came their way.

“Mugman?” Alice asked. She couldn’t be sure, but he said he’d catchup.

“Mugman!” Cala squeaked and sat up. Alice looked at her in surprise before she remembered how
this girl had hung onto Mugs on the flight over here. They must be really close.

“Cala? Are you here?” Mugs voice came from down the hall.

“Over here, Mugman!” Cala called back, her face lighting up. Mugs gasped. He must has spotted the creature’s body. A moment later, Mugs was climbing over it and into Alice’s view.

“Alice! Bendy! Cala! What is the world happened to all of you?” Mugs said as he rushed over to them.

“It’s a baslisk, Mugman! Bendy was able to defeat it, but he hasn’t woken up yet,” Cala fretted.

“Oh man. He’s out, huh?” Mugs knelt down in front of all of them. He looked down at Bendy with concern. He glanced up at Alice.

“I’m fine,” Alice said quickly. Mugs gave her a half smile before turning to Cala.

“And you Cala? Golly, you’re hurt!” Mugs spotted the bite on her tail.

“Oh, I’m okay Mugman. It’s almost done healing.” Cala flushed.

“Are your eyes okay?” Mugs had his hand half raised as if to touch her face. Oh? Maybe closer then close? Alice bit her lip to hide her smile.

“Y-yes, I just don’t want to risk anyone turning to stone,” Cala said, dipping her head down.

Mugs furrowed his brows and frowned. “Can’t you turn it off? You did before.”

Cala giggled. “When I was a giant? That was a stone body, Mugs. I was only ever really looking through the eyes when I was trying to attack you.”

“Oh.” Mugs blinked, and he shared a surprised glance with Alice. “But your legs and such, will they come back or do I need to get ya to the bay?”

“I think they should return. I just need a few more minutes. Then, I can be back to ‘normal,’ and we can go.” Cala used air quotes when she said normal.

“What do you mean normal, Cala?” Mugs sat down cross-legged in front of her. Her tail brushed his leg, and she jerked it away. Mugs smiled, unperturbed. He reached out and took one of her hands in his.

“W-well, this is closer to what I really am...except the water part.” She muttered the last of it.

“So that’s your normal, but to you it’s being different that lets you fit in, right?” Mugs asked.

“Um, yes?” Cala hunched her shoulders her brows knit together. “What are you saying Mugs?”

“Nothing, I just want to understand. I get being different, but I can still go around in public without worrying about hurting anyone. That must be difficult.” Mugs shrugged. Cala flushed further, her face aglow.

“It’s not that big of a deal. I’m used to it,” she mumbled. “What’s odd is how many people seem okay with me lately.”

Mugs grinned. “Of course we are! We’re a real odd group, if you think about it.”
“He’s right Cala. No one in the house would hold what you are against you,” Alice said with a little pang of guilt. If anyone had, it would have been her not so long ago. She was learning that dark didn’t exactly mean evil. Cala beamed at them, her fangs gleamed in the dim light.

“Thanks,” she said softly.

“So what do we do about him?” Mugs pointed down at Bendy.

“As he ever done this before?” Alice asked.

Mugs shrugged. “Yeah, back at the cliffs when we were fighting uh…” He glanced apologetically at Cala. She blushed and covered her cheeks with her hands when he went quiet. “But I don’t know what happened. I was busy. One minute he was big Bendy, and the next time I saw him he was little Bendy again.”

Alice bit her lip and looked down at his relaxed face. She knew demons could shapeshift. It was demon 101 and one of the reasons they were so tricky. But she had never seen one of them pass out from changing before. She didn’t know what went into it, if it took magic or practice or what! She was coming to realize that her people, though they claimed to know their enemy well, they had a glaring holes in their knowledge. It was so frustrating that she couldn’t help.

She had fought a dragon not even an hour ago, she had saved Holly from being killed by Hat, she had succeed in stopping Holly from leaving the city. But now, here she sat. Useless again. And it was always with Bendy.

No that wasn’t true. There had been other times, but it sure felt like it. He was always saving her, but she didn’t seem to ever return the favor.

“Maybe Boris would know?” Cala suggested. Mugs shrugged.

“Well either way, we can’t stay here. We have to start moving again,” Mugs said. “The monsters won’t just wait. It’s only a matter of time before something else shows up.”

“Right,” Alice and Cala agreed.

“Can you get up, Cala?” Mugs asked her. Cala seemed to think about it for a moment.

“I think so,” she said. “But can you guide me? I--I don’t want to open my eyes with all of you here.”

“Sure.” Mugs stood up, her hand still in his. She pushed herself up, her scales scraping against the floor.

“Oh boy, this tail is closer to my other tail, but it’s still so strange.” Cala sighed.

Mugs chuckled. “You are just learning all sorts of ways of moving on the Surface.” Cala smiled and gave a little shrug.

Alice lifted Bendy from her lap and stood. Mugs noticed her prop him against the wall. “Need help with him?” he offered.

“No, it’s fine. You help guide Cala. I have Bendy.” Alice smiled warmly. She could at least do that. Mugs nodded and started helped Cala over the basilisk’s tail and back into the hall. Alice liked that cup man. He had a good heart.

She pulled Bendy onto her back, much like how he had her earlier, and started to follow. He was
very light. She didn’t care about the ink stains, she was already a mess from the dragon fight. Thankfully, she could feel the warmth from his body against her back; unlike that larger form, which had been cold to the touch, made worse by that powerful demon aura.

She hopped over the dead creature easily but was pulled to a stop. She glanced back to see Bendy’s tail had caught on one of the creatures scales. Oops. She gently pulled his tail free and, with no idea what else to do, looped it over her arm twice so it wouldn’t get caught on anything else. Tail spikes. Was that a common problem for Bendy? Did his spike ever get caught on things? She never had seen him struggle with it.

They got down the hall and headed further into the building. Alice smelled smoke. Was something burning? Oh heavens above, they didn’t need a fire right now. It seemed there was smoke coming from somewhere. They heard footsteps coming from a dark corner. Mugs lifted a finger. “Alright, come out, and I won’t shoot.”

“Mugman!” Felix called from the dark hall. There was definitely smoke now. It was filling the building fast.

“Mr. Felix!” Mugs smiled.

“Help us out! We have Holly and the cog, but the fire is spreading fast!” Felix called out. Mugs rushed into the dark. Alice stayed back with Cala.

It only took them a moment to return. Mugs had the cog, Felix beside him. Xedo had Holly slumped between him and Mickey. “Mickey!” Alice gasped. “You’re visible! That’s wonderful!” The mouse looked over at her, smiling, before his lips fell, and his eyes widened with alarm. He pointed behind her. Alice turned but only saw Cala.

“Good stars above!” Xedo gasped. Oh! They wouldn’t know about Cala! Oops!

“It’s fine! This is Cala! She’s a friend!” Alice stood straighter. Cala sunk into herself at hearing her words. “We can explain later.”

“Bendy!” Felix came up beside her. “What happened?” he asked, concern in his dark eyes.

“Like she said, outside! That fire is moving fast thanks to these dry vines.” Mugs grunted under the weight of the gear. Alice glanced behind them to see that the glow of the flames was already appearing.

“Right. Let’s go,” Felix said.

“U-um, is someone still willing to guide me out? I don’t want to open my eyes here,” Cala asked with a distressed grimace, showing her fangs.

“I can do that Cala,” Felix offered and took her hand.

“Thank you Mr. Felix,” Cala said in a small voice. The group trudged through the half destroyed building back to the exit. To their luck, no other monsters appeared, but the fire licked at their slower-than-comfortable progress. Alice felt her throat itch painfully with the smoke, her eyes starting to water. Sweat beaded her brow. Just when she worried they might be in real trouble, the exit appeared. Alice let out a sigh of relief as the cold air brushed her face.

“C’mon,” Mugs said, his arms starting to shake under the weight of the cog. “I left Black Hat and Boris over here.”
“Boris? Is he okay?” Felix asked again with the same concern as before. Mugs nodded. Both he and Mickey let out a sigh of relief. They followed Mugs to a small, manicured lawn. The half destroyed bushes in it shook at their approach. Boris popped out a moment later. His ears were up, the pipe half raised in his hand.

“Mugs! Mr. Felix! Everyone!” Boris’ face lit up at the sight of Mickey and the unconscious Holly. “You did it! You guys got her!” His tail lifted to wag back and forth. “And Mr. Mickey! Hi!” Then he saw Cala, and his ears dropped.

“It’s fine Boris.” Felix smiled warmly. “We’re glad you’re okay.” Any uncertainty the wolf had dropped immediately.

“Thanks! Hi Cala!” Boris greeted.

Cala ducked. “Hi,” she said shily.

Boris looked around at the group. “But where’s Bendy?”

“I have him.” Alice turned so he could see. The little wolf’s eyes widened. “He fought and passed out I think.” Boris hurried to her, eyes wide.

“Is he okay?” Boris asked anxiously.

“I don’t know,” Alice admitted reluctantly.

“Yes, yes,” a voice interrupted them. Black Hat stepped out of the bushes. His clothes were torn and blood stained, except for the hat, which sat just as perfect as always. He cleaned his monocle with a handkerchief, head down until he was satisfied, and lifted it to his face before looking up at them.

“All the warm and fuzzies of being together again, but I would like to remind you that we are on a schedule here.”

“Leave them alone, Hat.” Mugs glared at him. He went back behind the bushes. “We can do whatever we need to here.”

Alice nodded. She followed Mugs, Boris close behind her.

“I have something that might help Bendy wake up,” Felix offered. Boris nodded quickly.

“Yes, go and wake the fledgling while I take care of the girl.” Hat grinned at the unconscious form of Holly. Alice gently put Bendy down with Boris’ help, leaning him against a tree’s trunk.

“We are going to help Holly,” Alice said sternly. She straightened up and saw Mugs drop the gear against the building wall.

“Help her?” Hat’s fanged grin dropped. “I was just going to kill her.”

Cala gasped. Mickey paled and gave her a panicked look. Alice scowled and moved to stand between him and the group holding Holly up. “Mr. Hat, we talked about this! You promised to help!”

“But she attacked me! I have a right to defend myself!” the demon growled at her. Alice rolled her eyes.

“She’s unconscious now. She’s hardly attacking you.” Alice sighed.

“Exactly! Now our chance to kill her.” Hat gestured to the girl. Alice dropped her head in her hand.
“I don’t understand why you’re struggling with this. It’s really simple.”

“You aren’t killing her, Hat!” Alice snapped.

Hat’s eyes went black and red. His aura darkened and chilled with his anger. “Demon law dictates th—”

“We’re on the Surface, and she isn’t a demon!” Alice snapped. “Angel law claims her safety from an attacking demon that isn’t contracted or on claimed territory.” Hat hissed. Alice turned her back on him. She looked at the startled fox and mouse. “Lay her on the grass.”

“Don’t think I will help you then. I won’t save the life or mind of this withering maggot!” Hat seethed.

“But we have an agreement,” Xedo protested.

“Then, let her see proper punishment once we are done. We save her, then she comes with me,” Hat snarled at the fox.

“No way,” Mugs cut in. Hat turned his glare on the ceramic man. “Hat, if you aren’t helping, then leave us alone.”

“B-but we need him, don’t we?” Boris asked fearfully. “What do we do?”

Alice sighed and glared at the stubborn demon. He glared right back without any remorse. “You know the city might be destroyed, countless people are suffering and dying, she might go insane or worse!” Alice gestured to Holly.

Hat snorted. “And what is any of that to me, little angel?” So much for empathy.

“Well.” Xedo glanced at Alice to Holly to Bendy. “Technically we have another demon here.” Boris’ eyes widened with alarm.

“But he won’t know what to do!” the wolf protested. Felix was digging through his bag, looking for something.

Hat laughed. “The fledgling is more likely to drive her mad than that gear.” He sneered at Alice. She lifted her chin challengingly.

“We’ll see then, won’t we?” Alice ground out. Felix found a bottle and uncorked it in front of Bendy’s face. They waited in tense silence as Bendy cracked his eyes open with a groan.

His, thankfully normal, light eyes roved the group until they focused on Boris. “Hey, what happened?”

“You would have to tell us.” Boris smiled.

“You fought a basilisk and won!” Cala piped up. His face dropped slack for a moment before a look that Alice could only describe as pure terror crossed his face. He was on his feet the next instant, looking around.

“Woah, woah, it’s okay Bendy.” Felix stood up. “It’s not here.”

“You managed to kill it,” Alice told him. That didn’t seem to calm him down. He looked around with haunted eyes. “Bendy?”
“I--I--I think I saw it,” he muttered. His hands went to his head. “Gold and hateful and--” Hat was suddenly standing over him. He wacked him on the back of the head. “Ouch!” Bendy barked and glared up at him.

“Don’t think on cursed things, especially those with death curses. They can still affect you,” Hat chastised him.

“But he couldn’t have.” Cala shook her head. “Anything that makes eye contact dies instantly.”

Hat hummed. “I have a few ideas.” He smirked. “We can stand around and I can talk or you can decide what you are going to do with that before she wakes up and I am forced to kill her.” He waved a lazy hand at Holly.

“What!” Bendy barked. “Wait, when did we get here? How did we get Holly? Is she okay? What the hell is going on!” He looked around at everyone. “And why the hell did Cala lose her legs and that guy finally show himself?” He pointed at Mickey. The mouse shrugged helplessly.

Alice decided to step in before any of the others. As much as she hated to admit it, Hat was right. They didn’t know how much time they had until Holly woke up. They had to act on the chance they had! “I know it’s confusing, Bendy. We can all share stories later, but right now we still have an emergency.”

He looked up at her, the confusion and fear melting away to determination. “What’s going on?”

“Hat refuses to save Holly. We don’t know how long we have. I have to enter her mental plain, and I need a demon’s help to remove the cog’s influence,” Alice said quickly.

“What!” Bendy turned a fiery glare on Black Hat. “The cuss she means you aren’t saving Holly? That’s what we brought you for!”

“I don’t have to do anything. She has attempted to kill me a number of times and has insulted me. I have a right to punish her.” Hat growled. “But your little angel refuses me my revenge.”

Bendy scoffed. “No kidding! She’s tried to kill all of us at this point! Get over it!”

“Not for the summons she used!” Hat snapped and glowered at the much shorter demon. Bendy blinked.

“You don’t mean the--”

“Don’t!” Hat’s eyes flashed in warning. Bendy snapped his mouth shut. There seemed to be some kind of understanding pass between them. Boris looked between them, confused.

“What?” Boris asked. “What did she attack you with?”

Felix’ ears perked. “No,” he breathed with understanding.

Bendy turned to him and made a strange cutting motion over his throat. Hat glared daggers at the cat adventurer. “You have something to share cat?” he asked softly. “I would choose my words carefully if I were you.”

Felix’ eyes widened, and he quickly shook his head. “No, no. Nothing. But I don’t think that’s a reason to not help, sir.” Hat snorted and lifted his chin with finality.

Bendy scowled. “So, that’s it?”
“Yes, nothing you say or do will convince me,” Hat promised.

“Fine, who needs ya?” Bendy stepped up to Alice. “Whadda I got to do?”

Hat’s visible eye widened. “You’ll only kill yourself and them,” he taunted.

Bendy paused. He looked over his shoulder at the other demon. “And why the cuss do you care? Either do it or go jump a cussing cliff, Hat. I don’t have the time to deal with you.” Bendy dismissed him with a flick of his spiked tail. Mugs snickered. Hat scowled but didn’t say anything else. “So, what do we do Alice?”

Alice looked at Hat warily. Truth was, she’d rather it had been Hat. He was experienced, he knew the magic and workings of a soul that was unique to only demons. It was obvious that Bendy had never done anything like this before. The consequences to themselves and Holly were made that much more grim. Still, she turned back to Bendy. He had determination and a good heart. They still had a chance. “Lie down.” Alice indicated a spot on the grass. She sat down next to the possessed girl. Bendy sat next to Alice. Alice nodded and laid down. Bendy followed. “Now give me your hand.” She pulled her stained gloves off and offered her hand to Bendy. He slipped his hand in hers. His cool aura brushed her awareness as she focused on her magic, more agitated and colder than usual. His hand sat warm and callused in hers. His fur was soft. She pushed those thoughts from her mind.

She turned to Felix, Boris, Xedo, Mickey, and Mugman, all of them were watching quietly. “We shouldn’t be more than fifteen minutes. Even if we are longer than that, don’t unlink us, and try not to move us unless absolutely necessary,” She instructed.

“What should we do if you don’t wake up?” Boris asked weakly.

“Prepare their funerals,” Hat ground out sarcastically.

“Shut it,” Mugs grumbled against the wall next to the cog. “They’ll be fine Boris.” Mugs told him with a smile. Alice was amazed at how quickly his facial expressions and tone could change.

Alice nodded. “Okay, here we go.”

“Good luck,” Felix told them. Bendy grinned. Alice focused on weaving her magic into her hands. Her halo warmed with energy. She reached out and touched Holly’s temple. There was a flash of light as the link between their minds was formed from the rune she held in her mind and then darkness.

Bendy felt like he was falling. It was odd. He knew he wasn’t going anywhere, but he still felt like he needed to reach out for anything to grab hold of. But there was nothing to grab. He couldn’t see or feel anything.

When his vision cleared, he was standing in the strangest place he’d ever seen. He was at the edge of a scene of chaos. It was a broad, empty space with distant, white walls. There were...puzzle pieces on the ground everywhere? He looked around and realized that Alice was nowhere to be seen. Well cuss. This was bad. How did he lose someone in a person’s head? That was were he was at, right? He turned and saw that behind him were rows upon rows of shelves. Filling every single one of them were round orbs of different colors. His eyes hurt to look. There were red, blue, yellow, green and purple. The colors were everywhere. Some of them were even a mix of colors. Good sun above, it was too much! To his side was an enormous, black tower that shot up as far as his eyes could see before hitting a round, dome-like ceiling. A line...or maybe a bridge connected it to a round room
attached to the ceiling at the center of it all. There was something beyond the tower, but he couldn’t quite see what it was because it was too far away, and the shelves that were everywhere were in the way.

He sighed and rubbed his eyes. They’d hurt ever since he woke up from that...was it a dream? He guessed it was. Another flash of gold and horror hit him. He snapped his eyes open to see the colored orbs again and chase the memory away. If Hat said it was bad to think about it, then he’d listen. He had a splitting headache anyway. He went up to one of the orbs to distract himself from his disquieted mind. Ha...looking at a mind to distract a mind. This was weird.

There was a small, silver plaque underneath the orb. It said, “Should have listened to dad.” Bendy glanced at the orb. It was purple.

A suspiciously familiar little girl in pigtails held a stick, kneeling in the dirt with a field behind her. A broad shouldered, balding man in overalls stood behind her, talking to a giant fly, who leaned on a baseball bat. Her tongue stuck out as she drew in the dirt, concentrating hard. After a moment, she sat back with a proud grin on her face. The shape she drew looked like a squished circle with a snake running through it. She reached out, waving her hand dramatically. The drawing started to glow. Her smile widened, and she leaned forward.

In the background, her father glanced over. His head whipped back a moment later, and he darted forward, knocking over the fly. He grabbed the small Holly and yanked her away just as the rune burst into flames, knocking them both to the ground.

Small Holly blinked a few times, sitting in her father’s lap, hands still out. Her eyebrows had been singed clean off, and her hair was sticking out in odd directions, glowing a little in places. Her father pressed his lips together ruefully and patted her hair down, putting out the burnt ends.

Bendy blinked. A memory? That had to be Holly, and the guy must be her dad. Huh. Interesting. He turned to another orb. This one was yellow. Underneath the plaque read, “Stories about the sea.” This time it was an older Holly. She looked to be in her mid-teens and wore a flower print dress. She sat in the middle of a crowd of kids, holding a baby in a legless romper and a sailor’s hat. Four other boys sat next to her, all in navy suits as well. At the front of the room was an extremely muscled man in an official navy outfit, holding a pipe in his mouth. A thin woman stood next to him. She had short hair that curled next to her ears. She leaned down and took the baby from Holly, saying something. Holly smiled back at her. A moment later, Holly's father walked in with an elegant looking woman that had a tight bun at the back of her head. She was holding a clipboard and started to count the children. A moment later, she said something to the navy man. He sat down, pulling out a bowl of...spinach? before taking a bite. A smaller bowl was handed out to the children, most of whom ignored it. Holly grabbed a handful and chewed on it cheerfully. When the navy man was finished, he leaned forward and started to talk.

Bendy stepped back. So any of these were memories? Every single one? What did all the colors mean? And why were some a solid color and others a mix of two and even three! He paused at the puzzle pieces. And what were these? He looked around to see if there were any that were put together.

Some were scattered about in piles, others were connected together in small and larger clumps. Screwdrivers, wrenches, bolts and a bunch of other kinds of tools with arms and legs carried puzzle pieces around, trying to fit them. On a closer look, he realized each puzzle piece also had a phrase on it, just like the plaques for the orbs. There was a large, finished puzzle nearby. At the head a sign read, “What is Alice?” He looked at the pieces and saw things like, “Alice jumped ten feet to catch the window sill” or “I saw Alice on my angel map.”
“Figuring things out?” Bendy muttered to himself. He blinked and then snorted. “She’s ‘puzzling’ things out! Oh stars. Alice would love this place.” He looked to one of the screwdrivers. “So you work here or somethin’?”

The screwdriver, who had a puzzle piece tucked under his arm, blinked at Bendy. “Uh yeah...I guess,” he said dully, his eyes black and heavy. He reached down and tore a piece off of Alice’s puzzle and replaced it with the one he was carrying. Bendy blinked and looked at the new piece.

It read, “You can corrupt an angel’s magic with pure, thousand year old obsidian.” A quick glance at what the screwdriver was carrying away showed him the phrase on the old piece. “She loves puns.”

“Woah, woah, wait a second,” Bendy said, quickly stepping up beside the screwdriver. “What are you doing exactly?”

The screwdriver paused, giving him a blank look. “Maintenance. Gotta pull out the old, useless information and stick it in storage. Headquarter’s orders.”

Bendy hesitated. He didn’t know how a brain worked. He didn’t know if he could mess with this without there being unforeseen problems later. Still, he’d rather Holly hang onto the love of puns than some messed up way to corrupt angel magic. He reluctantly withdrew from the odd scene and wandered down a random hall. Where would Alice go? Where should he go? He had no clue. After walking for a time, he spotted a familiar face. Cuphead? He approached the orb. It’s was purple and red for some reason...maybe? Bendy knew he shouldn’t, but he was curious.

It was his Holly this time, hiding behind a tree, watching Cuphead and Mugman walk down a street. Suddenly, something white crawled from her pocket, leaping into the air towards the two cupmen. It smacked Mugman in the face, then bounced towards Cuphead, who caught it easily. Snowball. Holly’s eyes widened in fear from the spot where she was hiding. Cuphead turned, searching. He said something, and Holly’s shoulders hunched, but she remained stiff and still. Cuphead’s eyes got a mischievous tint to them, and he held up Snowball, saying something to the small animal.

Holly’s eyes widened, and she quickly moved from behind the tree, saying something. Cuphead snickered and said something in reply. Her frown deepened, and she said something back, hand reaching out for the small animal. Cuphead raised a brow. They talked for a few more minutes, Mugman’s face creasing with worry as it continued. Then Holly’s eyes widened with excitement. Bendy couldn’t hear what she was saying, but he’d seen that expression enough times to know that she was asking question after question.

She seemed to realize this and then stopped.

Cuphead blinked and stared. Then a smirk appeared on his lips. He took a step forward. Holly looked up in surprise and fear. He clapped his hands on either side of her shoulders. Then as she shrieked soundlessly, Cuphead leaned over and hooked the back of her coat on a nearby tree branch. The schmuck! Was this the ‘tree princess’ stardust he had been calling her? Holy heavens above! Cuphead! Bendy scoffed and rolled his eyes. He would need to have a talk with both Cup and Holly once this was all done.

He continued on down the hall. So that memory was recent. Did that mean he was going to get somewhere? Where these things came from maybe?

He wandered for a time until suddenly he heard a blood curdling shriek. Bendy jumped a foot in the air and swung his arms up defensively. What the hell was that! He quietly crept toward what he thought was the source of the noise.
It continued. “Don’t step into the water! You’re an angel. You’ll corrupt faster than Aunt Olive’s pudding. Then you’ll kill us all! Things are going badly enough, thank you very much!!” a male, slightly whiny voice said.

“But I need to get over there. What do you suggest I do?” That was Alice’s voice! Bendy hurried around a corner.

“Aren’t you an angel? Can’t you fly?” the voice said hopefully. When Bendy turned the last corner he saw an enormous lake. It was pitch black with gold sparkling across it in the form of bubbles that were constantly rising into the air. He stopped suddenly because he saw Alice a couple rows over, standing on top of one of the shelves. It had been completely submerged. A thin, purple character in a suit with a large mustache sat on top of some sort of cube floating in the water. Alice was looking at him in concern.

“I’m sorry, I can’t fly now. Maybe there’s something I can throw to you and pull you over?” Alice suggested.

The character put a hand over his brow. “No. I fear that this may be the end of me.”

Bendy raised a brow at the liquid and the strange dramatic character. Whelp. He stepped into the liquid and waited for the ‘end,’ as he put it. When nothing happened, Bendy rolled his eyes and headed over to the two through the river of...whatever this gold-black stuff was.

A second later, the purple man saw him. If possible, his eyes widened to take up half his face. He let out the most girly scream Bendy had ever heard in his life, leaping several feet into the air. Ah cuss, just what he needed. A zany. “We’re gonna die! It’s already too late! The cog has a demon in its clutches, and we’ll never be able to stop him. Ahhhhh! Agony! What a bitter-sweet short life this was!!!” Somehow he managed to land back on the cube and cowared, hands covering his face.

Alice turned, startled, wide eyes on him. Bendy lifted a hand in a lazy wave. “Hey, Alice.” She blinked at him.

“Hello Bendy.” Alice nodded to him. “Do you feel okay?”

Bendy shrugged. “Besides the killer headache I’ve had since waking up and my eyes hurting a bit, I’m fine. I’ve been looking around for ya.” He stuck his hands in his pockets. “So what have you been up to?”

She blinked again and turned to the purple fellow. “I think he’s fine,” she said to him. She focused on Bendy again. “Just trying to get to the headquarters of this place.”

The purple man peeked out from in-between his fingers. “Don’t believe him! That water corrupts everything it touches,” he hissed and cowared again.

Bendy scowled and turned to him. “Excuse me?” he grumbled and started to walk over to the floating man.

“Ahhh! Don’t eat me!” The purple character looked around, snatched a book floating by in the water, and desperately tried to paddle away.

Bendy rolled his eyes again. Oh the humanity. “I’m not gonna eat you, ya mook. Calm down.” Bendy lifted his hands in a placating manner. He approached the purple man, the weird liquid reached his chest before he got to the box the panicked man was clinging to. Then, the smell hit him. Sweet and fruity and so much more pungent than any fear he’d smelled before. His head swam in it. He shook it and held his breath. Oh man, that was strong!
The purple guy only paddled harder, moving about an inch. “Would you chill?” Bendy growled. He grabbed the box that was under the surface of the dark-whatever-it-was and started pushing it toward Alice. The purple guy froze, staring at Bendy.

“Be careful Bendy,” Alice called out to them. Bendy grit his teeth. No kidding. His lungs were starting to protest from the lack of air. Bendy pushed the box in front of him and turned away from the guy to steal a quick breath. Bad idea! The scent made his mouth water and his stomach clench like he hadn’t eaten for days. He bit down on his lip. The pain caused his head to clear a bit. He pushed the box away from him and toward Alice.

A moment later, the box bobbed right next to the submerged shelf, and the purple guy hopped quickly next to Alice. He turned back to stare at Bendy. Bendy very hesitantly took a small breath. It was still there but not as strong. He let out a relieved sigh.

“Well, gee whizz,” the guy said, looking at Alice and then back at Bendy.

“You’re welcome,” Bendy muttered and headed to the far side of the hall.

Alice nodded. “Thank you for doing that Bendy.” She smiled at him.

The purple one ducked. “Yes. Thank you, Bendy, thank you.” He tilted his head, hiding slightly behind Alice. “Exactly how did you do that?” he asked in wonder.

“What?” Bendy asked as he pulled himself up on a shelf and out of the odd liquid. It wasn’t hot or cold, just a weird wet pressure on him. As he got out, it slipped off of him like he was oil in water.

The guy bobbed his head. “Allow me to demonstrate.” He looked around and plucked a memory off a shelf. He examined it for a moment. “Ah, puberty. It won’t be too terrible if we never get this one back.” Then he chucked it into the lake. The orb hit the water, disappearing for a moment and floating. The orb, which had previously been bright blue, started to get threads of black and then totally turned black after a moment. It sunk out of view. “It’s even worse when its an aspect of Holly’s personality,” the guy said with a shiver. “They turn into tools.”

“You’re a Personality?” Alice asked, staring at the now black orb with wide eyes.

“No,” the guy said, adjusting his bow tie. “I’m one of her emotions. Fear is the name.”

Bendy felt his gut twist in equal disgust and desire at the same time. Fear. That was Holly’s Fear. No wonder he was so potent. Bendy grimaced. Oh man, it was so wrong. So starfallen wrong. Sun and moon help him, could he get a break?

“It’s nice to meet you, Fear.” Alice turned to him and smiled politely.

Fear brightened and smiled at her. “And you’re Alice Angel!” He turned to Bendy. “And Bendy of the B-Brothers! Connie said you would come down here, but I didn’t believe her.” He frowned, twiddling his thumbs nervously. “Thought she’d spent too much time down here and had taken a metaphorical dive into our non-existent memory dump, if you know what I mean.” Bendy didn’t, but he wasn’t going to waste time asking for clarification.

“Know where the cog is?” Bendy asked, deciding to get straight to the point.

Fear turned to him. “It’s up there.” He pointed at the bubble room that was attached to the ceiling of the strange place. “It’s embedded in the panel at headquarters.”

Bendy turned to look at the ridiculously tall tower. “Of course it is,” Bendy said deadpan. “Any easy
way of getting there?"

Fear let out a high pitched noise of negativeness. “We could use the train of thought. It’s fast, but that’s down unless we wake Holly up,” Fear said.

“Cuss no,” Bendy snipped. They didn’t need the psycho-killer-possessed Holly awake.

Fear gave him a...fearful look. “Well...other than that, there's supposed to be a way to headquarters through each of the Island's of Personality. The easiest used to be through the Shipyard. But the Hungry Tower ate all the ships.” Now that Bendy wasn’t distracted, he noticed that there were several large structures surrounding the lake of black water. Nearest them was a wreckage of wood, masts, and what looked like shreds of sails.

“That was the Shipyard. This one's Knowledge Nook.” Fear swallowed and pointed. Directly across from them was a huge, wide building. He thought he saw books flying around the windows. A large one snapped at a screw, and it ran away. “And then there's what used to be the Heart Home.” Fear glanced at their right, looking at the tower Bendy had seen earlier. He flinched. “Now it’s that ugly thing that I’ve dubbed Hungry Tower. There should be a way to headquarters through each of them. That’s what Connie said.” He looked down, worry crossing his face. “If she were here, Connie could just take us there herself too. She’s the last island.”

Bendy raised a brow. “Wait, is Connie a person or an island?” He looked to the oddly colored man.

“Both?” Fear replied. “She’s a manifestation of a core memory, an event in Holly’s life that makes up a major part of who Holly is. Her full name is Conscience.” Fear looked down, muttering under his breath. “She kept on sneaking up to headquarters after all the other emotions lost their screws.” He pressed his lips together.

“She used the control panel to try to do damage control and keep Holly from doing more terrible things like...” He hesitated, thinking. “Acting out against you, Alice, even though Holly knew you were suspicious of her. Then she managed to convince Holly to trap Mickey instead of killing him when he followed her home. She hoped that Alice would find the mouse and stop her,” Fear said proudly. “She’s been sticking as many gaps in Holly’s logic as she could for days.”

Alice and Bendy shared a surprised look. So it could have been worse? Stars, and he had been so oblivious! Then, Fear shuddered. “But once she’s touched the control panel, it started to make her sick! She turned gray, and she’s slowly been fading away.” He sniffed and grabbed at his bowtie in worry. “And now she hasn’t come back!” He started to cry and then blew loudly into his shirt. Gross.

“Well, if we can get to it, we can stop all of this.” Alice told him reassuringly. She put a hand on his shoulder and smiled. “If you help us, I’m sure we can get there all the faster.”

Fear nodded, blowing again loudly. “If we go up through one of the islands, it’s possible. But Knowledge Nook has gotten so big and the books have gotten so aggressive that I’m not sure whether we can get to the elevator.” He twiddled his thumbs nervously. “It’s more than twice the size it used to be.” He shuddered. “And that Hungry Tower...” He shuddered again. “We can't go through there.”

“Bendy and I will protect you from the books if you’ll guide us,” Alice offered.

“What about the tower?” Bendy tilted his head. He flicked his tail into the weird liquid and watched it slide off like it couldn’t stick.
“It used to be this sweet little cottage. Then, it changed into that and *eats* things. Like I said. It ate the poor Shipyard, destroying Holly’s love of people.” Fear folded his arms. “And sense of humor.” Bendy snorted.

Fear shook his head *hard.* “I have no idea what’s up there, but I refuse to find out!” He raised a finger dramatically. “I don’t want to get *eaten.*”

Bendy frowned. “So your just gonna hide until this place falls apart?” He raised an unimpressed brow at the emotion.

Fear pulled a purple combat helmet out of nowhere and buckled it onto his head. “Sounds like a plan. I’ll be in the hull of one of the ships.”

“And when all the hiding places are gone and you are all alone, you’re okay with that?” Bendy tilted his head. Alice looked between them with furrowed brows.

Fear started to sweat large bullets. His fingers twiddled faster. That smell was getting stronger again. “I…” He cleared his throat. “I, uh…”

“Because right now you have a demon and an angel willing to be your defenders, but we aren’t going to stick around forever. We are going there.” He flicked his spiked tail to the bubble room sticking out of the ceiling. “And we may succeed, and we may fail, but we aren’t coming back.” Bendy smirked.

“B-b-b-but I’m pretty useless?” he said weakly, shrugging his shoulders with a fake smile.

“You know how this mind works...or worked. You know where we are going and how to get there. You know that this stuff,” Bendy pointed at the lake, “is dangerous for most. That’s more than I know right now pal.”

“He’s right Fear! We could really use your help,” Alice added.

Fear ‘eeped.’ “Okay…” he said, rivulets of sweat coming off his forehead. Bendy tried to clear his throat. He thought he’d get used to the smell given time. But no. It was only getting worse. Maybe bringing this guy *was* a bad idea. This was probably the closest Bendy could get to him with a clear head. He mentally marked a six foot distance from the annoying emotion.

“No time like the present then,” Bendy said and stood up.

Fear scurried across the top of the shelf. Then, his body stretched out, the upper half reaching. When his hands touched the shelf Bendy was on, his lower half snapped into him like a slinky. He flipped over, his feet now stretching out for the next shelf until he had footing. Then his upper half snapped towards his lower. He turned towards them, twiddling his thumbs again. “K-Knowledge N-Nook then. Angry books are better than whatever is in the Hungry Tower.”

Bendy had to hold his breath as soon as the emotion moved toward him. Oh. This was definitely a bad idea. Maybe he should tell Alice? He glanced at the girl as she nimbly made her way over. She would be okay with it, after all. He opened his mouth and the look of fear she had on her face when she saw him as his taller self flashed in his mind. Maybe not. He snapped his mouth shut. He could handle this. He was fine. She didn’t need more to worry about.

The three of them continued forward, skirting the large tower and passing through the field of puzzles Bendy had been in when he’d first arrive. Fear called it ‘The Puzzler.’ Alice laughed for a good three minutes just like Bendy thought she would.
More pieces were being replaced. A large truck labeled ‘mulch’ was being filled with the pieces that had been pulled up. Surprisingly, Fear had them sneak in the back and sit among the piled puzzle pieces. “If I end up in a woodchipper, I’m gonna flay you,” Bendy muttered under his breath. It was impossible to avoid the smell and the watering of his mouth.

Fear seemed to sense this. He ‘eeped’ and backed away quickly, unfortunately running into a pile of puzzles which collapsed on top of him into an avalanche. “Help me,” he squeaked almost inaudibly from the pile.

“Oh dear!” Alice rushed to help unbury the idiot. Bendy stayed back and crossed his arms. This was ridiculous. What the cuss was wrong with him? Well, he knew what, but that didn’t mean he wanted to believe it. “Bendy help,” Alice called to him.


“He looks hungry. Like the tower,” Fear said in a muffled voice from the pile. “And it doesn’t help that Holly read in a book very recently that demons can eat fear.”

Alice blinked and looked in between Bendy and Fear. “He looks like the tower?” Bendy snorted and chuckled. Alice smiled.

The pile of puzzle pieces remained silent. Alice went back to pulling the pieces aside. “Even if that’s the situation, Bendy won’t hurt you. He’s a good person,” Alice told the pile gently. Bendy’s eyes widened.

The emotion popped out of the pile like a gopher. “I-If you say so…” He looked over the edge of the cart. “We’re almost there.” Bendy followed his line of sight.

The building loomed, not as tall as the tower, but large. It was several stories high and very wide. Little screwdrivers and cogs were working at the side, widening it even more. The truck rolled into a wide, garage-like room inside. More tools started to unload the cart. Bendy and Alice jumped out. Fear tripped and tumbled onto the ground before scrambling up.

The emotion scurried from the truck as a screwdriver raised a metallic brow at him. “A bit old to be pretending you’re a puzzle piece,” he commented. Fear raised a finger, opened his mouth, but no sound came out. Instead, he turned back to them and pointed. “Up the stairs, onto the main floor of the library.”

Alice and Bendy shared a glance. “You used to pretend to be a puzzle piece when you were younger?” He smirked.

“Puzzles were considered very much in demand for five year olds!” Fear said defensively.

Bendy and Alice smothered their laughter as they headed into library. The room they had started in had several tools taking the pieces and sorting them. They went up a short set of stairs and arrived in a hallway with a long embroidered carpet. It was a wide hall with a set of stairs every couple feet. There were doors everywhere. Each was unique. Some were short, some were tall, some were wide, some were thin, some didn’t even look that much like doors. Bendy saw multiple levels of walkways and doors going up as far as he could see. It was huge.

Fear scurried down the hall in front of them, darting from supporting pillar to supporting pillar with a nervous, flickering gaze. Alice and Bendy walked casually in, watching the nervous emotion with mild interest. Alice leaned over to whisper to Bendy. Bendy swallowed his annoyance at her have to
lean at all. “Are you really okay, Bendy?” Her dark eyes were full of concern.

Bendy hesitated. If there was ever a time to tell her, now was as good as any. “I, uh, what do you mean?” Bendy deflected nervously.

“You’re avoiding him as much as he is avoiding you. I know what he said was a bit much, but you shouldn’t let it get to you.” Alice glanced at the purple man and then back to Bendy.

Bendy scoffed. “I don’t care what that string bean thinks. I’ve heard worse.” Alice furrowed her brows at that, confusion entering her eyes. Bendy sighed, still not comfortable with the new struggle he was facing. “He’s maybe...a little….right,” Bendy muttered.

“Right?” Alice blinked.

“Fear, um, smells great. Like the best dinner layout I’ve ever smelled, and I feel like I haven’t eaten in days,” Bendy admitted and grimaced. He watched her eyes widen and jaw drop. This was where she called him a monster. He sure felt like one saying it out loud. He didn’t even know what it meant to want to devour fear. Hat had made it sound like a good thing, but Bendy wasn’t an idiot. This was terrible. She had to be thinking about how vile he was. He looked at his feet, not wanting to see the surprise become disgust on her face or that look she gave him before. The fear that had come from her then...

Instead, a hand rested on his shoulder. “Thank you for telling me,” Alice said gently. “But you won’t, will you?”

“Stars no!” Bendy snapped without hesitation. He looked up, disgruntled, only to see her smile. He paused.

“And that’s what makes you different, Bendy,” Alice told him. The tense knot in his gut seemed to disappear with that smile.

Just then, Bendy noticed Fear half holding a door open to one of the rooms. His face had frozen, and the edge of his eye was twitching. Now what? “Something up?” Bendy asked the emotion.

The emotion’s eyes rolled up, and he fell back, as stiff as a board. When Bendy looked in the room, he saw hundreds if not thousands of...spiders? They looked sort of like spiders, but instead of a head and a thorax, each had a book. They scurried around the room. When they saw the open door, several raced for it. Alice acted fast and slammed the door shut. There was the sound of collision on the other side. Bendy winced. “What...the cuss was that?”

Alice shook her head. “I guess those are the books.”

“Stars,” Bendy breathed. “This might be a bit tougher than I had thought.” Alice nodded in agreement. She knelt down beside Fear. Bendy, of course, stayed back.


Fear groaned miserably. “Is it over yet?” he asked.

While Alice continued to try and reason with the unconsolable emotion, Bendy heard something that made his ears prick. The next door over was also open. Fear had probably already looked in there. A voice was coming through it, and for some reason, it sounded incredibly familiar. Bendy glanced back at them before creeping up to the doorway to peer in.

Unlike the first room, this one was incredibly organized. It was an auditorium with several rising
rows. They were filled with all sorts of toons sitting and listening. At the center was a standing area and a little desk with a chalk board behind it. Then, he saw who was speaking.

The owl made a grand gesture to the diagram on the board. “And yoo-oo-u can see here that the rune for ‘space’ and the one for ‘time’ are in relation, both having the same base symbol.” The owl blinked his large eyes and chuckled. “One could say they ‘expand’ in different directions from the base but are absolutely related, proving the advancements they made in science.” Wilson’s large eyes zeroed in on Bendy. The demon’s stomach dropped to his feet. A chill raced up his spine. The owl stepped around the standing area, slowly making his way up the stairs. “The Micco were a culture that may have been more advanced than anything we have today. It will take a real genius to understand their systems and inventions.” He smiled. “Isn’t that right, Mr. Bendy?”

Chapter End Notes

More beautiful art! This week we have art from fantastickingdomus! So much beautiful art.

First off, there’s a scene from last chapter when Snowball saved the day. XD I laughed so hard.
Next, those of you who checked out the Inky Extras interview might know who this handsome fella is. Isaac! Alice's brother!
Are you sure it's me?

(I hate drawing swords)

we can try

Alice and Isaac together!
Isaac questioning Bendy and Alice's current situation.
A beautiful picture of Cala with a pair of gams!
More Cala
And last but not least, a fiery scene...Wiston really needs to learn his boundaries, huh? I love how Cup is laughing in the background.
The Hungry Tower

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"Greeting ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, welcome to the latest chapter!" Mic smiled and bowed. "Today is a real wallop for Bendy! He keeps thinking they'll get there but he sure is tired of the head games! Let's see how far he gets!"

Chapter Notes

Hello hello!
Dear readers! Sorry for the lateness. Life happened. I'm almost snowed in now. Hope it clears up soon. I already have watched a bunch of people slip and slide down the roads.

Besides that, Happy Birthday Bendy! You're two years old! ;;;;;\^w^/;;;;; (How it really been THAT long?!)

And I had a realization this week...the new avatar Mercowe choose is that odd owl-cat and a griffin is an eagle-lion. Thus there is a bird-cat relation meaning that Mercowe's distant family is the one that took Cuphead and it's on her to get him back. Maybe. If that's what happened. Or he's dead. Either way.

Whelp! Enough of me babbling. Enjoy the chapter! Enjoy the amazing art. And thanks for all the love, support, comments, and art! This humble ghost is so grateful! Speaking of ghosts...Wilson is here, isn't he? ;3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy’s throat was as dry as the desert. His mind blank. The owl didn’t look anything like how Bendy remembered. He was plumper, his feathers were smooth and shiny, he was dressed in a suit that seemed right for a professor, a vest and tweed jacket. Chalk was on his feathery fingers and a gentle smile on his beak. He wasn’t haggard, worn down, or grief-stricken. No, he appeared younger, vibrant and energetic. His huge, round eyes lacked the haunted look of a cornered animal.

“H-h-how are you he-here!” Bendy choked out around the lump in his throat. “I saw you die!” He was shaking. He couldn’t stop. This wasn’t possible. He had to be going crazy! The last time he had seen this bird, he was a mess of feathers, blood, and broken bones.

Wilson tutted with laughter. “Now, now young man. I am not the owl you met. I am a figment of Holly’s imagination, a conglomeration of what she knows about ‘Wilson.’ Although, in some sense, I suppose you could say I live on in a way. My lessons and influence touch the lives of others through my research and books. Either way, I am a ghost or memory of what Holly imagined I am like or was like.”

Bendy shivered. Yeah. A ghost. It would still come up in nightmares. Wilson seemed to pick up on
his mood. “Breathe boy. It’s okay.” Bendy let in a gasp and looked at the owl’s kind, sad eyes. The same eyes. No. Not the same. This wasn’t real. “This mind is suffering from a corrupting bond with a machine piece, correct? I am sure you are here to help her. If you can forgive my presence, I would like to help you.”

Bendy coughed and forced a smile. Guilt twisted his already suffering stomach. “No, don’t apologize. Why would you apologize for existing?”

Wilson smiled kindly. “I don’t wish to upset you, but I believe I can help you.”

It was eerie that this Wilson and the one he met so long ago both just wanted to help. Sure, the real one had been desperate, but he still wanted to help Bendy. He hadn’t even known anything about him besides him being a demon and...being sick. “Sure. Thank you, Mr. Wiseton,” Bendy agreed quietly. Back then, he had ignored the owl, argued with him, kicked him out. It was something he regretted. He wouldn’t make the same mistake twice—even if it was all a sick illusion.


“Hello dear, you’re Alice. It’s nice to meet you. I am Wilson Wiseton, or at least, the one that exists in Holly’s mind.” The owl smiled at the angel warmly. Alice stared in fascination.

“It’s nice to meet you,” Alice said. Wilson shook her hand. “Um, we gotta get going, Bendy.”

“Yes, you are correct. I believe I can help,” Wilson said. “Please follow me.”

When they walked out the door, Fear had finally sat up. He eyed the flying books around them warily. He blinked when Wilson walked out the door with Bendy and Alice. “Huh? Wilson? Have you seen Connie?” Fear asked, his eyes flickering around nervously.

Wilson’s large eyes flickered with worry. “I am sorry. I have not seen her in some time.” Bendy flinched. This was just too much. His mind kept dragging him back to Sillyvision. Every sad look, every gesture that was familiar. It would drag up the horror. The blood, the feathers, murmuring crowd. His hands sticky with blood as dread and fear slowly—A hand rested on his shoulder.

“Bendy?” Alice asked softly. She was watching him with kind, worried eyes. “Are you okay?”

Bendy cleared his throat and shook the memory away like cobwebs. “Yeah, I’m fine.” Her eyes told him she didn’t believe him.

“If anything becomes too much, tell me. I’m here to help you,” Alice said with absolute certainty. Bendy nodded. Oh yeah, tell her. This mind trip was turning into a horror house. It was like even unconscious Holly was hitting him where it hurt. Fear and now Wilson? He hadn’t really told anyone how messed up that accident had made him. How many nightmares it gave him. How heavy the guilt was that he hadn’t tried to do more for the man that he now knew was a good person. At least Boris hadn’t seen it. Holly’s head couldn’t be doing this to him on purpose, right? She had no clue he struggled with this. No one did.

With Wilson around, for some reason Fear seemed to relax a lot more. They continued down the library. A walking, talking rune stopped them at one point, an origami horse rode by at another, and an imp mocked Alice while scampering down a higher floor. Bendy chuckled a book to shut it up. Then, a flock of flying books turned into half avian monsters that attacked them and carried Fear off a few feet, but they managed to fight through them fairly easily. Well. In comparison to what they’d already gone through. Ripping up books and paper was a cakewalk compared to basilisks and unicorns. Finally, they arrived next to a glass elevator that went up as far as Bendy could see. Wilson
opened a nearby door.

“Excuse me, do you have a minute my friend?” Wilson asked. Bendy paused and raised a brow.

“Oh yes! Anything for you professor!” a very familiar voice said. “What can I do for you?” Felix stepped out of the doorway. Bendy’s jaw dropped. F-Felix!

“Bu-ho-whe-How did you get here!” Bendy stuttered. The two turned to them.

“Oh!” Felix’ eyes suddenly filled with stars. He was next to Bendy in an instant. “It’s a demon! An actual demon youth! Fascinating!” Felix walked around him, looking at him from every angle. Was there sparkles...following him? Bendy blinked a couple of times. “You must be Bendy! Great kid! And you’re real! How fascinating!”

When Bendy looked closely, he realized that this Felix was slightly taller than his Felix, his fur was glossier, and he seemed a lot more...energetic?

“Yes, my friend. They are here to save Holly,” Wilson said.

Fear glanced at the elevator. “We just need to go up there, find C-connie, get the key to the panel from her, and you can take that thing from the control panel.”

The...sparkles? Sparks? Lights? Glitter? Whatever-the-cuss-they-were doubled and flew off the cat adventurer. Stars filled his eyes and, again, he grinned excitedly. “A daring adventure! Yes! What are we waiting for!” He posed and...light? From the window framed him perfectly? Bendy stared in morbid fascination. Was this Bendy’s life now? One weird event after another?

Wilson leaned over with an entertained smile. “You see, this is Holly’s representation of one of her favorite adventure authors. You, of course, know the real Felix the Cat, so you can see the differences.”

Bendy nodded slowly. Weird didn’t even cover this. The shining adventurer jumped into the elevator with gusto. It made Bendy consider what the hell might be rattling around in his own head. He...kinda didn’t want to know.

Wilson joined Felix in the elevator and soon the rest of them piled inside. Once the doors closed, Bendy noticed hundreds of buttons with different symbols on them. Fear cleared his throat and yanked off his bow tie, revealing a key connected to it. He stuck it in a small slot in the middle of the other buttons and turned. A groaning noise filled the elevator, and the room started to vibrate violently. Bendy’s eyes widened. What the cuss? When was the last time this thing had any maintenance?

Fear ‘eped’ and took a step back. His smell filled Bendy’s nose. The demon made a gagging noise and reached to grab something to anchor him. His hand found Alice’s arm. She gave him one glance and seemed to realize was going on. She stepped more fully between Bendy and Fear. Bendy covered his mouth and face with his other hand. Then the elevator took off like a rocket. The landscape around them whizzed by in a blur. Bendy saw flashes of things as they were all pressed to the ground, fairies, a dame in front of a mirror, a forest in the middle of a hall, and a demon? He had a cocky smirk on his mouth and was leaning against a column, talking idly to two short squat cup people with shark teeth using finger guns to light books and shelves on fire nearby. He had about two seconds to consider how much it looked like him before it too was gone in a flash.

Was that a version of him? With maybe the Cup brothers? They seemed to be having a swell time wrecking things.
He couldn’t focus too much on it. He could only hold his breath for so long and every gasp brought a haze to his mind and the pain of hunger to his stomach.

“How much longer?” Alice asked calmly. Her voice shook with the elevator’s vibration as she spoke. She had to be aware of Bendy’s struggle was only getting worse. Enclosed space with the emotion he craved? Terrible idea.

“I-I-I don’t know,” Fear said. “I’ve never done this before!”

A moment later, the elevator stopped suddenly, causing them all to lift off the ground and fall again before the doors opened, and they fell out.

“What a ride!” Felix grinned. Bendy groaned. This was the worst. He scampered away from the group, Alice turning to him with concern. Wilson also seemed to notice a change.


“I’m fine!” Bendy snapped, not wanting to talk about it. This was so stupid! He had dealt with hunger before. This was nothing! Why was this such a cussing struggle?

Fear twiddled his fingers, scurrying quickly down the bare, white hallway they were in. He looked as if he expected Bendy to be on his heels at any second. The emotion vibrated with energy, his face turned toward them as he backed away. The scent was only getting worse. Bendy hung as far back as he could. Alice looked distressed between him and the emotion. The imaginary characters watched on curiously.

Fear stopped at a door at the end of the hall. “I-Inside is h-headquarters. The other emotions have become...strange. When the cog showed up Connie told us not to touch it, but Happy just couldn’t help himself. He hated not being able to touch the panel.” Fear gulped. “After he did...he changed. It was like all the normal things that he helped Holly find joy in had become twisted.” He adjusted his bow tie again. “Then, one by one the other emotions touched it, and they changed too. Sorrow got sick, so Anger had to take over his job. She was doing pretty well, but then she started to like using the panel way more than she used to. Distaste got way more sarcastic and goaded Anger on...But H-Happy and Anger will probably be the most p-p-problem,” he managed to say. “W-we just need to f-find C-Connie to unlock the p-panel. I-I think she’s u-up here.”

“Great,” Bendy muttered to himself. It wasn’t like any of them would be able to hear him from back here anyway.

“Then, let’s go! We have a fair maiden to save!” Felix declared. Bendy cringed at the cheesy line. Felix would never say that. Ever. The cat bounded through the doors without another moment’s hesitation.

Inside, Bendy saw a large, oval room. It was empty and the lights were off. On the far side, there was a small case with folders. The room had more rows of memories lining the walls. There seemed to be an inner room across from them. There were several round couches spread around. A wide desk covered in knobs and buttons was at the front of the room. Sticking out of the panel like a sore thumb was the cog.

“Well, at least it’s easy to spot,” Alice said optimistically.

Felix rushed in. “Connie! Connie dear! Where are you?” So much for a quiet approach. He went toward the second room.

“Not to be rude, but what are you doing here?” A short, stout yellow man in blue overalls appeared
in the doorway of the inner room, blocking Felix. He blinked at them, watching calmly with a confused smile.

Somehow Fear was already in the room and hidden behind one of the couches. “H-Happy?” he said, peeking out barely.

Wilson stepped up. “Ah, well you see Happy, we--”

“We’re here to save Holly! Which means finding Connie. Where is she?” Felix cut off Wilson and pointed a finger in Happy’s face.

Happy sighed and rolled his eyes. “Anger.” A stout red emotion in a matching dress and a black bun charged out of the darkened room, football tackling Felix with her shoulder. “Aaaaaaargh!”

Bendy reacted to help Felix. Alice and Wilson went for the door. Fear cowered and made it harder to focus. Bendy grabbed Anger’s arm and pulled her off the adventurer. Felix was winded but seemed okay. No. He seemed excited. Stars and...glitter? Danced around him again. “A fight!” Felix called. Bendy didn’t have time to focus on the cat. He was busy riding a wild bull of emotion.

Anger’s eyebrows went down, and she clenched her fists. “Aaaaaaargh!” Her hair unraveled, and lava spouted out of it, spraying at the both of them.

“Oh c’mon!” Bendy gasped and jumped back.

Anger continued to charge, backing the two of them towards the window at the far end of the room. Felix reached into his bag and pulled out a whip. “This is going to be great!”

He lashed out and the whip circled Anger’s arm. He pulled to try and trip her.

Anger smiled maliciously. Then a line of fire ran up the whip. “Oh dear.” Felix threw the end of the whip at Anger.

“Water,” Bendy muttered. He turned to Felix. “Do you have a bucket of water? Something to put out the fire?” Felix looked at him surprised and then grinned. The cussing stars were back.

“Of course!” He pulled out a fire extinguisher. Perfect. He pulled the pin and pointed the hose at Anger. A shot of foam hit Anger in the face. The emotion disappeared in a sea of white, thudding to the ground a moment later.

“Nice!” Bendy grinned. Felix did too. The two went around the downed emotion. When they reached the inner room they saw five beds in a mid-sized room. A green girl in a witch hat and a scarf sat on one of the beds. She glanced up at him when he entered the room. She scoffed and flicked the brim of her hat. Bendy took only a moment to acknowledge how strange Holly’s mind was before checking the rest of the room.

A blue character, identical to Happy in everything but color of his skin and the fact that his overalls were white, sat on a bed in the corner, a blanket pulled up around him. He coughed.

Alice and Wilson closed an empty closet door. “She’s not here,” Wilson murmured. Alice turned to the blue emotion.

“Where is Connie?” Alice asked sincerely. “Please, we only want to help.”

The blue emotion sniffed and coughed again. His lip trembled miserably. “I’m sorry. I want to help. But I’ve been so sick that I couldn’t even get out of bed to see where they took her.” Sorrow glanced
at the green emotion.

Distaste snorted and leaned back on her hands with a smirk. “Oh, I don’t mind telling you. It won’t do much good.” She stood up and leaned out the window in the small, inner room. “Over there.” Bendy looked at where she had directed. It was the large, ominous place Fear had called the ‘Hungry Tower.’

“She’s in there?” Bendy asked. This did not feel good for some reason.

The green woman raised her chin, tilting her head. “Yeah.”

“Why? What is it?” Alice asked, eyeing it mistrustingly.

The girl ran some fingers through her hair. “Hmm. An addition made by the cog. Because it eats everything that goes inside it. Think...power hungry?” She smiled. It was a cold expression, eerie, predatory almost. “That’s where all the magic fueling Holly has been coming from. It helps to keep the the pool of it downstairs nice and black.”

Alice narrowed her eyes. “I’ve...never heard of anything like that.” She sounded horrified. “Aren’t you worried that thing will destroy her mind?”

The emotion laughed. “As if. We control what feeds it.”

Wilson shook his head. His beak turned into a scowl. “Yes, but for how long? How long before you run out of things you are okay with feeding it? How long before it starts devouring the places and things that are necessary?” He narrowed his eyes. “How long before it devours you?”

Distaste waved a hand. “Long after it eats you. Besides, Holly gathers knowledge. As long as we keep gathering, we’ll always have something to feed it.”

Bendy honestly had heard enough. The girl was in the tower? Then, they had to go to the tower. “Great, how do we get in and get her out?”

The green emotion pointed at a black door on the far end of the room. “Across the bridge,” she said dismissively. “You’ll have to tell me what it’s like to be eaten alive.” She giggled.

And with a small snap, the last straw of Bendy’s patience was gone. He grabbed the emotion be the wrist and started dragging her with him toward the cussing bridge. She gasped and struggled, yanked against him and pressing her feet in the ground, trying to stop. It didn’t even slow him down. She sat down onto the floor, making noises of distress. He apparently moved fast or at least surprised everyone, because he was halfway out of the room before anyone thought to react beyond having their mouths hang open.

“Um, sir?” Wilson asked. “Wh-what are you doing?”

Bendy glanced back. The sweet scent of fear hung in the air from a number of them. “Oh? Well, she’s curious about being eaten alive. So, why not bring her?” He started walking again.

“Let go of me, you lunatic demon!” Distaste yowled. The other emotions had hid behind the wall of the inner room and were staring at him in horror. Alice, Felix and Wilson stumbled to catch up. “This is all your fault anyways, so burn!” Distaste snarled.

Bendy growled, not his regular growl. This was deep and guttural. “I am so cussing sick of all of this!” He whirled around on Distaste. He got in her face and sneered. “I have been burned, stabbed, smashed, tormented, and cussing broken! I’ve had to watch my friends get taken, fight for their lives,
I’ve seen innocent people suffering, I had my brother taken from me! I am in here, seeing my friend’s mind being destroyed! And you! *You have the cussing audacity to tell me this is all MY fault!*

She stared at him, eyes flickering. The scent of fear grew stronger. She sneered at him even though she was trembling. “Because you’re an idiot. You’re all going to die eventually. Those two *murderers* will ensure it.” She sneered. “Why wait for the destruction?”

Bendy snorted and started walking again. “Because everyone cussing dies someday, ya moron. It’s what you do when you’re alive that matters.” He got on the bridge. Distaste didn’t answer. She only continued to struggle with his iron grip, nails scratching. Bendy didn’t even feel it. He wondered if it had something to do with this being in her head.

“Bendy! Bendy don’t do something you’ll regret!” Alice gasped for breath as she finally got to them. “Ya know Alice. Demons apparently devour fear right?” Bendy mused. “I wonder if they can eat other emotions?” He raised a brow at Distaste. She gaped, eyes wide and mouth open. Alice paled.

“B-Bendy?” Alice stammered. She looked between him and the emotion with wide eyes.

“A-Alice! You’re an angel! Y-you wouldn’t let him do that to me! Right?” Distaste stammered. The fear spiked. Bendy smirked. Alice stared at her, then Bendy.

“Bendy,” Alice whispered. Bendy chuckled, his stomach rolled. He dropped the annoying emotion. She scrambled back across the floor.

“Nah, would give me a stomachache,” Bendy said. He turned a glare on the emotion. She scowled at him and scrambled back a little further. “But you should remember who you are talking to. You’re lucky I’m a nice guy. I think any other demon wouldn’t have hesitated.” Not that he really knew, but whatever.

Distaste was still trembling. She glared. “You think you’re so right all the time,” she said shakily, backing away quickly.

Bendy frowned. “What’s your problem!” He snapped. That emotion was agitating.

“You’re going to die,” she sneered. “And who knows. You might take other people with you.” She was at the doorway now.

Bendy glared at her. “Yeah, well, hopefully not.” He stuck his hands in his pockets. But people were already suffering, weren’t they? If he had never brought the cog, this would have never happened.

“Yeah. You hold onto that sentiment,” she spat, fleeing out the door.

“I should have dragged her to the doors first,” Bendy muttered deadpan. Alice frowned at him. He ignored it.

There was a flash of purple at the door. For a moment, Bendy thought Distaste had returned, but then he realized it was Fear hovering at the door, looking at him.

“Fear,” Bendy acknowledged. At least this one said ‘thank you’ sometimes.

He looked like he was trying to say something, but he kept trembling and then his teeth would chatter. He gulped, taking a deep breath, leaning out a bit more into the hall. “You’ll both be okay, right?” he finally asked hesitantly.
Bendy’s eyes widened. Alice answered. “We will. We’ll be back with Connie in no time.”

“You care?” Bendy muttered. He didn’t mean to. For some reason, it had surprised him. Fear had been avoiding him for obvious reasons. Bendy shouldn’t hold it against him, but it was just too much like how he was treated back in Sillyvision.

The emotion took a step closer, his fingers twiddling together so fast that it looked like he was making a cat’s cradle or something. “Y-y-yes,” he squeaked in response.

“Why?” Bendy asked. His morbid curiosity getting the better of him.

Fear actually smiled at him. Bendy blinked in surprise. “B-because you’re a good guy.” His fingers went up to his bow tie. He tugged at it before continuing to twiddle his fingers nervously. “Especially for a d-d-demon.” Wilson and Felix nodded in agreement. Huh?

“Thanks?” Bendy said slowly. Alice sighed. He guessed this was Holly’s head and the ‘normal’ her had stood up for his character a number of times. Made sense that these uncorrupted parts of her would still be like that. Though, it was weird to think of Felix and Wilson as something like imaginary friends. “We better get going again. We gotta fix this.”

“I regretfully must say my goodbye here. I won’t do you much good in there. I fear, I may even hold you back, Wilson said. “So, I wish you luck. Do your best, Bendy. Find the rest of those parts. I believe in you.” Wilson clasped his hand in a firm shake. Bendy gulped and nodded. It was still too eerie for him. He also shook Alice’s hand. “Good luck to you too. You are a valuable friend and very reliable.”

Alice blushed and nodded. “Thank you.”

The owl stepped back. Felix grinned. “I’m coming with! This is going to be the adventure of a lifetime! Who knows what’s in there?” Bendy couldn’t help but smile. He was definitely not Felix, but his excited energy was appreciated. Bendy nodded and turned on his heel toward the ominous tower. Fear watched them as they went, remaining at the door with his eyes locked on them apprehensively. Bendy, Alice, and Sparkle Felix reached the tower. The top of it. The fall down looked...intimidating to say the least. Bendy was happy there was no wind here. The door of the tower was large, dark, and reminded Bendy of a picture of a medieval gate he had seen somewhere.

“Shall we knock?” Felix asked. Bendy snorted and went to push the door open. It gave with no fight. There was no sound as the door swung open, but there was a shift in the air. Almost like a breath. Chills danced up Bendy’s arms. The door opened to solid darkness. It was silent. Bendy couldn’t see anything beyond the small circle of light the open door let in. It was like the shadows devoured the light before it could hit anything else.

“There is something here,” Alice whispered, looking around searchingly. Her halo didn’t even seem to illuminate anything.

“Great!” Felix stepped in, his eyes sharp and excited. “Where?” he asked, his eyes scanning the room.

“Careful,” Bendy said and took a couple of cautious steps in. “We are really high up.”

Alice followed last. She rubbed her arms and kept turning to look behind her. “It’s like something is watching us.”

“Well, that’s rude. They should come out and talk,” Felix claimed. Bendy held in his snort of derision. The door behind them slammed. All three jumped as they were lost in solid darkness.
Hands clapped on Bendy’s arm.

“Bendy! Is that you!” Alice asked right next to him.

“Yeah Alice.” Bendy patted her warm hands. Her scent of rain and greenery confirmed to him it was the angel.

“My halo isn’t doing anything,” Alice whimpered. “What kind of darkness is this?”

“Not a natural one,” Felix said. “Torch doesn’t work either.”

“Well, what are we going to do? We can’t stumble around in the dark! What if we fall?” Alice asked. Bendy thought about using his shadow talent, but he was hesitant. He had no idea what would happen.

Suddenly, the walls lit up with soft light-blue light. Symbols spiraled from their floor level and up. The spiral went up...and up...and up before disappearing from sight. “Um.” Bendy stared up and then looked around the floor they were on. “Weren’t we at the top of the tower?” Bendy mumbled. Alice nodded slowly. Bendy couldn’t find a railing or any sign of something under them.

Nothing. The floor was solid. What the cuss? “There are stairs!” Felix pointed to the wall. Bendy now noticed the carved stairs in the side of wall. They spiraled up, following the symbols. “Any idea what these symbols are?”

Alice and Bendy shook their heads. Well. “I guess we can only go up,” Alice said. Bendy nodded and took the first step, only to fall sideways onto the wall. He grunted as he landed on his side. “Um.” He looked up at his friends who were now standing on the floor that had become a wall to him. “This is odd.” Bendy cautiously stood up. He took a few steps on the wall. He didn’t fall. “I guess we are walking on walls.”

Felix had stars in his eyes and jumped onto the wall. “What an experience!” Alice stepped over. Bendy offered her a hand to help. She stumbled and saved herself with a little help from Bendy.

“Thanks,” she said and pulled her hand back.

“No problem.” Bendy smiled. Felix rushed ahead, the angel and demon behind. It seemed that they were always on level floor, even as they spiraled up and up, never having to climb. The symbols glowed under their feet as they went. Bendy had no clue how long they had been climb-walking. It could have been thirty minutes or a few hours. Alice had stayed quiet. Bendy had tried to start a conversation once, but she seemed too distracted to answer beyond a hum.

That was fine. He had time to think then. At least, that’s what he told himself. Secretly, he wondered if he pushed too far back on the bridge and scared her. He hadn’t really planned on bringing the emotion in here. Now wasn’t the time to talk about it, apparently. He also wondered at what Fear had told him. The guy had to know Bendy had been struggling around him, and he still told him he was a good guy? He couldn’t help but wonder what Hat would have done in that situation. Eaten the poor emotion? Not shown any discomfort? Hat had said he had amazing control but was that true? He felt like he was a landmine. One wrong move, and he’d go off.

Maybe...he did need help? It almost physically hurt to think it. Help with the parts? Sure. Help with the map? Obviously. Help with his sickness? He didn’t like it but yeah. Help with managing himself? Admitting he didn’t feel in control of himself anymore? Ouch. What would Boris think? And Cuphead and Mugman knew Hat. He wasn’t completely sure on what it was between them, but it didn’t seem good.
Suddenly, the symbol under Bendy’s foot changed color from blue to bright orange, and Bendy was suddenly falling. He tumbled through the air, unsure of up or down. He crashed into someone and then landed with a thud. The colors changed to purple. “Ow,” Bendy muttered into the ground. He lifted his aching face to see what happened. Alice was next to him, sitting up. Felix was a bit further away.

The carved stairs were gone, the spiraling tower too. The purple light showed a black and purple forest of neon, glowing plants. No noise came from the odd plants or the purple stream that ran by, a few feet away, or the purple sparkles that were either bugs or good imitations. “What the cuss now?” Bendy groaned.

“Seems our environment changes with the symbols,” Felix said, popping up on his feet easily. “I wonder how that ‘eats’ people,” he muttered and pinched a black and purple leaf between his fingers.

“Maybe it’ll just drive us crazy,” Bendy muttered and pushed himself up. He dusted himself off. The tower above them had disappeared into the darkness. “Now, which way do we go?”

Alice stood and looked at the glowing, purple water. “I don’t know. I think we still want to head ‘up’ right? Upstream is always up.” Alice pointed up the stream. Felix nodded. Bendy sighed. It wasn’t like they really had any cussing clue on what they were doing. They started moving again. Felix jumped a bit ahead, taking samples of the plants, the water, and catching one of the bugs. “It’s creepy with no sound.”

“Yes, I wonder why that is,” Felix said. “It seems that it’s an illusion or imitation. Curious.”

There was a shift behind Bendy. He stopped and whirled around. Nothing. There had to be something. He heard it. Alice paused. “Bendy?”

“It’s fine. Let’s keep going.” Bendy muttered and turned back to face the angel and explorer. This place was getting to him. His nerves had been frayed a long time ago. The light shifted to a golden yellow, and they all tensed. Nothing happened for a moment. Then the stream was bubbling, the bugs were buzzing, and the leaves shifted. There was sound.

Felix turned his head, wonder in his eyes. “How fascinating.”

“What does it mean?” Alice stepped up next to him. Felix touched another leaf.

“Maybe the illusion is getting stronger? Maybe the tower is correcting itself to make it more real?” Felix mused.

Wrong.

Bendy jumped and spun around. He heard that. Where was it?

Here.

Bendy flinched, his eyes scanned the leaves. “Show yourself.” Alice and Felix fell quiet behind him. The leaves shook to Bendy’s right. A bush in front of Bendy moved but whatever was inside didn’t reveal itself. “Who’s there?” The leaves stopped.

Come see.

No. That sounded like a bad idea. “What do you mean? Felix is wrong?” Bendy asked.
“All real?” Bendy tilted his head.

“Bendy, who are you talking to?” Alice asked.

Bendy glanced back at her. “Can’t you hear it?” She shook her head and looked beyond him. “But the leaves were moving.”

“They were?” Felix asked.

“Neither of you saw that? Heard it?” Bendy asked. They stared at him. Well, that was answer enough.

You.

Bendy turned back to it.

Too young.

Bendy frowned. “What the hell does that mean?” The leaves shifted again. Bendy tensed. He didn’t like this whatever-it-was. “Look, we are looking for a girl named Connie. Have you seen her?”

Mind link. Come see.

Bendy narrowed his eyes. “I’m not going anywhere with you. You come here.”

What you need isn’t there. It’s here.

“Cussing two feet away.” Bendy deadpanned. “Look I’m gonna go. I don’t think--”

You’ll die. You’ll kill them all. Then you’ll live.

Bendy froze. “What did you just say?” he growled and took a step toward the thing in the leaves. Suddenly, everything vanished. The leaves, the stream, Alice, Felix, all of it. Bendy was in darkness again. “Hey! What did you do!” No answer. Whatever had been talking to him was gone. Bendy turned around, his boots splashed in barely an inch of water. Something moved under him. He jumped. The thing moved too. He looked down to see his reflection looking up at him as if it was broad daylight. He looked above himself for a light source. Nothing. How could he see himself like he was in broad daylight if he couldn’t see anything else? And it was way too quiet. Unnaturally quiet. He could only hear his ragged breathing and racing heart.

“Alice! Felix!” Bendy called out. His voice echoed and echoed. Oh stars. Did this place have an end? Where were they? He only took one cussing step! He walked back the way he had gone. Nothing changed. He started to run. His feet splashed in the water, making his reflection ripple as he raced through the dark. “Hello! Anyone!” He called out. Still nothing. He ran and he ran. He gasped for breath but didn’t stop until he was completely spent. How far had he gone? Did it matter? It was still nothing. “This is what I get for listening to plants.” Bendy groaned to himself. His heart pounded in his ears. Sweat dripped off his face and joined the water at his feet. With only black nothing to reflect, it looked like ink. A huge inky mirror that reflected his own fear, panic, and exhaustion back at him. How long had he been running? An hour? Longer? Where was Alice and Felix?

Bendy panted a minute longer, gazing at his reflection. He was riddled with holes and slashes from those damn fairy horses. Blood had dried on his ruined shirt and vest. Ink stained his pants, shirt, and goggles. His eyes seemed strained. Dark shadows hung underneath them, framing them in a way that
made him look old and worn. Honestly, he looked like he could keel over at any moment. “You look like a cussing mess,” Bendy muttered.

His reflection grinned. “No kidding. What have you been doing to look this bedraggled?” Bendy jumped back in surprise. This time, his reflection didn’t follow him. The other Bendy put one of his hands on his hips and pulled at the shirt. “I mean look at this! Did you lose a fight with a tree?” The upside down Bendy smirked. Bendy gaped. It was official. He had lost his mind. The reflection tutted. “No, you’d have leaves on you if it was a tree.” He put a hand under his chin.


“Wait! I got it! Candy cane claws!” The other Bendy snapped his fingers and looked at Bendy expectantly. “Right? No? A giant hedgehog then? Something with quills?”

Bendy shook his head. “Unicorns,” he muttered, not knowing what else to do.

The reflection groaned. “You weren’t supposed to tell me! You took all the fun out of it!” He melted up. Bendy flinched back. The water bubbled, and suddenly, a new figure sat before him. It looked like a strange sort of cat. It...he? wore an old, golden collar-looking-thing with a symbol and gold bands around his forepaws. His long ears had tufts of fur at the ends that stuck up oddly. He had a...beard. His fur was long and...blue. He had green eyes and feathered wings. Bendy had gotten over weird a while ago, but the combination of color and strange animal parts had his head spinning anew.

“So-sorry? Um, wha--er, who are you?” Bendy asked.

The cat raised a brow. “Chaos’ is the name and fun is my game.”

Bendy blinked. Well...this was something. “Where are we?”

He hummed and smirked. “That depends on where you want to be.” The cat flicked its tail. Bendy blinked.

“I was in a tower with my friends. But now I’m here. I got seperated. Do you know a way out of here?” Bendy asked cautiously. It was something more than nothing. Bendy would take it.

“Oh sure! Head that way.” The blue cat pointed a paw to his right. Bendy nodded and waved a thanks before heading out. Not two seconds later, the cat was in front of him, giving him a confused look. “Why did you come back? It’s behind you.” Bendy stared for a second.

“Oh, yeah.” Bendy turned around and started again. Ten seconds later, the cat was in front of him again. It was laying on its belly and frowning at him. “Are you sure you want to leave? You keep coming back.”

Bendy growled, turned around, and the same cussing thing happened. “Are you messing with me!” Bendy demanded.


Bendy growled again. He turned and marched away angrily. He was leaving!
And he was back. “AAAAGGGGGHHHHH!” he shouted.

“Oh and a temper. My, my,” the cat mused. “You are rather new to all this, aren’t you?”

Bendy glared at him. “You are doing something! Knock it off! I have to get back! People are relying on me.”

Chaos chuckled. “Oh, come now. Have some fun. Loosen up. We have all the time in the world.” He pulled a pocket watch out of nowhere. “We are moving at the speed of a thought after all.” He laughed.

“Oh stars. You’re a zany,” Bendy groaned.

“A what?” The cat frowned.

“A zany. You’re a zany toon with all the zany nonsense that all zanies have,” Bendy growled. Why him? Why did he have to go through this?

“Oooooh, sounds like my kind of crowd,” the cat purred. “Are they unpredictable?”

“Always,” Bendy groaned.

“Exciting? Ever changing?” the cat purred.

“Without a question,” Bendy muttered miserably.

“Anyone I would know?” Chaos asked, standing up and sauntered over to him.

“Ever heard of the Warners?” Bendy deadpanned.

The cat fluttered up and gasped with his paws on either side of his muzzle. “The Warners? I love their work! They are some of my closest followers.” The cat looked out and winked. “If you know what I mean. Ya never know when someone can come along and tell you to keep teasing the readers.” Bendy blinked and looked around. Who was he talking to? Chaos turned to him. “How are they doing?”

“Fine. Good friends of mine,” Bendy admitted. “So you know them, huh?”

“And they know me. You seem familiar too. Do I know you?” Chaos asked.

“I’m Bendy.” Bendy introduced himself.

The cat gasped again. “As in the Bendy?”

“Uh?” Bendy frowned. “You know me?”


“Wait, wait, how do you know me?” Bendy asked.

“Ooooh, it’s going to be great! I’m so excited to meet you when you are here. The chaos, the energy! I’m so very excited. Me and the rest,” the cat purred.

“What? What rest? There are more things like you?” Bendy’s head started to spin as the cat flew around.
“Oh, how interesting! How very interesting.” The cat stopped an inch from his nose. He was grinning like a madman. “I look forward to seeing you again, Bendy. Keep up the good work. Don’t get boring.” He grinned. “And watch out for that little, yellow chip.”


“Don’t worry. You have all the time,” Chaos said. “By-bye now. See you soon. Can’t have you stay here. You have so much work to do!” Chaos sighed dreamily.

“Wait, you haven’t answered any of my questions! What chip! How do you know me! What chaos! What is going on! Hey!” The cat pushed him with a paw, and he fell back. Instead of landing on his back, he fell through the water. He sank like a rock. When he opened his eyes, he was dry and looking up at Alice’s and Felix’ concerned faces.

“Bendy? Bendy are you okay? Answer me!” Alice asked with a worried edge in her voice.

Bendy groaned. “What happened?”

“We were hoping you could tell us. You were talking to that bush like it was talking back and then you fell back,” Felix said.

Bendy groaned and sat up. His head was pounding. “How long was I out?”

“Out?” Alice asked. “Not at all. You just fell over. I picked you up to see if you were okay.”

“Just now?” Bendy’s eyes widened.

“Just now,” she confirmed. “Bendy are you alright? What happened?”

“I...have no idea,” Bendy said slowly. That other place, the cat Chaos, the bush. All in a matter of moments? But it had been hours, hadn’t it? “I think I went somewhere? But I didn’t...So a vision or something?” But it had felt so real. “I’m alright.”

Which turned out to be a good thing, because the lights changed to red, and they were spinning. Alice wrapped her arms around Bendy and hung on. The spinning stopped, and they were on a grated walkway. There was a red-tinted wall next to their walkway in the air. It seemed to be metal. Pipes stuck out of it and ran alongside them.

“A...factory?” Bendy muttered. He looked down. There was nothing but darkness under and above them. He sighed. “I guess we’re walking again.”

He and Alice helped each other up. Felix was already looking over the wall and pipes. They started down a random way. There were only two directions after all. Their feet echoed loudly, along with the sounds of steam moving machinery and something liquid flowing.

“I believe we have reached the bottom of the tower. Probably where everything is converted into the liquid.”

“But we climbed up,” Alice protested weakly.

“Yes. Up at the top of the tower where there shouldn’t be an up. But we did, and now we are most likely at the bottom,” Felix said excitedly. Bendy rubbed his temples. He would be in therapy after this.

“Fine, whatever. What about Connie?” Bendy snapped. Felix shrugged. That’s when he smelt it. A
distance whiff of fear. “Wait.” He took a deep breath. It wasn’t a promise, but better then going blindly like they had been so far. He followed the smell. Alice and Felix followed. The scent led them deep into the factory. The farther they went, the more machines and piping they saw.

The smell got overwhelmingly strong as they reached the lowest level. Water pooled on the floor. There was a large pipe that came down out of the darkness. Black water gushed from it.

But no person. The scent of fear was strong. Where was it coming from? Bendy turned this way and that, trying to find it in the red, tinted light. Just then, Alice tilted her head slightly. “Do you hear that?” she asked. “Whistling?” She was right. Someone was whistling a tune.

Bendy smirked. He puckered his lips and whistled back.

For a moment it went silent. Then, softly, oh so softly, the weak, cheerful tune repeated back. It was coming from behind the pipe.

Bendy parroted it again. “That’s good, Bendy!” Felix cheered.

There was a cough and a sniffle. “Hello?” someone whispered.

“Connie! Is that you!” Alice called out.

“Connie! We’ve come to save you!” Felix declared.

“Felix?” The voice was weak. “Alice,” she said, the tone sharper. “You need the keys. Oh, I’m such a airhead. I should have given them to Fear.” There was the sound of shifting. “A-Alice. I can’t move. You need to come get the keys.”

“We’re coming,” Alice promised. She and the rest moved toward the source of the sound.

Bendy saw a figure squished behind the pipe. A box had been propped in the way. Felix moved it quickly. A faint gold glow appeared. Bendy blinked. What? It was Holly. Holly!

But at the same time it wasn’t. The figure glowed with gold veins that covered her almost entirely. One eye was gold, while the other was normal. Her clothes were singed and drenched with water. A silver, shimmering substance seemed to be coming off of her at a consistent rate.

“Oh dear. Oh you poor thing. We must get you out,” Felix said. For once, his excitement completely disappeared into a serious concern.

“Keys first,” Connie said firmly. She held out a hand towards Alice. Alice took them with a frown. Bendy scowled. Oh no. He did not like that implication. Steeling his nerve and resolve, he marched up to the girl that looked like the friend he felt he had lost and scooped her up.

“Wasting time,” he said and started back the way they had come without another word. Alice, with wide eyes, followed. He couldn’t help but notice that the head toon didn’t feel solid. It was like carrying a bag of sand. He could feel grains shifting. This couldn’t be good. She was literally turning into dust in his arms.

“How long have you like this?” Bendy asked lowly.

Her eyes had started to close, but they fluttered back open when he spoke. She shook her head sadly. “I’ve been deteriorating since I touched the cog. So a week ago? Maybe two? The time down here is so strange. I’m not sure.”
Yeah, not good. “Do you think we’ll be able to get back the way we came?” Alice asked uncertainly.

Connie turned to her. “I’m sure with the both of you it’s possible.” She smiled at Alice. “I was able to find my way back to the door once, but I couldn’t get it to open.” She looked around slowly. “And there are things that will eat you if they find you down here.”

Chaos said to be where he wanted to be, right? This place didn’t work like a normal tower. “I...think I have an idea. We need to get back to that walkway we were on,” Bendy offered. Connie nodded wordlessly.

“Excellent!” Felix declared “Then, let’s go!” He went to charge ahead but stopped. A...thing came down the walkway at somewhere between a slither and a crawl. It looked a little like a crocodile except its snout was more square, and it had no scales. Its skin was cracked in places, like it was made of glass. Its tail seemed to tap around itself, independent of the body. It had no eyes, but there were two large holes on its head, ears maybe? It had spikes on its back, sides, tail and where there should have been eyes. The tail made a tip-tap tip-tap sound against the metal surrounding.

The three froze. Felix reached into his bag. “You two get Connie out. I’ll take care of this,” Felix said.

Alice took a step forward. “No, Felix. I can--”

“We don’t have time. Besides, you think your magic will work here, Alice? You can’t even get your halo to glow,” Felix argued. Alice blinked. She lifted a hand. Her eyes widened when nothing happened. The creature hissed and turned toward them. It started moving faster. Alarmingly fast.

“I got this. You three go on,” Felix promised and pulled out a battle ax.

“But--”

“You two don’t belong here, and Connie is a major part of Holly’s personality. I’m just an imaginary friend,” Felix said. Bendy grit his teeth. He twitched to move, but the feeling of sand in his arms stopped him cold. The cat jumped and dove atop the monster. It roared as Felix slammed the ax down on it. The monster thrashed and fell back into the water.

“FELIX!” Bendy shouted. Alice pulled his arm.

“Come on!” She yanked him along. Bendy looked back to the monster thrashing about in the water before it disappeared into the shadows as they ran for their lives. Bendy’s stomach twisted nauseously. They ran and ran. Every hiss of steam or strange noise had them jump and run faster. They reached the point they had appeared at. Both he and Alice were panting for breath.

“We left him!” Bendy barked as soon as he could. He was shaking. Felix! Felix! They left Felix! Stars! Starfallen damnit! His head buzzed. The scent of fear was strong, but Bendy was too upset to care about the hunger.

Tears were in Alice’s eyes. “I’m sorry! We had to. We have to go. We’re running out of time. Just look at her.” Alice gestured to the girl in Bendy’s arms.

Bendy could literally feel small streams of grain slipping from between his fingers. Connie’s eyes were fluttering, and her mouth was pressed in a thin line. She stared back towards where Felix had disappeared. She shook her head slowly. “You need to stop the corruption before it does more damage,” she whispered.
“So, where do we go Bendy?” Alice asked. She brushed at her eyes. He took a shaky breath. The tip-tap. Did he just hear it? He glanced behind them. Cussing great! It was coming.

“Jump!” Bendy ordered.

“What?” Alice’s eyes went huge. The scrape and bangs of the monster came crashing toward them. Bendy didn’t look behind him to see it. Alice’s horrified face was enough. He grabbed her arm and stepped on the railing.

“Just jump! Trust me!” Alice put a death grip on his arm. He only had a second to see the forever black in front of him before he jumped, Alice right next to him. There was a slam of the monster hitting the spot where they had been. And then they fell up.

It was hard to focus on anything after that. They spun in darkness for a while. Bendy hung on to Connie, and Alice hung on to him. The door. The door. The door. He just tried to imagine the door past the panic of falling.

And then they weren’t. It’s not like they landed. They were just standing again. Bendy looked around. Soft light blue symbols spiraled around them. He looked to his side. It was the cussing door. Thankthestarsmoonandsun. Bendy rushed to it. Alice stood flabbergasted.

“What? But how? We went up again! How did we end up here?” She gapped. “And how did you know we’d end up here?”

“I didn’t,” Bendy admitted. “But I gave up on this place making any sense, so jumping had sounded about right. It was surprising and unexpected.”

“But what if it didn’t work?” Alice asked.

Bendy snorted and pulled at the door. It didn’t move. “And what? Have this place suddenly make sense? Ha!” He pulled harder. Nothing.

“So you just did the most ridiculous thing you could think of and hoped for the best?” Alice murmured in quiet awe.

Bendy shrugged. “Short of taking a dip in corruption or getting eaten, yeah.” Don’t tell him it was something so stupid as...He pushed. It swung open. Bendy’s face fell into a scowl. It was like this place was designed by the Warners just to screw with him. He growled and hurried out. He didn’t want to find out if that thing could follow them. Alice was on his heels. She slammed it shut behind them.

They shared a look. That had been dreadful, terrifying, confusing, and they had lost Felix. He never wanted to go into someone else’s head ever again. Alice seemed to share his feelings. They rushed across the bridge and back into the bubble room with that cussing console that had the starfallen cog in it.

Wilson and Fear were hovering at the front of the room. There was no sign of the other emotions. Fear’s eyes lit up once he saw them. “You’re back!” But then his eyes seemed to count.

Wilson’s eyes widened. “Felix,” he muttered.


Alice handed Bendy the keys. Fear and Wilson backed out of the way. “Thanks.” Bendy took the
key reverently and went to the cussing panel. He inserted it and turned it until he heard a click. An inch wide space opened around the cog. When he peered into the opening, he saw veins of that gold light. "That’s the magic, I’m guessing,” Bendy muttered. “Is it hers or the cogs?”

“That’s the cog’s,” Connie said wearily. “All the gold is the cog’s.”

“Any idea how to get rid of it?” Bendy asked. He didn’t cussing know anything about magic.

“Just remove the cog. Once that’s done the natural antibodies of the mind and soul will drain the cog’s magic.” She turned painfully towards Alice. “We’ll need you to purify the core memories, however.”

“Sure,” Alice agreed. Bendy turned back to his task.

Connie leaned over, grasped a knob in the floor, and pulled up a round shelf with four orbs inside of it. The gold veins had wrapped around two of the orbs, and one of them had gone blank, completely opaque of color.

Alice nodded. “Right. I’ll see what I can do.” She gingerly lifted a corrupted memory. Her halo glowed and bright green and gold surrounded the ball.

Bendy turned back to the cog. He placed his hands on the gear and turned. It shifted, barely. Bendy huffed. What the heck? Was this thing fighting him? He turned harder, and again, it barely shifted.

“Bendy, magic! You have to use your power!” Alice called back to him.

“Easier said than done!” Bendy shouted back. He frowned. How was he supposed to use it though? His shadows? They were wild, hard to control, and he didn’t want to break the panel. On himself?...But. He glanced back at Alice. She was cradling a new one, wisps of gold and green flitting around it. That couldn’t be right...right? No.

Bendy gulped and turned back to the cog. He took a deep breath. He couldn’t just stand here either. He decided his shadows would have to do. He didn’t know how the other one worked at all. At least with this he had a little idea. He reached out. The cog was like a tsunami of power that almost had him fall over from the strength of it. Holy sun and moon! And he thought the shadows around Hat were strong! What was with that power? It was like a beast like--He glanced at Connie. Like a living animal, eating and hunting on instinct. This thing...Was it the tower? A part of the tower? What the starfallen cuss?

“This is sunblazing madness,” he growled and grabbed it again. The shadows wrapped around and under it. He could feel the connection to the panel. He turned, the power shifted, trying to pull it back, fight him. Bendy grunted and turned it again. He pushed his shadows between the panel and cog, little by little. He shifted it again. The cog began to give, the power connection weakening...and reaching for him. “Tch! Yeah right! Like I’d let that happen.” He turned and turned, ignoring the waves of energy that seemed to reach for him now. The magic from the panel shifted and suddenly seemed to cut off. He hoped that wasn’t a bad thing. With a last heave, the cog came off. The magic was overwhelming. He focused on surrounding it and caging it with his own. Pushing it in. It was like catching air. He grunted. This thing--Was he really going to lose to this thing? He struggled with it.

The panel sparked. His shadows withered and redirected to it. NO! That was not the focus right now! He pulled them back around the cog and imagined crushing it. It took an agonizingly long time. He was panting and sweating, his limbs shaking from the fight. Again, the thing seemed to fight him, trying to grab at him or anything around to link to. Finally, it crumbled and fell apart in his
hands. It disappeared. Bendy sighed and collapsed to his knees. “Stars,” he panted and brushed sweat off his forehead. “That was harder than I thought.” He’d had a fight with an inanimate object—and almost lost! He hoped it was supposed to disappear like that.

“Bendy, are you okay?” Alice asked. He glanced over. She seemed to have gotten them all except the grey one in her hands. Her large dark eyes seemed worried.

“Fine, just catching my breath,” Bendy huffed. “Gonna checked the panel.” He pulled himself up on shaky legs and looked inside the panel. The gold was already fading. He looked over the parts and wires. It seemed simple enough. Two different power cables, magic, and the electric one. He looked at the places where the cog had been. Ah. He’d have to reconnect them and close the circuit. It’s like it had clawed in. He stuck out his tongue and reached into the panel. Untwist that here, screw that there, fit that in there. Bendy relaxed a margin as his hands moved. This was comfortable. Different, but the same. Machinery. He could do machinery. Stars, something familiar. He could almost weep.

He fitted in the cable, and it sparked before it flicked. Hopefully, that was okay. He checked the work for any sign of a shortage or a break in the line. Seemed good to him. “Done,” Bendy claimed.

“Wonderful!” Alice said brightly. Bendy turned the key to shut it again. He handed it back to Connie who smiled at him. They turned to Alice. She sighed as she put the last orb back.

“There,” she said. She looked a little paler, but pleased. “That should do it. You all should be good to go. Any remaining side effects should fade in a week.” She approached Connie.

Connie took Alice’s hand and then Bendy’s. “Thank you so much,” she whispered. She sounded like she was on the verge of crying.

Alice smiled. “You too. We want to have Holly around for a long time after this.” Bendy nodded in agreement with Alice. Regardless of everything, he just wanted everyone to be okay after this.

“That tower, will it disappear?” Bendy asked.

Connie looked out the oval window. She shuddered, sorrow in her eyes. She still felt very fragile. “It’s a part of the cog, so I would say so. But I don’t know. Even after looking at every book in the library, Holly didn’t find anything that shed more light on any of the parts or how they work.”

“Of course not.” Bendy sighed warily. “That would have been easy.” He glanced at it. He worried what would happen if it didn’t disappear. That strange, dangerous place. How much of Holly had already been lost to it? Could anything come back? Could Felix?

Connie let out a breath. “Look.” She pointed out the window. The lake, far below them, was draining. The murky black water seemed to be sucked back into the tower.

“I’ve never seen such a strange thing in a mind,” Alice said softly.

“These parts can do things we don’t understand.” Bendy sneered. The parts he was after. This is what it had done to an innocent girl.

“Well we can’t linger. Our time here is running short.” Alice sighed. She looked as exhausted as he felt.

“Be safe,” Connie told them. The air in the room around them started to brighten. “Oh.” Her voice was starting to sound distant. “One last thing you need to know!” It was fading more. “When she went the university, for a moment the mural stopped the co--” His vision went white, and suddenly, he opened his eyes. Sunlight shone down on his face from above. He had to squint for a second.
“Bendy!” Felix grinned. “You did it!” The demon sat up. Everyone was grinning or smiling.

“Bendy!” Boris was sitting next to him, tail wagging. “Good job! The monsters are gone, and the city is back.”

“Felix!” Bendy knew it was stupid, but he had watched a version of his hero die. Seeing him kneeling there, alive and well, was a huge burden off his shoulders. He hugged the cat. Felix seemed surprised for only a second before returning the hug.


“I’m good!” Alice sat up. “Boy, that took a lot of magic! How are you feeling Bendy?”

“Alright,” Bendy answered. Mugs and Cala next to her smiled. Cala was back to normal too. No snakes, legs in place were the snake tail was. “And Holly?”

He turned and saw her lying next to him. She was still unconscious.

“She’s asleep, but appears okay,” Xedo said. Bendy sighed. Thank the stars.

Chapter End Notes

Hello everyone! All this art is already on tumblr, but it's all so awesome that we figured we might as well post it here as well.

This first is by fantastickingdomus!
This next series of arts is by lolling alollinglaughingcat. The first is of a ghost-like Wilson. I am so scared.
Isn’t that right, Mr. Bebby? Snowball, Commander of Unicorns, Savior of Demons.
An adorable Cala Maria!
XD Wiston asking Xedo for permission to set something on fire.
An adorable Bendy.
And Snowball giving commentary on how Holly should listen to her more. XD
When Holly uses dangerous runes even after you tell her not to, but everything turns out okay.

When Holly messes with dangerous dark magic despite you telling her not to, and everything goes wrong.
Chapter Summary

“A certain Cup is steamed.” Mic muttered nervously.

Chapter Notes

Tired. Just tired. The joke is over, Cup appears. Have fun. Enjoy.

To say Cuphead was angry was the understatement of the century. He was livid. He was raging. *Boiling.*

He marched to the cussing office building. He was going to kill her. Murder her. Friendship be damned! Innocence be damned! That little tree witch had it cussing coming! A vampire hissed at him as he went. He shot at it with barely a glance. The bloodsucker yelped and darted away. Yeah, that’s right. You better cussing run! Anything that got in his way was *dead.*

Just as the starfallen building came into view, the cussing storm weakened and dispersed. Oh no. Did that mean what he thought it cussing meant? Cup broke out in a run and nearly raced in when two things became obvious to him. One, the starfallen building was on fire, and anything in there was extra toasty. And two, his group of so-called friends were chatting up a racket in a small alcove of greenery.

He recognized their voices. He pushed through the bushes and found literally everyone there. The pipsqueak and angel were sitting up and talking. The tree witch was out cold next to Bendy. He itched to shoot her. Everyone seemed a bit bloodied up. Everyone looked cussing exhausted.

“Cuphead!” Mugs' face brightened up. “Thank heavens you’re okay! What happened to you?” His brother was leaning against the wall, next to the crummy cog. His pant leg was torn and there were cuts and slashes up it. Cala was standing on his other side, her hand cradling her arm.

“Cup!” Boris also smiled. “I was starting to worry.” One of his ears dropped. “Why are there feathers in your hair?” Cup felt his eye twitch.

“Because I was left flying around the whole starfallen city for two cussing hours!” he snapped.

“With a stardusting cat chicken that tried to cussing feed me to its damned hellspawn!”

“Woah, Cup. You’re boiling! Calm down!” Mugs shrugged away from the wall and lifted his hands placatingly.

“Calm! Oh, I’ll be cussing calm after I cussing shoot someone. She still evil?” Cup demanded. Alice stood protectively in front of the tree witch. She had burns and slashes on her. What had she fought to look like that?
“No, we saved her,” Alice said firmly. “The monsters should be gone too. There’s nothing left to fight, Cuphead.”

“ARE YOU KIDDING ME!” Cup raged. “I MISSED CUSSING EVERYTHING?”

Cup threw his hands up in aggravation. A number of the group flinched. Cala ducked behind Mugs with wide eyes. Felix and that fox frowned. Hat rolled his visible eye.

Bendy stood up and smirked. “Hey man, look on the bright side.” Cup scowled at the short demon. “You only got feathers. You aren’t a complete birdbrain.” Cup clenched a fist. He looked cussing dead on his feet. Pale, torn up, his clothes in dirty, bloody rags, and there were dark shadows under his eyes.

“Bendy.” Mugs’ tone was full of warning. Bendy snickered regardless of his appearance. The cocky little mook.

“No need for the fowl mood Cup,” Bendy continued. “You got the best bird’s eye view of the situation.”

Cup grimaced. Was he willing to punch this guy even though he was half dead? Yes, yes he was.

“Um, Bendy? I don’t think that’s a good idea,” Boris muttered, eyeing Cuphead.

“What? It wasn’t like he was chicken. He didn’t fly the coop by choice,” Bendy needled.

“Pipsqueak. I swear, if you aren’t running in two seconds, I’m gonna blast you to the other side of the starfallen sea. Cala won’t even be able to bring you back,” Cup growled lowly.

Bendy lost the smirk. “And who are you calling a short bean tiny little kid!” Bendy snapped back. Oh, he was asking for it. Cuphead leaned down to get in his face. Funnily enough, that seemed to aggravate him more.

“He didn’t say that, Bendy,” Boris muttered, ears falling. “C’mon guys, don’t fight.”

“He’s right. We’ve done enough. Some of us need to go to the hospital,” Felix said. His shirt was also torn up and bloody. Stars, was everyone hit by a truck? “And I don’t think the ambulances will be able to run in this mess.”

Bendy and Cup didn’t break eye contact. “You wanna go, short stack?”

“I’ll make you eat dirt,” Bendy growled back. He glanced up. “Wait, some of those feathers are actually flying in your hair.” His scowl dropped a bit in confusion. “Did some of those feathers actually get in your head? I thought you said stuff like that doesn’t happen unless you want it to. Did this turn you into a real featherhead?”

Cup growled. Mugs moved to stop him. “Cuppy, no!” Cup lifted a finger and fired. Everyone froze and followed where he shot.

The burning hole in the wall smoked. Hat straightened up, withdrawing the hand he had been reaching towards the cog. He adjusted his tie with both hands like that was what the sleaze had been doing the whole time. He smiled his shark-like grin.

“And just what the cuss do you think you’re doing, Hat?” Cuphead sneered. Black Hat was just as torn up as Bendy, but lacking the burns. The usual threatening power of his aura seemed to be lacking too. Cup narrowed his eyes at the untrustworthy demon, finger not moving from him.
Hat blinked, feigning innocence. “What? I was just--”

“Leaving,” Cup growled. “If this is over, then we are cussing through. You’re done.”

Hat smirked, but he could see the anger in his eye. Mugs had his finger up and ready. “Oh, but Cuphead, I wanted to make sure that--”

“You could run off with something interesting,” Cup finished for him. “Well, not today, you hellspawn scum. Crawl back to your casino.”

Hat’s grin became too big, too many fangs, terrifying...if Cup hadn’t seen it a hundred times now. Cup hung onto his nerve even as the air chilled. “You insolent little glassware,” Hat hissed.

“Leave it, Hat,” Mugs warned. “Everyone else may be exhausted, but Cup and I are ready for another round if we have to.” Hat looked between them and laughed. For a second, Cup actually thought the demon would go for it.

“Very well, next time then,” Hat said simply. Cuphead swallowed his relief and disappointment at those words. Hat turned to Alice and Bendy. He lifted his hand and tilted his hat. “See you two in a week’s time or so. Remember, you still have to hold up your end of the deal.”

Bendy sneered. “Our end? What about your end! I don’t owe you cussing moonrocks!”

Hat chuckled. “You need to learn your place, and if she is still breathing, then I am holding up my end of the deal.” His grin turned bloodthirsty. “I didn’t kill her, after all. So again, I will see you two soon. Until then, ta.” And in a flash of shadows, the demon was gone. Cussing creep.

“Th-that guy was really trying to steal the cog!” Bendy gaped. “After everything, he was just gonna--gonna--”

“It’s what he cussing does.” Cup sighed and dropped his hand. Give it to a demon to do nothing and still make you owe them. He glanced at Bendy. Not all, he corrected himself.

“Thanks Cup,” Boris said, eyeing the spot Black Hat had disappeared.

“That lowlife demon,” Alice muttered under her breath. She sighed. Cup raised a brow. He would think she would withhold a comment like that, but maybe her tongue was looser than normal due to exhaustion.

“Hey, the mouse is back,” Cup realized. Mickey jumped and looked at him and nodded. “Still can’t talk?”

“Oh, well I--” Mickey gasped. “I can talk!”

Cup rolled his eyes. “Congratulations.” Mickey hunched his shoulders sheepishly. He also seemed to be sporting a nasty bite.

“So, hospital?” Mickey asked. Everyone groaned in agreement. They walked together. None of them wanted the cog in the open, so Mugs offered to run it back to the house despite his limp. No one else knew what to do with it. Cup had to carry Cala, she still didn’t know how to walk, and the bite in her arm was deep, even if she was able to save herself from the venom. Boris helped Bendy on insistence from Felix. It was a good call, because the demon was swaying after only a few steps. Still, he wouldn’t let the wolf carry him. Idiot. Alice carried the still unconscious-but-hopefully-now-tree-princess-instead-of-tree-witch on her back. Cup kept a close eye on her. Alice was just as
exhausted as Bendy, and the ceramic man wouldn’t be surprised if she simply fell over at any moment. That left the fox and mouse to help Felix. Apparently, the adventure was dealing with some nasty wounds himself and now that the adrenaline was gone the consequences were setting in.

He really hoped no one died before they got there. He didn’t need more drama. He kept glancing around at everyone. He had been completely and totally useless. He had done nothing to help any of them. Alice and Bendy’d had to save a number of them from the way they were talking. Still, hearing how Felix, Xedo, and Mickey had caught the girl was a shock. Cup remained quiet and simply listened. Cala still gave him nervous glances. She probably had no idea if he was still angry or not. Cup didn’t bother clarifying for her.

He was angry, but not at them...Well, most of them. Angry he hadn’t been able to help. Angry that this happened. Angry that everyone was hurt, and he was right as rain. Angry that Black Hat had something over Alice and Bendy. He was angry that he had nothing to take his anger out on either.

They reached the hospital to find it was in complete chaos. Toons were sitting on the street with nurses and other employees flitting about with medical supplies. Seemed the worst were the only ones allowed through.

“Over here! If you need help come here, and we’ll direct you!” a familiar female bird chirped out. What was her name? Dove-something? Dovil? Yeah! That was it!

There was a crowd of toons around her, shouting and talking. She was standing on a table, waving at people and pointing one way or another, shouting over the ruckus the crowd was making. She had a marker in her hand. Their group made it to the front. To Cup’s surprise, Fanny was standing at the table too. She had a marker and was marking the back of people’s hands.

And then she spotted them and scowled. Oh man. He wasn’t ready. And he still had feathers in his head!

“You!” she barked. Oh stars. “What the cuss have you lot done this time!”

Did she know this was all them! How! Bendy gaped at her. Boris’ ears fell.

“Miss, please, we have wounded.” The fox spoke up. Cup glanced over to see Xedo and Mickey holding up a way-too-pale-to-be-good Felix. His eyes were closed. Well cuss. Fanny scowled.

“You follow me. Dovil, you have the crowd,” Fanny told her and flitted away, her ears up, her scowl deep. Cup swallowed.

“Wha-but Fanny!” Dovil fluttered nervously. “There are still a lot of people and--No sir, you won’t die from that scratch! You’ll be fine--Oh, she’s gone!”

Cup and crew followed the nurse in. The halls were lined with people. Toons with bandages, nurses and doctors going one way or another. A few of those beds on wheels had a toon groaning here and there. What a bunch of pansies.

“In here.” Fanny pointed to the room. It was an office, not a medical room. “Any of you that doesn’t need a bed, sit in the chairs and wait. You three follow me.” She pointed to Xedo and Mickey, who were still supporting Felix, and Alice, who still carried Holly. Cup gently put Cala in one of the seats. Boris practically forced Bendy into another. Cup knew he wasn’t doing well since he didn’t fight to get back up after Boris pushed him down.

It was loud for a hospital. People talked, moaned, wept. Doctors and nurses were talking and ordering things. The noise and smell of cleaning chemicals and blood put Cup on edge. It seemed to
take forever for the rabbit nurse to come back. Xedo and Mickey were behind her. Mickey had a bandage around his bite wound. He seemed alright otherwise. Felix, Holly, and Alice weren’t with them. She had a first aid box with her.

“Where’s Alice?” Bendy asked.

“I had her take up to a doctor. She and the other girl have some pretty bad burns,” Fanny said without looking at him. She went to Cala first and checked the girl’s arm.

“You were bitten?” Fanny asked.

“Y-yes,” Cala answered meekly.

“Hold still. You’ll probably need stitches,” Fanny told her and knelt down.

“O-okay.” Cala ducked her head. Paul shifted his tentacles on her head. If Fanny thought it was weird, she didn’t comment. She seemed completely focused on what she was doing.

She disinfected, cleaned, and bandaged the wound. She then turned to Bendy. “You’re a mess!” she snapped. “Take off your shirt!” she ordered.

Bendy smirked. “Not even a first date?” Cup clenched his fist in his pocket.

The rabbit glared at him. He sheepishly removed the shirt. Despite Bendy’s attitude, Cup winced in sympathy. Slashes, burns, holes, and dried blood revealed themselves. They had to practically peel the rags Cup wouldn’t bother calling a shirt off of him. Boris paled. Cup put a reassuring hand on the pup’s shoulder.

“Oh my!” Mickey murmured. Cup’s thoughts exactly. How the hell was the guy still awake?

Fanny scowled. “What the hell happened? You, with me, now.” Bendy opened his mouth. She gave him a death glare and grabbed his arm. He snapped his mouth shut and allowed her to drag him away. Boris went to follow. Cup let him. Poor kid.

That left him, Xedo, Mickey, and Cala. “Well, this has been most eventful,” Xedo said unnecessarily. Cup snorted.

“Well, I think I’m only taking up space here. I best head to the house, check on Wiston and the others, let them know what happened, be a reporter.” Xedo listed off a number of things quickly. Cup frowned.

“You’re not telling everyone the truth.” Cup braced himself. In all of this he had forgotten the fox was a cussing news reporter.

Xedo scoffed. “And what? Have the police arrest a girl that was as much a victim as anyone? Have them take the cog? Or the doll? Have all the gangs, the witches, and every other force on the earth that hungers for power become aware of it?” Xedo took off his glasses and cleaned them. Cup was somewhere between mad he was being talked down to and sheepish for questioning the fox. “No, I think not, Mr. Cuphead. Hat getting within a hand’s reach is enough for me. If it could do something so heinous to a good person like Holly, I would hate to see it fall into the hands of someone truly malicious.” Xedo gave him a calculating look, like he was trying to puzzle something out.

Cup shrugged. “So what are you going to say?”

“As much damage control as possible.” Xedo sighed. “With the right words and witnesses reports, I
am sure I can save Holly from prosecution.” Cup raised his brows in surprise. “I have much to do. Good day gentlemen, lady.” He nodded to Mickey and Cup and then to Cala before leaving the room.

Mickey shifted uncomfortably. “I-I better go too. I need to see if Ozzy and the kids are okay.” The mouse took a step toward the door.

“Ya ain’t gonna breathe a word of this to them or anyone, right mouse?” Cup crossed his arms and gave the mouse a cold glare.

Mickey quickly shook his head, his hands up in surrender. “No! No! After everything I’ve seen, how could I? Mr. Tiptail has a point after all!” He smiled, but it was strained.

“Good, you cause any of my friends any trouble, and I’ll be coming for you. Got it?” Cup threatened with a sneer.

Mickey dropped his hands. He half expected the mouse to cower, but he straightened up. Determination hardened his eyes. “You don’t have to worry. I won’t be trouble. I understand the truth now.”

Cup gave him a searching look, trying to see any sign of deceit in him. “Good, because I still don’t like you. You might have helped. You might have stopped her and saved Bendy with that doll, but I still don’t trust you.”

Mickey nodded. Pain flashed through his eyes before the determination was back. “I understand. Hopefully, I can be someone reliable for the boys after this. Tell them good luck, and I hope to see them soon.” Mickey stared at him. It was another look like Cup was wearing a sign in another language. Cup narrowed his eyes. He really didn’t like that mouse. Mickey disappeared through the door. Now it was just him and the mermaid. Joy.

Cala stared at the floor. It was like she was afraid he’d snap at her next. To be fair, he’d been snapping at anyone that dared to look at him since he got back from the damned chicken. He sunk down into a seat and ran a hand through his hair.

“I’m sorry,” Cala whispered.

“For what?” Cup grumbled.

“You’re really upset,” Cala stated.

“Yeah well, hell broke loose today.” Cup threw a handout. Cala nodded slowly. “And I had to deal with that scumbag from that waste pit. So yeah, I’m upset!” Cussing demon and his cussing high horse.

They sat in tense silence for a moment. “What are you going to tell him?” Cala asked in a hushed voice.

Cup lifted his head to stare at her. She was staring at her hands clasped in her lap with an intensity that Cup hadn’t seen on her face since he fought her on the islands as a kid. “What? Afraid I’ll sell you out?”

She flinched and paled. Cala still refused to look at him. “You’re supposed to.” She whispered it like she was afraid just saying it would make it true.

“Yeah, and?” Cup gruffed. Cala jerked her head up, eyes wide in surprise.
“What?” she muttered.

“I ain’t gonna sell you out to that schmuck. I already did that once,” Cup admitted with a heavy sigh. And that guilt had nearly broke him back then. Hell, it was still a cussing sore spot. Letting everyone back home down like that. “You don’t have to be afraid of Mugs or me.”

Her eyes were so wide it was almost funny. Paul’s too. “B-but if he finds out you and Mugman will…” She swallowed.

Cuphead snorted. “You think he’ll rip us apart over a little girl like you? Ha! I don’t think so, scales. We might get in trouble, but he can’t do much more than he’s already done. He wants to get some stardust stuff done, so he needs us right now.” At least that’s what Cuphead was hoping. This ink machine junk seemed important to him. He had Cup and Mugs after that owl for a cussing year before Bendy and Boris, and now they were here so...

Cala stared at him. Tears brimmed in her eyes. “Cuphead you--”

The door swung open, and Fanny was back again. “Okay, last of all you, glass brain.”

“Me? I’m fine?” Cup muttered. She walked up to him, way too close for what he was prepared for. She reached forward and plucked a feather out.

“Are feathers supposed to be inside your head?” Fanny asked.

“It’s fine.” Cup felt his face heat up. Oh stars, go away.

She instead stepped closer and started plucking feather after feather. Cup blanched. “Wh-what are you doing! This isn’t important. Aren’t there more important things you should be doing?” Cup tried to pull away. He couldn’t stand up with her right in front of him. The arms of the chair trapped him from moving to the side. Fanny grabbed his rim. He made a choking sound. Her hands were soft but deliberate. She was close enough he could smell her perfume.

“Hold still, you idiot!” Fanny snipped. “I just need a break from all the crying mooks out there.” She was quick with the ones that were stuck in his hair, but he felt her pause once those were gone. He knew why too. There were a few that were floating around in his head. They had slipped down his straw so the wonderful little ability he and Mugs had to keep stardust and junk out didn’t work. He hated that. His straw was one of his few weaknesses, not that he'd dare let anyone cussing know that.

“How do I get those out?” Fanny asked. She wasn’t even giving him the option to say no. Mugs could do it later. He tried to say it, but the words were stuck somewhere in his throat. He sighed. This was so dumb!

He cleared his throat. “Really, it’s no big--”

“Just tell me, idiot,” Fanny ordered. Cup sighed. He wasn’t escaping this, was he? He focused on his magic and relaxed the consistency of his liquid magic.

“Go ahead, just don’t ruin my hair,” Cup muttered and looked down. He felt her hands move a bit more slowly, and he clenched his hand.

“Does that hurt?” Fanny asked, stopping.

“No, just weird,” Cup muttered.

“What even is this? Milk?” Fanny asked as she dropped another feather to the floor. She continued
gently fishing the feathers free. Cup snorted. He had to be careful though. Like this, he could spill. He didn’t need to lose a bunch of magic like that. He hadn’t done that since Hat had gotten his damn golfballs into Cup's head years ago. It would be too humiliating.

“Magic, liquid magic,” Cuphead muttered.

Fanny hummed. Cala watched with interest. “Done,” she said and dropped the last feather. “Do you need to worry about infection?”

“No, it’s not like a blood circulation system. I can get magic sickness but not from things like germs.” Cup snickered and returned his head and hair to its more firmer form. Fanny poked his head. He flinched, not expecting it.

“It’s like jello that’s too firm.” She hummed curiously. Cup ducked away. She smirked. “You’re one weird guy.” Cup stood up. He snorted and stuck his hands in his pockets. Stupid bunny smiling at him and poking him. Cala looked between them. “So is y--”


“B-b-but I’m fine!” Mugs protested and held his hands up defensively.

“I see the blood on your leg, and it’s time to get your stitches removed anyway,” Fanny stated with ice in her tone. Her hands went to her hips. Her eyes narrowed dangerously. “Unless you ripped them again.” Mugs somehow paled further. He looked at Cuphead pleadingly. Cup shook his head. Sorry bro. He couldn’t do a thing for him. He was doomed. The bunny dragged him away, his brother resigned to his fate.

Cala watched with awe. The door shut, and she glanced at Cuphead. There was a heartbeat of silence then. “Do you like her?”

Cup snorted. “You kidding me? That dictator?”

Cala smiled. “It’s cute. Don’t worry, I won’t say anything.” She giggled. “I think she likes you too.”

Cup scowled. He was not going to acknowledge the quickening of his heartbeat. Nope. Nothing there at all. “I have no idea what you’re talkin’ about.”

“You have a nice blush,” Cala said. Cup scowled, and she ducked her head down.

After that, things seemed to bleed together. One by one the people that didn’t need to stay over night were brought back and released. Alice, Bendy, Felix, and Holly had to stay. Their wounds were apparently severe, and burns were easily infected. Alice was annoyed that they wouldn’t let her go. Boris was upset they wouldn’t let him stay with Bendy, but the place was too crowded as it was, and no one said no to nurse Fanny. So, they all were promptly kicked out the minute they were given the check mark of health.

The group talked and tried to piece everything together that had happened.

It wasn’t until they reached the house that Cup realized why Holly might have a burn. No one had gotten a hand on her, not really, not to injure. Sure, there had been the net, the dart, and Hat had made an attempt when Holly had fought the demon and angel, but Alice had diverted Hat's attack according to what she had told Boris before. No. The only person that had landed a hit on her
was...him. His bullet.

Stars.

She wasn’t like Alice or Bendy either. How likely was it that it would scar? How bad was it? He glanced at Mugs, who was walking Cala inside, answering any and every question she asked about the things she saw. Would it be like Mugs’ scars? Would it look bad? Felix’ scar was considered awesome by his geek readers. Wasn’t it different for girls? Why the hell was he even worried about this?

They went in and learned what happened at the house. It had been turned sideways for most of the madness. Literally. Sammy had nearly fallen out a window, but Oddswell had managed to grab the back of his shirt and, with Red and Snow’s help, drag him back in. Thankfully, because they had been lifted high in the air it had been hard for most of the monsters that had been roaming about to get to them. They’d only had to fight off a pair of gargoyles and then a mid-sized spider. Near the end, they’d seen a skeleton in a pinstripe suit lurking about underneather them, but he’d left a short while after. Cup had a good guess of who that was but didn’t speak up. He did share a knowing look with Mugs.

A creepy old witch had also showed up and looked around at one point, but they had all been hiding by then, so she hadn’t found them. The house practically vibrated with relief that everyone was mostly okay. There was still the concern for the cog. Oddswell had locked it in an office safe, but they all knew it was a temporary fix. A safe would be the first place people would go to. Boris reluctantly put the doll with the cog in the safe. He didn’t like it that close to the cog, but what other choice did they have? The cussing thing moved around on its own.

They shared worries about the city. The buildings had returned to their rightful positions, but the streets and roads were a mess. Any damage done to the buildings also remained. Several had fire damage or structure problems. Oddswell griped about the deliveries of medicine to his patients. Mugs and Boris offered to help run around the city until the roads were fixed enough for vehicles to use again.

When Cuphead got to his room, Snowball was collapsed there on his pillow. She smelt like she had crawled through a sewer. She smelt like she had crawled through a sewer.

“What happened to you girl?” Cuphead asked. “You need a bath.”

The little critter’s only response was to give a tiny groan and curl up into a ball. Poor thing looked exhausted. Cuphead gently lifted it up and carried it to the bathroom. He washed her off in warm water in the sink. He was careful with her little plant bristles and worked the soap through her strange plant fur.

The small animal was limp in his hands, though after a minute she chittered happily. When she was clean, she meeped at him, sitting up a little and giving him big, round eyes while looking at his hair.

“Yeah, okay, just let me dry you off first.” Cup smiled. “Hey, Bendy and Alice saved Holly, by the way. Hopefully, she’ll be her old self soon, and you’ll get to go back to her.” Cup told the little creature as he dried her off with a hand towel. Her bristles puffed up, and he snickered.

The little dandehog’s eyes twinkled, and she perked up. “Meeep!” she replied. Combining that with her poofed up whiteness, she looked like a giant, sparkling pom pom.

Cup chuckled. “You’re really happy about that, huh?” The critter chirped at him again. Cup lifted her and allowed her to jumped onto his head. Mugs joined him after a time. He had been worrying
about Cala. The girl didn’t have a place to go, so Snow offered to room with her. Cup wasn’t sure if his brother and that gorgon being close to each other was a good thing, but after today, Cup was just too tired to care.

The next couple of days were the same, mostly. Alice, Bendy, and Holly were released the next day. Bendy and Alice took Holly to the apartment before coming to the house. The girl was awake, but exhausted and barely lucid. She had been ordered on bedrest for the next few days. Alice and Bendy, despite the bandages, seemed fine. Or pretended to be. With the panic over and the monsters gone, order returned, and now the sound of construction seemed constant. It gave Cup a headache. The rest were sharing stories of what happened and running errands for Oddswell and Red.

It wasn’t until that evening that the uncomfortable conversations came. Seemed Bendy and Alice had a bit of an experience in Holly’s head but didn’t want to talk about it on the grounds that it was invading her privacy. They both seemed to be haunted by whatever had happened, though. Cala had to explain her story to the house, what Holly had done to her, her deal with the sea witch Ursula for legs. Mugs and Cup frowned at that. A gorgon fang and some blood. That couldn’t be a good thing. Then came the talk about her being a gorgon, of course.

Understandably, some in the house was a little wary of the fact; Red, Alice, Sneezy, and Snow’s fiance—who had been in and out of the place ever since he’d come. Cala had to come up with some stardust lie on how she was able to change back and forth and not always be in her gorgon form. Cup knew the truth, though. That was the Devil’s work. She’d sold her soul for her and her sister. They could go around society without turning every living thing into stone.

Oddswell found it interesting, of course. He had that ‘I want to study at it under a microscope’ look that Cup hated. Mugs noticed too, because he stuck close to Cala’s side most of the time.

Xedo, true to his word, had gone around the city getting interviews and asking questions. By the time electricity was back to running, the fox had the story set. Everything seemed to be recovering rather well, to Cuphead’s surprise. So, of course, it really wasn’t. It was just taking its time to show itself. Little things started to reveal themselves as the days went by.

He and Mugs reported. It was the boss. He didn’t seem too surprised that something like this had happened. He was suspiciously quiet and seemed distracted. His usual threats didn’t have the same bite. Cup wondered what was up, but the Devil hadn’t felt inclined to share.

Felix was finally released. Apparently, the hydra bite around his torso had done the adventurer some real damage. Still, he’d be okay and would have some new scars to tell his readers about. That didn’t bother Cuphead. What bothered Cuphead was the look Felix gave him or Mugs when he thought they wouldn’t notice. Not just Felix either, Xedo was doing it too. They were grating against his nerves. What? What were the looks for? What did they know? The paranoia in Cup went up a notch. And then there was Bendy.

The shrimp was flirting with any dame that wasn’t ‘taken,’ and it was driving the house nuts. Sure, the guy was always a flirt, and a bad one, but Red was on the verge of strangling him. Snow was safe, and for some reason Alice, but any other woman was a target. Boris was mortified. Then it finally happened, and Bendy did get smacked. Some daughter of one of Oddswell’s patients. A little fox.

Boris admitted to him and Mugs that Bendy hadn’t been this bad of a flirt since Sillyvision. The wolf had thought he had been bored or gross, but he had been getting better with friends. The quest had really opened up both their worlds. Boris didn’t get why Bendy was acting like this again.

Cup had a guess. It was only confirmed when he took Bendy out for drinks, just him and the demon.
They sat at the bar.

“Boris is just overthinking it,” Bendy muttered into his beer. Cup snorted.

“Red almost threw a plate at you today, man,” Cuphead said flatly. “I mean sure, when you’re as fit as a fiddle, but you are still healing. She doesn’t do that to the sick. You’re acting like an idiot.”

Bendy rolled his eyes. “I’m just havin’ some fun. Get off my back, Cup.”

“I will when you tell me what the cuss is wrong with you.” Cup took a drink and put his beer down. “You are driving us all insane.”

“Oh please,” Bendy scoffed and turned to look at Cup with a sneer. “Nothing is wrong. We all lived, the city is saved, we’re great!”

“Is that why I hear you up and about at two in the morning?” Cup asked.

Bendy blinked, the sneer falling to surprise. “What are you doing at two?”

“Usually trying to sleep or figure out why I can’t,” Cuphead stated simply. Or cussing nightmares, but he didn’t need to explain that cussing baggage. “And lately it’s been you.” And others.

Bendy sighed and turned back to his drink. “It’s not that big of deal. Really.”

“Tell that to your brother. Boris is beside himself with worry. I think everyone is, but you keep brushing us off.”

“Because it’s nothing,” Bendy snapped and gulped half his beer. He slammed it down and dared Cup to push it. Cup smirked. Challenge accepted.

“Is it the junk in Holly’s head?” Cup guessed lightly. Bendy narrowed his eyes. “Was it that you were a big scary demon in front of Alice?” His eyes widened in surprise. “Or is it Hat?” Bendy slammed his hand down on the counter. The bartender glared at them. There were a lot of people here, and business was still going to be slow with the roads a pile of rocks that they were. Cup wasn’t worried about getting kicked out yet.

“Would you shut up!” Bendy snapped. “Stars, it’s all a broken record!” He propped his elbows on the table and rubbed his temples like he was fighting a headache. His voice rose up in a mocking tone. “It’s fine, Bendy! You’re nothing like him! Good job, Bendy! You saved the city and Holly! Don’t worry Bendy, everything’s fine!” He barked a bitter, sarcastic laugh. His voice dropped but anger now burned. “Like I’m cussing blind or something!”

Cup took a drink and remained silent. Bendy continued. “The hospitals are struggling with supplies since the cussing roads are busted! Three people died of ink illness this past week! Felix is hurt, Alice is hurt, Holly hasn’t spoken more than two words to anyone! The cussing map hasn’t shown us anything on a new part, and even if it did, none of us are in shape to do any-cussing-thing about it! Xedo is bending over backwards to cover our tails! And I’m turning into--” He suddenly downed the rest of his drink. He gasped and slammed the empty glass on the table.

Cup took a moment to let the guy breathe. “And you think it’s all your fault for bringing the gear into the city.”

Bendy flinched and didn’t lift his head. It was like Cup had given him the final blow. Cup sighed. “Ya know that’s a load of stardust, right?” Bendy’s head snapped up, his eyes burning. Cup didn’t react to it. “If that’s what this is over, then forget it. You didn’t do that yourself. Mugs and I helped.
So did Boris and Felix and even Cala. We are all guilty of that. Holly too. Hell, everyone. None of us cussing know what we are doing with those starfallen parts. Not really. It was a mistake. Big deal.”

“People died,” Bendy muttered miserably.

“Who? From stuff in the city? Guess what, the fox says that’s not so. Apparently, a cussing bunch of starfallen unicorns showed up and fought off most of the cussing dangerous stuff. We were with the worst of it. Turned out that most of those freaks in costumes were just there to scare and not kill.” Cup chuckled. Jack had a good hand on his people, after all. Killing was not the name of the game for Halloween Town locals. If ya killed, there was no one left to scare, after all. Cuphead took another drink. He waved the bartender over to get another for Bendy. “And those with ink illness are going to die anyway unless we get that cussing machine going. You can’t blame yourself for that.”

Bendy opened his mouth, but Cuphead kept talking. “Felix is gonna get his tail beaten once in a while because it’s his cussing profession. He can handle it. Alice is a starfallen angel! You think she hasn’t dealt with the kinda cussing pile of moonrocks before?” Cuphead scoffed and chuckled. “Really man, you’re beating yourself up over nothing. You did cussing save the city, and you did cussing save the tree princess. Life threw you a curveball, and you dealt with it.”

Bendy dropped his shoulders as the second beer was placed in front of him. Cup hummed. “And you’re nothing like that sunblazing scumbag Black Hat.”

Bendy huffed and took a drink. “I am though.”

Cup actually laughed. “No. You’re not. Trust me on that.” Bendy scoffed disbelievingly.

“Hey! I had to deal with that schmuck for years! I cussing know what he is like!” Cup snapped and glared at the shrimp.

“Why? What the hell did he do?” Bendy snapped back.

“He nearly killed me,” Cup growled. Bendy’s face fell, and then Cup realized what he'd said. Cup wasn’t here for a pity party. He’d gotten over this stardust a long time ago. Cup rolled his eyes.

“When we were growing up. Mugs and my situation was...complicating. We were sent to live with him, and we were stuck with him since. He taught us to fight, to skim, to cheat, lie, and so on.” Cup glared at his glass. “Most of the time, it was a do or die thing too. It’s a miracle Mugs and I lived through it.”

“When were you…” Bendy seemed to struggle with words. He gestured to Cup. Just as the ceramic man thought, there was pity in his eyes, but also curiosity and, amazingly, understanding. But of course, Cup almost forgot who he was talking to. If anyone understood a difficult childhood, it was Bendy.

“I was fourteen. Mugs was eleven,” Cup said. “He is a cruel, sick, selfish hellspawn. He doesn’t hesitate to use people and then get rid of them. His closest followers are insane. He will do anything for what he wants. So, I mean it when I say. You. Aren’t. Like. Him.”

“But he’s a demon,” Bendy muttered dejectedly into his glass.

Cup raised a brow. “And what does that have to do with anything?”

Bendy turned away. Cup rolled his eyes. “I’m gonna kill him. What the cuss did he tell you?”

“It’s not what he said! Well...not much. It’s just, I’m just, I can’t.” Bendy sighed and took a drink.
“Spit it out, damnit. I’m gettin’ annoyed here,” Cup said. He finished his first drink. The bartender was quick to replace it.

“I’m a demon!” Bendy choked out.

Cup stared at him, his frown falling further. He was joking, right? “No kidding? I had no idea,” Cup said sarcastically.

Bendy growled. “I’m serious, Cup! I’m noticing things.” His anger dropped back into misery.

“What? Like demon puberty?” Cup snickered. Bendy didn’t say anything. “You’ve got to be kidding!” Cup laughed.


“Alright, alright, so what have you noticed?” Cup calmed down. Demon puberty. Who knew.

Bendy frowned. “I like the smell of fear. It...makes me feel hungry. I,” he grimaced, “I really liked Alice’s fear. Hat and that other demon fella in the city said it was nature. They told me I’m gonna go on some kinda ramage too.”

Cuphead snorted. “Yeah right. You’re fine,” he denied instantly. Bendy deflated. Cup dropped a hand on his shoulders. Bendy flinched at the move. “Look Bends, you are a hardworking, loud, annoying, compassionate guy.” The demon frowned at him. “But not matter what changes you go through, you’ll still be the guy that adopted a wolf pup, saved my pathetic life...and Cala’s, Alice’s, and now Holly’s. An evil monster doesn’t do that. Hat didn’t. So, you’re a demon. So, you have some stuff you’ll have to learn how to deal with. That’s everyone, pal. You’ll either figure it out, or we’ll help you. That’s what friends do, right?”

Bendy stared at him for a long moment. “Yeah. You’re right.”

“Oh course I am. I’m the best,” Cup gloated.

Bendy smirked. “Nah, that was luck. You’re a mook.”

Cup snorted and pulled away. “So ungrateful.” Bendy grinned at Cup’s grumbling. He didn’t know if he did Bendy any good, but it seemed so. Bendy appeared more relaxed the next day, and his horrible flirting...well it didn’t disappear, but at least he wasn’t going to get attacked anymore.

If only the days after were such an easy fix. Nope. Mickey and his little crew came by for Mickey to ‘apologize,’ though the little demon was way beyond that mess. Mickey had saved his life. It was forgotten, but those words weren’t said. Not with the mouse’s brother and friends there. To them, he was here to apologize. It was the only reason he had to drop by. He casually asked how everyone was and such. He and the group all had to whack the cussing bush and be vague. Cuphead got annoyed about ten minutes in and left to help in the kitchen instead. That was when Mickey gave him the ‘look.’ That same cussing look Felix and Xedo were giving him and Mugs. He nearly turned around and snapped ‘what!’ but his brother was already suspicious of them, so Cup instead hunched his shoulders and kept walking.

That was it! He was going to find out what the cuss was going on! Stars! Sadly, he didn’t get the chance that day. The cops showed up. Mickey still there. It was the dame detectives, that crow and raccoon. They had questions about the ‘incident’ that people had started calling the Nightmare Night. Though, it had only been a few hours. Pansies. Anyway, the detectives asked about the sighting of a girl fitting the description of Holly, her attack on the library, and the office building that had burned
down. They were all vague and ‘I dunnos’ of course. The cops seemed to know they were sitting on a pile of stardust but, oddly enough, didn’t seem to push.

Cup watched them suspiciously. If he didn’t know any better he’d say the cops were pals of Bendy and Boris’ somehow. They also were thanked for their ‘heroic civilon actions’ but to remember to leave certain things to the cops. Cup snorted. He couldn’t help it. The cops? The cussing cops? How many of those badges were in Dice or the boss’ pocket? How many gambled at Hat’s casino or sat down with Mortimer? How many dropped by Winky’s bar for the shadier stardust in the dark underbelly of the city? Cops, yeah right. And that had been the wrong thing to do, because that immediately turned their attention on him. Cup swore most of the room sucked in a breath and held it.

They had started to question him, found out he was the guy that had saved a number of people by defeating monsters. They, of course, didn’t recognize him from any near run-ins in their former jobs. One of the very few things he could thank the boss for. In the end, they had to leave him alone.

Mugs was sweating bullets on the other side of the room with Cala. They left with a warning that whatever had happened was handled. Bendy shrugged but winked.

Mickey and his crew left shortly after that, Ozzy rechallenging him and Bendy to a drinking contest. So, one good thing came out of the annoying visit. Stars. Cup had been going crazy with all the tiptoeing around the topics that were almost common place here.

He hoped that was it, but one last drama had hit. Finley had an ink attack, and Sammy cussing lost it. Apparently, it was worse than before. Bonus, the cat had no clue Fin was sick. The fox had been lying for weeks. Odds and Red whisked Fin away, and that left Granny and Boris to try and console the distraught cat. Cup was waiting for him to faint, he was so pale and shaky. He kept mumbling about how Fin couldn’t die. Snow and the rest were able to help him.

Cup watched on. His eyes found Mugs. His brother looked worried and sad. That was a problem. Cup could see a question in his eyes, a doubt. They would have to have a talk, but not here. Any conversation that Cup could imagine Mugs wanted to have right now would be compromising of their positions here.

He hoped the drama would calm quickly, but the fox’s secret from half the house was a big issue for some stupid reason. Seemed the cat was also upset with everyone that knew and didn’t say anything, and that divided the house. The cupman was annoyed and decided that he was leaving. It wasn’t his issue, and he didn’t care for the cussing tension. The fox survived the attack, so in his eyes, there wasn’t any reason for all this.

Mugs followed him out. They left the street to find the last problem of that day. A few goons were loitering at the end of the street. Thieves, if Cuphead had to guess. Possibly attached to one of the local gangs. Now, what would they be doing around Baker Street? With one glance, the brothers were in agreement. Baker Street was theirs, and they wouldn’t allow any low lives. So, the two had approached the thugs. At first, they tried to play dumb, but when Cuphead introduced himself and Mugs that waste of time pretense dropped. They still tried to play it casual, though.

Luckily for Cup and Mugs, it only took knocking two of them on their sorry rears to get some truth and answers. Seemed that the underworld had a better understanding of Holly being tied in with the Nightmare Night than the cops or public. She had been linked to them from that night they were chased by those goons in the cars and her being spotted around the Sykes warehouse before it burned down. Her with the cog at the library was enough for some parties to gain some interest in the girl and the house she visited so often. Cussing great. He and Mugs would have to do some damage control in the underworld. They couldn’t have Holly kidnapped or threatened, after all. She knew too
much. It wasn’t because Cup found it disturbing for the little miss that he so easily hung in a tree to be a target of some of the worst scum in the city. He had warned her, after all, and he didn’t need to feel responsible or anything. She had tried to kill him and Mugs multiple times. Forget that she was possessed or that she hadn’t left her apartment ever since Alice and Bendy had taken her there. Forget that Cup was suspicious that he had permanently scarred her. Forget that her little pet was sitting in his pocket, getting more and more depressed with each passing day her owner didn’t show up. Forget how Alice was starting to worry since Holly would hardly speak a word to her.

None of that mattered. Right?

So, he and Mugs had chased away the scum with a warning to not return. After that, they went to some of the seediest bars and shadiest corners of the city that were open. They needed information and quickly. Rumors were dangerous, and they could spread fast. If they were going to stop stardust from staining their friends and making life difficult, they needed to move faster.

It took a couple of nights of card games and drinks with informants and scumbags. He learned that the word was the little witch girl had taken out the Sykes and attempted to take over the city, that she was behind some of the disappearances and the death of the mayor. Worst of all were the two rumors that she hadn’t gotten her powers from either Hat or Bendy, since they both had been seen during Nightmare Night.

Cup was quick to correct these rumors and claim the disappearances as his for the boss. That the Sykes had failed in a job for the boss. He used it as a warning against working sloppy with himself and Mugs. Surprisingly, or not so surprisingly, that got passed around just as fast. The cups’ boss was mostly unnamed, only the debtors knowing the identity of the infamous ‘mob boss’ that the cups worked for. Everyone knew the group. Them, King Dice, Black Hat, Big Bad Wolf, and a number of others that worked for him had earned their own infamy either privately or publicly. The boss had his hands in everything, and most others knew not to mess with him or his business.

The excuse for what had happened to the city was that some schmuck had nabbed something from the boss, and they had taken care of it. Period. It seemed to annoy some that they couldn’t get back at the person that had caused them and their businesses such problems, but they weren’t going to give Cuphead any trouble. Or he at least hoped so. Greed was a strong motivator, and Holly had shown a lot of cussing power. That also hopefully removed the target off of Holly and Bendy. For now. If they kept getting tied up in newsworthy stardust, Cup would only be able to do so much. It also didn’t help that Bendy was a demon. Hat wasn’t the most subtle with his powers, and with the kid in the news so often and now that it was obvious he was with the cups...Well, it wasn’t so clear how safe he was from the criminal world. Still. Infamy had its perks. People wouldn’t try anything in broad daylight. Small fry wouldn’t dare, and the bigger dogs would plan carefully. Cup would have to keep an eye on his demon friend.

It was all done with subtle comments and implications over drinks and cards. Chips went along with Cup’s laid back attitude to the whole thing. He also claimed the disappearance of the commissioner. Cup had almost forgotten about the schmuck and that the Sykes had handled him, but it was another claim that would cause troubles if he just left it.

The little hints and details would be enough to let the mob bosses know that it was his boss’ business and to leave it alone. That done, he was finally able to enjoy Granny’s superior cooking again.
"Ladies and gentlemen! Welcome!" Mic greeted with a wide grin. "Today the crew finally see Holly after almost a week of silence! I hope everything turns out okay for our questers!"

The drama thankfully calmed down. Sammy had forgiven Finley, but now the cat was depressed and moping around. Cup found that only slightly less irritating. Cup was hoping that now things could be a bit more peaceful.

What a dumb hope. The next day was the day Felix and Xedo finally came to him and Mugs to talk. He guessed he should be thankful they did it in private instead of in front of everyone. What they had to say made Cup’s heart nearly stop. They knew he and Mugs worked for a demon. Holly had told them.

“You gotta be kiddin’ me.” Cup gruffed a laugh. “A demon? Us?”

“Then, why are you still going to the criminal meeting places in the city?” Xedo asked. He adjusted his glasses. “Don’t bother denying it. I tailed you.”

Cup scowled, the little-- Felix turned to him. “Is that true?”

Mugs jumped in. “We were just trying to protect Holly and Bendy.”


Cuphead snorted. “You think any criminal in the world takes the news seriously? We all know to read between the lines. Thanks to the mess Holly kept sticking her nose in and that library fiasco, the mafia bosses around here have taken an interest in her and how she did it. They thought she was behind everything. Who knows what they had in store for her. Another rumor was that she had made a deal with either Bendy or Hat for power.”
“We made sure that those rumors were taken care of and that Bendy and Holly would be left alone,” Mugs said. Xedo and Felix shared surprised looks.

“You’re welcome,” Cup snapped sarcastically.

“How? Why would the criminals listen to you two?” Xedo said. “I’m sure all of us know that the Sykes aren’t the worst this city has to offer. What could you say that would deter such people?”

Cup smirked. “Mugs and I have a reputation in the criminal world. We are infamous for our work and our successes.”

“I never heard about you until I met Bendy and Boris.” Felix furrowed his brows confused. Xedo frowned and crossed his arms. Seemed the fox wasn’t happy he didn’t know something. Too bad.

“Exactly.” Cup smirked. “That’s how good we are.” Or the boss’ magic, but whatever.

“So, it’s true that you two work for a demon. That you’re assassins and you are still in the criminal world?” Xedo demanded coldly.

“And what if we are? What does that change?” Cup asked, sounding uncaring. Mugs turned to him in complete shock.

“It certainly puts your loyalty into question. What would you two gain from helping the B-brothers? Or are you just doing what your boss is telling you to do? How is he okay with this?” Xedo asked with narrowed eyes. Felix seemed torn. So cussing nosy.

“They’re our friends,” Mugs stated. He crossed his arms and lifted his chin. “We wanted to.”

Xedo frowned. Cup scoffed. Damned fox was too smart. Cup itched for a smoke. He reached into his pocket. Xedo and Felix tensed. Cup rolled his eyes and pulled out his pack. “One, I am always armed.” Cup scoffed. “And two, we owed them. It’s that simple.” Cup tapped out one and lifted it to his lips.

“Oh really?” Xedo asked drily.

Cup sneered. “Yeah really. And I ain’t sharin’ the details. Ya got a problem with us? Deal with it. We’re helpin’ them as long as they’ll have us around.”

Xedo frowned disapprovingly. Felix was the one that spoke up. “You both have risked your lives and helped us over and over. I’m sure any debt to the brothers has been repaid.” Cup shook his head. Felix sighed. His eyes softened. “I don’t know the details, and it’s up to you to share or not, but can I at least ask, are you two okay? Do you need help?”

Cup stared at the cat in surprise. His hand was half raised to light his cigarette. Was he serious? Those worried eyes, that sure posture. He really looked serious. He shared the shocked look with Mugs. Who was the last person that had asked them that? The last person that knew about their situation and wanted to help them? Sure, the cat didn’t really know everything, but...Cup had an odd feeling that if he did he would do anything to help them. That was a dangerous determination he had. It would get him killed if he got involved.

Still. It was oddly touching to have someone worry. It had been a long time since someone had shown them true care and concern like this. Ugh. How sappy. He turned his back on the cat and fox. “We’re fine. You don’t have to worry about us. But it’s best you both stay out of it and stay quiet. You’ve both had a taste of what demons can be like. Besides Bendy of course.”
The two stared at him. He could feel it. Mugs stayed at his side, face twisted in worry. “Is it Black Hat?” Xedo asked.

Cuphead hummed and started to walk. “It sure makes you wonder, huh?”

“Wait, we aren’t done talking,” Xedo called after him. Cup waved over his shoulder as he turned the corner and left the men.

And that was that. Cup had no clue if they would tell the others or not. It was a concern. They weren’t allowed to talk about the boss. If the fox and cat figured it out, they’d be killed. Mugs didn’t want that. Neither did Cup, but he wasn’t going to admit that out loud.

It reminded him that he and Mugs still needed to talk, but it wasn’t the time. The house was getting busy again. Bendy had an attack, but Oddswell promised it wasn’t as bad as some of his others.

And Alice was there asking for help. She was starting to really worry about Holly. Guess recovering after destroying a city was more draining then Cup had thought. She didn’t really remember had what happened and seemed to still be very tired. Felix figured it was magic exhaustion. Her body was suffering from using and housing so much magic. Bendy felt guilt for the memory holes and the fact that the girl seemed to have lost her memory talent.

Bendy feeling responsible and Alice acting like a worried mother meant, of course, that they were going to get dragged out to the apartment. Cup tried to get out of it, but Bendy twisted his arm. He had to return her pet. Mugs went to make sure he returned her pet. Traitor.

So Alice, Bendy, Boris, himself, Mugs, Felix, and Xedo went to go talk to her, see if they could help. Cala tagged along last minute as someone that ‘understood what that gear was like’ or something.

The walk there was telling. Many of the vines had been cleaned up. The rubble of what used to be buildings was getting cleared out. A few of the roads were half repaired. No vehicles could really get around still, but a lot of businesses were now open again and foot traffic was a thing. The park was still covered in tons of giant spider webs. Boris shivered and walked closer to Bendy. Poor kid was going to have a fear of spiders for a while.

They passed by a herb and flower shop. A mouse and duck were looking at the mess. Alice took some time to say hi. They also passed Betty’s place. Cup bought some more cigs while they talked. Cup began to wonder if they would ever get there. Puff was practically vibrating with excitement in his hair. Finally, they reached the apartment building. It was in pretty good condition considering others on the same street. Cuphead wondered what they were going to see. Obviously, not the spunky little spitfire Cup had teased, but not the cruel, twisted witch either.

What had become of Holly?

From the quiet tension in the group, Cup figured he wasn’t the only one that was wary. When they walked into the apartment it was so quiet it felt as if no one was there. Cup’s nerves jumped up a notch. A trap? That was his first instinct. Alice was the only one that didn’t seem bothered by the emptiness.

Alice motioned for everyone to wait in the living room. She went down a small hall and knocked on the door. “Holly. Are you up?”

There was a faint shifting but no answer.

“You have company sweetie. Will you come out to join us?” Alice asked gently. “They wanted to
see if you were okay.” More like ‘sane,’ but whatever.

Still no answer.

“Please Holly? Everyone has been so worried,” Alice said. “I can tell you who’s here if you want.” Oh yeah, cause that would help so much. Cup rolled his eyes.

A creak and the sound of something settling on the ground. This time he barely made out the words. “Can’t handle it.”

can’t...Ah.

He glanced at Boris and Bendy. They both seemed to deflate at that. Especially Bendy. He had been worried that his work in her head was the reason she had memory problems to begin with. Hearing that she ‘can’t handle’ seeing them must be a blow to the guy.

Alice sighed softly. “Okay. Don’t push yourself.” She retreated back to the living room. She sat down with another sigh.

“It’s been like this ever since she’s gotten home?” Xedo asked softly. Alice nodded.

“Well, she can’t spend the rest of her life in her room,” Mugs said.

Cala frowned. “I’m sure she feels guilty over what happened. I know I did after I found out what I did.”

“Guilt? But she doesn’t have anything to feel for! It wasn’t her fault! It was all the cog’s doing!” Bendy hissed.

“But it was her that cast the spells, Bendy. I’m sure she’s looked outside,” Felix explained glumly.

“No one likes to feel out of control.” Alice gave him a knowing look. Bendy grimaced and dropped his head.

“Well no, but it’s still not her fault,” Bendy muttered. That hardly mattered now. The point was how she felt. If she thought it was all her fault, then that was that for her. He looked around the group. The bandages sticking out from under Felix’ shirt and Mugs’ pant leg. The bruises and bandages on Bendy and Alice. The pipe that Boris had started to carry around like Felix did his pack. Cup noticed. And Holly would too. Everyone was walking away changed, and she would feel responsible for every bump and scrap.

Cup looked to Mugs again. He had when he and Mugs had to go after their first contracts as kids. He had started off alone after fighting with Mugs. He had been an idiot and nearly died. Mugs had come in and saved him. They had stuck together after that; but Cup felt every bruise, chip, and crack his brother had gotten. It had hurt him to the soul. And when they lost to the Devil...

Cuphead stood up. Everyone went quiet and looked at him. He turned to Bendy. “Hey, how much you trust me?”

Bendy raised a brow. “Why?” he asked slowly.

Cup pulled out a cigarette. Alice frowned. “Because I think I have an idea on how to help her, but you’re are going to have to trust me and stay out of it.” Several of the group frowned disapprovingly.

“What are you thinking?” Xedo asked suspiciously. Stars! With the cussing suspicion again!
Starfallen witch and her cussing big mouth!

Regardless, that little mouse girl knew how to listen in, and she had to have heard everything they had been saying so far. Cup wasn’t going to sit here and talk about it. He was a guy of action.

“I’m thinking I get it. So, stay outta my way,” Cup snipped at the fox, annoyed. “Mugs.” Mugman stood up with confusion in his eyes. “You remember Sally Stageplay?” Mugs blinked and then his eyes widened as he realized what Cup was implying. He frowned exasperated.

“Cup, I don’t know if that's for the best. She said she couldn’t handle seeing us,” Mugs argued.

“Bro. I’m asking for faith here.” Cup lifted a finger and wagged it back and forth. Mugs didn’t lose the frown. He huffed but didn’t argue. “And I’d say the flower corner.” Mugs nodded.

“Cuphead, what are you planning?” Bendy sounded almost annoyed. Cup smirked and winked. He reached up and pulled out Snowball.

“Patience,” Cuphead said.

“Don’t be cruel, ya mook,” Bendy warned.

“When am I ever when it’s important? ‘Sides you’re the one that dragged me here to do this.” Cup shrugged like it was no big deal. Mugs scowled at him as they came up to Holly’s door. Cup tapped it with his knuckles.

“Hey tree princess, I know ya said you didn’t wanna see our faces, but I have somethin’ here for ya,” Cuphead said to the door. He tickled Snowball’s underbelly to get her to make a noise.

She squeaked, wriggling. Cute. Turning, the small animal blinked, looking expectantly at the door. This time, the room remained silent. Did she fall asleep? She wouldn’t ignore her pet would she? No way! She had come out and faced him to get her back, and that had been when she hadn’t known anything about them except what the palookas had talked about.

“Hello? Holly?” Cup tried again. “Puff here has been at the house waiting for you but ya never showed. We brought her over for you. She’s been patient ya know,” Cuphead said. “A real pal even. I was almost tempted to keep her,” Cup tried to tease. Mugs elbowed him. He brushed his brother off.

Another silence followed. He almost spoke again, but then the door shifted imperceptibly, opening a sliver. A piece of her face showed, but she wasn’t looking at him. She had her eyes firmly on his hand. A blanket was wrapped around her shoulders. Her hair was a mess. Her eyes were swollen. Her expression was slack with a hint of energy. “Snow?” It sounded uncertain.

The moment the little critter saw her, she made excited noises and jumped at the gap in the door. With dandehog precision, she latched on the blanket and scampered up to the girl’s shoulder, rubbing herself against the girl's neck and chin emphatically while making constant happy sounds. Holly looked at the critter blankly. With a shaky hand, she reached out to touch Snowball with awe. Her eyes welled up and a small stream of tears ran down her face. She brushed her hand gently through the animal's bristles. She shut her teary eyes tilted her head so her cheek brushed Snowball gently. It was touching, sure, and yet a bit heartbreaking. The joy in Puff was obvious, but Holly's joy was weighed down. Again, to Cup's annoyance, he understood that feeling.

Then, her eyes lifted and ended up meeting his.

He saw multiple different emotions rise in them, guilt, sorrow, fear. Her shoulders started to shake.
What the hell was she thinking? He saw her arm tense. He moved as she tried to shut the door, his foot stopping it. “Ah-ah-ah tree princess. You and I have business. Puff isn’t the only one that’s been patient.” Nothing will change if she just kept shutting the door on everyone. Alice was doing a good job, but everyone wanted to protect and coddle her. That’s not what the girl needed. It would probably make her feel worse.

Her eyes widened, and she paled. Letting go of the door, she turned and ran back into the room. Cup scoffed and shoved the door open.

“Hey! Cuphead!” Felix called out. Wow, only at the door they were already too nervous to shut it. Figures. He wouldn’t be able to say anything here. Mugs would be able to keep them back for a moment. He gave the room one glance over.

There was a bare bed at the far end of the room. To its left were two bookshelves filled with...you guessed it, books on runes. A vanity sat just past the door. Finally, there was the closet across from the bookshelves. It shut with a thud as Holly hid inside. The room smelled a touch musty, like it hadn’t seen fresh air in a while. She had become a hermit. A room hermit.

He went to the closet. “And just what are you hoping for in there?” Cup smirked around his unlit smoke. She wouldn’t dare attack, would she? He reached for the door and pulled it open with a sudden yank.

There was a shaky symbol written on the wall, but it had no glow of energy. Holly sat in a back corner, blanket wrapped tightly around her. She stared at him with wide eyes. Snowball turned to look at Cuphead. She gave a disapproving meep. Cup brushed it off. He was helping after all. And she was so perfectly wrapped up for him. Like a present. A package to be delivered. An idea came to mind, and he smirked. If she didn’t want to talk, fine. He scooped her up and tossed her over his shoulder like the sack of potatoes she was pretending to be.

“Hey, s-stop!” she croaked, her voice rough from not speaking.

Mugs had backed into the room, their rather upset friends arguing and scolding louder and louder. Seemed team ‘Stop Cuphead’ had a few new members. Sad really. It had to get too full at some point, right?

“And why should I do that? If you’re gonna act like a sad sack of potatoes, I’m gonna treat you like one.” She stared at him in shock. He laughed and rolled her off to toss her at Mugs. He didn’t allow her feet to touch the floor. “Mugs! Now!”

Mugs spun on his heel and caught her. They disappeared in a cloud of smoke before anyone could blink. There was stunned silence for a breath. Then outrage. Cup was already halfway out the window.

“What the cuss do you think you’re doing!” Bendy roared. His eyes blazing red. Oh, so scary. Especially with the bandaid on his cheek.

“Cuphead, you bring her back now! You can’t kidnap her! She isn’t the witch anymore,” Felix argued.

Cuphead laughed. “Be back later!” He jumped out the window to the sounds of protest and sprinted down the street, cackling. He made sure to take a few back alleys and lose anyone that tried to follow. He then went to the flower shop. There, Mugs had Holly. She was almost on her feet.

“I am so sorry about him, Holly. I have no idea what is going on in my brother’s head. I was really
just hoping he was going to give you back Snowball.” Mugs grimaced. “I can take you back if you-

“Ups-y-daisy!” Cup said cheerfully and scooped the sad potato sack back onto his shoulder before Mugs could finish putting her down.

“Cup!” Mugs protested.

Cup walked on with purpose. He ignored the flabbergasted looks of Minnie and Daisy as they passed by. “C’mon Mugsy! We won’t have long with an angel tracking us.” Cup waved him over with his free hand. He had a pretty good idea of where he wanted this chat to be. Surprisingly, Holly didn’t struggle. She just hung limply. He even thought he heard a soft sigh.

He frowned. She really was being pathetic. No fight? No screaming? Just simple acceptance? For all she knew, he wanted revenge. What the hell was this sad excuse of a sack? He was sure he had seen happier potato bags.

He josteled her a little. “So, that’s it? You really are just going to hang around and accept whatever the hell I feel like putting you through?” Mugs eyed him warningly. Cup ignored it.

“I’m curious to see how bad this can get.” There it was. The smallest spark of sarcasm. Ah! So she was in there! He just had to drag it out of her. And what better way than cold, hard reality? It was a great smack in the face! Woke him up every time.

“Oh, this could be hell.” Cup smirked. It was probably closer to a sneer. Mugs paled a bit. Was he really that intimidating? He knew he could be impulsive but c’mon! Mugs should know he wouldn't hurt the leaf girl.

“At least I won’t need a blanket,” Holly replied blandly.

Cup chuckled. Good sense of humor. Good. She could at least joke. They reached the park, and Cup plopped her down not too gently but not too rough either. Several trees were uprooted or broken. Others still had spider webs covering them. More webs blew in the wind from the two buildings on either side. The fallen trees were cut, and several were being loaded in trucks.

Holly blinked several times, the blanket falling off her head. “Now, there is a lot I want to say, even more I could say, but I have no clue how much you’re going to cussing remember.” Cup looked down at her. How much of her head was a mess? He had no idea.

She went back to staring at her feet. “I’ll remember,” she whispered.

“Don’t look at your feet! Mugs and I went through a lot of trouble to bring you here. Look up, damnit!” Cup snapped. Mugs made a sound of protest. He crossed his arms and glared at Cup. Cup lifted a finger to gesture for him to wait.

She slowly raised her eyes, carefully avoiding looking at him. Her breathing quickened, and she swallowed.

“Now, I’m sure there is a lot going through your head. Stop me if I’m wrong.” Cup smirked. “I can’t believe I did this. How could I have done this. No one will ever forgive me. Should they ever forgive me? I am the worst. The absolute worst. I am scum. I don’t even deser--”

“Cuphead stop!” Mugs snapped. Cup paused and looked back at him. “You’re going to give her a panic attack!” He glanced down at the girl.
She had lifted a shaking hand to cover her mouth. She looked like she was having a hard time with her breathing. She closed her eyes and opened them. Oops. He just wanted to prove that he could see what she was thinking. That he got it. Guess he pushed too far.

Then, she gave a soft laugh. “Easier than what I tried to give the both of you,” she said angrily.

Mugs’ eyes widened. Cup raised a brow. “Oh yeah. You tried to kill us. A number of times even. Drowning, burning, feeding us to monsters. That was pretty gutsy of you princess,” Cup said matter-of-fact. Mugs just stared at them both.

“B-but that wasn’t really you, right Holly?” Mugs choked out. He sounded uncertain now.

She shook her head, raising both hands. She flinched and dropped her left, leaving her right to press against her forehead. Cuphead narrowed his eyes. That was the burn spot, right? It was the shoulder he had hit. It really could’ve been his bullet. “I don’t know,” she said miserably. “It’s all so fuzzy and vague.”

She didn’t know? Well, that sounded painfully familiar. “Still didn’t change what you did. You messed up big, tree princess,” Cup said coldly. And she did, but she thought she was irredeemable.

Holly turned back to the park and continued to watch the work. “I did.”

“You wrecked the city, nearly killed us and everyone else. Boris is gonna be afraid of spiders for who knows how long, and who knows the trauma Mickey is going to be dealing with,” Cup listed. “I mean, this city is going to be a mess for a few more weeks, and the hospitals are so busy with hurt people.” Cup looked down at her. “And now Mugs and I are going to have to show Boris how to use that cussing pipe. And it's all. Your. Fault.” Cup smirked.

Holly’s blank expression wavered. She took in a deep, shaky breath, covering the trembling of her lips, her wide eyes. Not too hard Cuppy. He didn’t want to break the girl. He just needed her thinking along the lines she had been for the past few days and then turn it on its head.

“I mean. You couldn’t really kill anyone. That’s pathetic. All that power and you just couldn’t pick a plan to stick to. I heard your unicorns killed your monsters. That’s sad. Seriously, what evil overlord has their own forces tearing each other apart?”

“Cup?” Mugs asked confused. Cup shook his head. His brother needed to stay quiet!

Cup sighed. “And Mugs only got a cut-up leg. There won’t be scars. Not even a single stitch. You tried to kill us three times, and you couldn’t do much more than a skinned knee? You are the sunblazing worst at being a villain.” He shook his head disapprovingly. Which was true...even though she had been terrifying and there had been so many close calls.

She raised her head slowly, confusion on her face.

“Ya know, all this cosmetic damage sure looks impressive, but in the end, you can’t pay out. Mugs and I had to shake some of the mob off you, because they thought you had potential.” Her face blanched. Cup shook his head. “I have no cussing idea what they were thinking. I haven’t ever seen such a pushover tree princess in my life. You couldn’t crush a bug.” Mugs eyes widened, a hand covered his mouth.

She stared at him, opened her mouth and closed it again.

“So I really don’t get this sad pity party you’ve been throwing for yourself.” Cup stuffed his hands in his pockets. “Do you want to be a good villain? Hat can give you pointers,” Cup offered lightly. He
shouldn't enjoy her gobsmacked staring but it was funny.

Holly's brow went down. "Heavens no!" she snapped in the first real burst of energy he'd seen in her. There was the tree princess that yelled at him as he left her on that branch! Ha! She really could snap out of it! She just needed to see that the damage done wasn't permanent!

Then her shoulders hunched. “But I’m not sure what to do,” she finally offered.

“With what?” Cup asked. He lit his cigarette with a finger and took a deep breath.

“With anything. I’m not sure I even deserve to be here.”

Both he and Mugs burst out laughing. “Y-you don’t think you--Are you kidding me!” Cup wheezed. He nearly swallowed his cig.

“Holly, if anyone doesn’t deserve to be there, it's us!” Mugs said. “We tried to kill Bendy and Boris too!”

“Hell, I think we were a lot closer to succeeding then you were kid,” Cup added and worked on getting control of himself.

“Don’t laugh about that.” Her tone was cold, and her eyes were narrowed with anger at both of them. “The only reason I didn’t kill him is because of the sick, sadistic idea that filled my head that I wanted to see him suffer, that I wanted to see you all suffer. I t--” She choked on the word. She started to breathe fast again. “I tortured him.” Her voice cracked. “Bendy. Who’s already gone through too much stardust.”

“And he’s fine now.” Cup dropped the smile. “Whatever you do won’t ever be as bad as his attacks. I think we can all agree to that.” He took a deep breath. She wanted reality. He’d show her reality. “And the only reason I didn’t kill him is because Mugs got in the way.” He growled. Mugs turned wide eyes on him. “I shot my brother instead,” Cup admitted. “And I thought I had killed him.”

“Cup.” Mugs stepped up to rest a hand on his shoulder but Cup shook his head.

“Go on. Show her, Mugs.” Cup turned his head away. He still felt the hole in his gut. Mugs sighed and lifted his shirt. The jagged scars that lined his left side, the added scars of the stitches that tracked the ruined flesh. Holly stared, her brows going down.

“It was an accident Cuphead,” Mugs said firmly, dropping the shirt.

“But an accident that was meant for that demon and wolf,” Cup shot back. He turned to Holly, “You wanna run from what you did? Then, you better be ready to run for the rest of your cussing life, because that’s how that life goes. And if you think that group we left in the dust is going to let you do that then you have another thing coming. They will hunt you down to every corner of this starfallen planet, and you and I know that!” Cuphead snapped.

Something softened in her then, her brows rose and a kind of warmth entered her eyes. “They would.”

“So then, you better do what I cussing did. You make it up to them,” Cup said seriously. “You live your life, you figure out how to cussing smile and laugh again, and you help them any way you can.”

Her brows fell again as she seemed to consider. “You’re right,” she said softly. A look of exhaustion passed through them, but then determination. She tried to get up but swayed and fell back down.
“Well, that didn’t work,” she said weakly.

Mugs offered her a hand. Cup did too. They both pulled her up on her feet and kept her steady.
“Golly, you should probably go get more rest. You look pale, Holly.”

She gave Mugs a slow, tired smile. “I’d honestly prefer to stay awake for as long as I can at this point.”

“Hey, you schmuck!” a voice came from behind him, and suddenly Cup was face first on the ground with an angry pint-sized demon standing on his back. “What the hell is wrong with you! Is your brain cracked? What low-life kidnap a sick girl? Huh? Huh! You have some nerve, you creep!”
Bendy dug his heel into Cup’s spine, right between his shoulder blades. “I don’t think I can be friends with such a disgusting palooka!”

Cup growled and rolled. Bendy jumped up to avoid him. Nimble little pipsqueak. “I said I was helping. Are you deaf or something? Do you even have ears?”

“Um, Bendy!” Holly tried. She looked at Mugs.

“You don’t!” Bendy pointed at him accusingly. “You are the cussing worst when it comes to listening! You pile of stardust! You sunblazing moron!”

Alice came from around a corner, breathing hard, Boris and Felix with her.

“Oh yeah? Well, you’re the little pipsqueak that has only been moping around because you think you gave the tree princess permanent brain damage! FYI, she seems fine ta me!” Cup shot up from the ground. This little schmuck had made him lose his smoke!

“You can’t just make that call, you cussing idiot!” Bendy barked his eyes lighting red. “And who did you call a microscope beansprout!”

“I didn’t say that, you cussing moron!” Cuphead snapped back.


“Would both you idiots shut up! Stars, you’re giving me a headache, and Holly already isn’t feeling good,” Mugs chastised.

Bendy stopped and whirled around. “Holly! I am so sorry! Did these schmucks do anything? You know Cuphead is a moron! Anything he said means nothing! You’re a real friend, Holly. Honest. None of us blame you for anything.” Holly’s brows dropped. Her face fell.

Cuphead whacked him on the head. “Who are you calling a moron, and what the hell do you think I actually said, idiot!”

Bendy rubbed the back of his head and grabbed Cuphead’s shirt collar, fist raised. “You, you moron! You can’t just cussing push people around!”

“Bendy!” Boris called out. Forget the bandages, Cup was taking this hothead down.

“Cup!” Mugs barked a warning.

“That’s enough,” Alice shouted, and Cup thought his head would crack. Damn. That girl had lungs. “No more fighting. I’ve had enough of it. If you two make one more move I will separate you myself and show you how angels deal punishment.” Bendy froze. Cup did too. He...didn’t want to know.
Angels made even the boss hesitate when doing work. Cup really didn’t want to know why. He and Bendy let go of each other and took a step back like schoolboys caught fighting on the playground. They both looked at the ground.

“Sorry,” they muttered together. The rest joined them after that.

“He didn’t lie. He only tried to help,” Holly finally said. She started the words while looking at the ground, but slowly lifted her eyes to look at Bendy, an flickering attempt of a smile on her face.

Bendy watched her carefully. “You sure? Are you going to be okay, Holly?”

Her smile continued to waver. “I think? At least, I know what to do now. A-and you shouldn’t blame yourself about my memory. I think it has something to do with my talent and bits have been coming back.”

Bendy pursed his lips and gave her a small nod. He and the angel still wouldn’t say anything. Cup was still suspicious that more had happened than just pulling out a cog.

“Well, if that’s all, I think we can get back to the apartment and be a bit more comfortable, agreed?” Felix offered, a little breathless. He winced.

Holly looked at him, blinked, and then frowned.

“Sounds good ta me.” Mugman smiled and scratched his nose.

“Don’t think you’re getting off either! You are just as guilty as he is!” Bendy pointed a warning finger at him.

“But we really were just trying to help?” Mugs muttered.

“Nah-uh. You don’t kidnap girls. It’s the principle of the thing man. C’mon!” Bendy said vehemently. Cuphead rolled his eyes. Technically, Bendy’s ‘rescue’ of Alice could be considered kidnapping from a certain perspective. Should he? The demon had gotten a lot of needling from him lately. Maybe later, when he felt like it.

Alice went over to Holly and the two of them walked together, the angel helping her friend.

Cup followed, Bendy glared daggers after him. Cuphead ignored him. It was a little harder to ignore the looks from Xedo and Felix, though. Stars. What was he going to do about them? They were dangerously close to knowing too much. And possibly Holly, if she remembered. It didn’t look like she did. An accident? Cuphead’s stomach turned uncomfortably at the thought. Felix showed he cared, and Xedo had his little brother to look out for. Heaven knew he was needed. Cup shook his head. Damnit! That kinda stardust hadn’t mattered before! He’d done far worse…

He looked up. Felix had an arm around Boris, the both of them talking animatedly. Xedo was back with Mugs and Bendy, commenting on some such news report image he was going for, painting them as starfallen heroes. Stars above. He couldn’t hurt guys like this. So, what the hell was he going to do?

The two rolls of paper in his hidden inner pocket seemed to grow heavy. He couldn’t mess this up! His and Mugs’ lives depended on it! What the hell was he going to do?

“Cuphead, are you okay?”

Cup looked up to see the worried eyes of Alice gazing back at him. “Is something wrong?” she
asked gently.

Cup stuffed his hands further into his pockets. “Fine,” he grumbled. His hand brushed the cigarette box, and he pulled another out. Alice frowned disapprovingly.

“Oh, but if something is troubling you, you can talk to me,” the angel promised. Oh yeah. That was a great idea. Tell the little angel he worked for her mortal...immortal?...enemy. Real swell idea there.

...Did angels get old?

Holly slowed and turned back as well. She still looked tired, but there was an energy to her eyes that hadn’t been there before. “You said it yourself. No one here will leave you alone if you’re in trouble and need help,” she said softly.

He nearly lost his smoke as he gaped at the girl. The little lady had turned his words right back on him. They were a spear through his soul. Bendy suddenly smacked him on the shoulder.

“You in trouble? What did you do now?” Bendy frowned. Cup turned his stunned gaze on him. Bendy raised a brow. “Well? Spit it out. I can’t do anything unless you tell me, man.”

“Cup’s in trouble? With what?” Boris turned around. “Can we help?”

Xedo and Felix watched him with concerned eyes. Those eyes that reminded him painfully of someone that used to tell epic adventures to him and his brother around the furnace, paint pictures in the living room, and sit out in the sun while he and Mugs played in the meadow and woods around their house.

He glanced at Mugman. His brother seemed just as stunned and even more touched. His eyes were suspiciously glassy. He smiled at Cup, but there was also that guarded question. Would he tell? Would he trust them with the truth, open up, and ask this group to help save him and Mugs from their mistakes? From their lives as little more than attack dogs? He looked back at Holly.

There was consideration in her look, and a slow smile formed on her face. It was like she had said ‘see?

“The hell?” Cup muttered. “No. What problem? Only problem I got is you bunch breathing down my neck.” Cup frowned and took a deep breath of his cigarette before letting it go from his lungs slowly.

“I don’t think so Cup, I think I see you blushing,” Boris teased with a toothy smirk.

Bendy chuckled. “He’s right. What is it? Is it that girl you refuse to tell me about?”

“A girl?” Felix asked, a slow smile coming over his face. His eyes still showed disappointment. That stung. Cup didn’t know why. He wanted to snap at the cat. What the hell did he know! Nothing! He had no right to judge Cup! The schmuck furball!

“Oh yeah, Mr. Felix!” Bendy grinned. “He has it bad for some dame. Bet she’s even in the city! He won’t say anything about her, though.”

Felix chuckled. “Have you tried talking to her, Cuphead?”

Cup scowled. “Would you all get off my back! Cussing stars! I shouldn’t have come here!”
Mugs threw an arm around his shoulders. “Aaww, you know you’re happy you’re here.” His brother grinned. Cup scowled.

Holly snorted a laugh, covering her mouth. Cup turned his glare on her, his face burning. For some reason, that only made her smile widen and caused her to laugh for real. Oh stars, he was losing it. They were laughing. Was he really one of the most feared and respected low-lives in the world? He doubted it now.

“No, I’m not! Get off me! Leave me alone!” Cup elbowed Mugs off. His brother was still chuckling. He marched ahead to get some space between himself and the saps behind him. Cussing hell. They were turning him soft!

“Aww, I think we flustered him Bendy,” Boris said.

“C’mon, Cup! There’s nothing to be embarrassed about! Dames are hot! It’s a fact of life! I can give you some pointers!” Bendy called after him and burst with laughter.

“Your pointers would just make any girl run for the hills.” Boris sighed.

“Hey!” Cup heard Bendy before he turned a corner. He needed to cool down and think. Those mooks weren’t going to let him. He needed a clear head. He had to find a way out of this mess!

Boris sighed. There went Cuphead. He hoped Bendy didn’t push him too hard. Despite his blunt personality, Boris thought Cup was actually a really nice guy. He just had a tough time talking about his feelings.

Much like someone. Boris eyed his laughing brother. At least he was having fun? He looked at Mugs to make sure this was okay. The other smiled and shrugged. Guess it was then. Alice sighed. She seemed worried too.

“Don’t worry.” Mugs spoke up. “He is just super shy when it comes to stuff like girls he likes. It doesn’t happen often.”

“We need to change that--Wait!” Bendy turned mischievous eyes on Mugs. “You know!” He pointed at Boris’ friend accusingly.

Mugs eyes widened before he lifted his hands in a ‘stop’ gesture. “And I am sworn to secrecy. Nope. Don’t ask me. I will never say. Never. I like sleep without fear of waking up to something nasty.” Bendy raised a brow. The smirk didn’t disappear. “No!” Bendy tilted his head. “I said no Bendy!”


Bendy scoffed. “It’s not embarrassing to like a girl, Boris.” Boris wrinkled his muzzle. He had to disagree. It was very embarrassing when Bendy liked a girl. Horribly embarrassing. Boris would rather live under a rock. Bendy saw the look. “Just you wait bro. When a gi--”

“I am never going to like a girl if it’s anything like how you are,” Boris cut him off. He had heard it a million times before, after all. Bendy liked to think he was some big woman magnet, but he’d only ever struck out. There hadn’t been a lot of girls around his bro’s age in Sillyvision, and the ones that were either didn’t give him the time of day or were taken. The most he’d ever gotten was a dance and a rare peck on the cheek.
No. The closest thing Bendy had ever had to a relationship was either the flirting he did with Sasha—yuck—or that kiss he stole from Alice. Mugs had told Boris about it in private. Stars, his brother was hopeless. Said brother was now glaring at him.

“You just haven’t met the right dame yet. You’ll see,” Bendy said and turned on his heel. Oh yeah, sure bro. He’ll see. Boris let his eyes slide over to Alice. She was watching in half confusion, half amusement. He wondered what she thought of Bendy’s obvious womanizing--or sad attempts at womanizing--ways.

Bendy had admitted--again in complete confidence to Boris--that he did like Alice. And from what Boris had seen, he liked her a lot. But...he had dialed back the flirting and his usual nonsense because she was an angel. He didn’t think he had a chance. That there was probably something up between their races or whatever. Boris thought it was silly, and Bendy had been overthinking it, but then Bendy had told him about how she rarely stood near him or touched him. She always seemed to brace herself around him. It bugged him more than he was willing to say.

Boris had decided to watch and find out for himself. He didn’t care for romance. It was gross, but he did like to see his brother happy. It was such a rare occasion to see Bendy just light up like there was nothing wrong with the world. It had started happening more often. Boris wondered if it was all due to Felix or if the rest of them helped. Anyway, Boris watched Alice and, to his disappointment, it appeared that Bendy was right. She did seem to tense when he entered the room. She would give him a few glances when he wasn’t looking too. Nervous looks? Boris couldn’t be sure. Either way, something about his brother bothered the angel.

That was too bad. Boris really liked her. She was very kind and thoughtful. Sure, her humor and puns were horrible, but she did a great job to light up a room, and Bendy liked her jokes. She was just silly enough to fit in and mature enough to be seen as a respectable adult...At least, to Boris she did. He wished he could be like that instead of seen as a kid, but he technically was still a kid.

Boris shook his head. Anyway, he just wanted to see if Alice really did have a problem with his brother or if something else was going on. He wasn’t sure who he could ask though. Holly would have been his first pick, but with her memory stuff and all, was it a good idea? He looked over at the girl. She seemed so fragile right now. Haunted even. Boris got that. After laughing at Cuphead, she had lost energy again, and now Alice seemed to be the only reason she was staying upright. She had gone through a traumatic experience, even more so than Cala.

Boris paused and blinked. Or was it? Cala had been with that cog for years. Trapped with it for years. Why didn’t she have more problems like Holly? Was it because she was isolated? Or that the magic in cog only seemed to make her bigger and more monstrous? Boris frowned to himself. It just didn’t make sense that it was so different. Why?

“You seem to be thinking hard on something,” Mugs commented. Boris nearly jumped. He looked over at the quiet cupman. Mugs smiled.

“Oh yeah, just wondering why the cog acted so different from Cala to Holly,” Boris muttered. Honestly, with how easy Mugs could sneak up on him, it was a miracle he and Bendy had escaped them before. It was like another superpower the guy had.

Mugs frowned. “Wouldn’t it be because Cala is a gorgon, and Holly does magical symbol thingys?” He waved his hands around, wiggling his fingers. Boris frowned. True, but didn’t the page say it did illusions? So far, Boris hadn’t seen a single thing that had been an ‘illusion’ to him. Not that rock spider that had cut him up, the giant Cala that had eaten Mugs, or any of the monsters that Holly had summoned. It had all seemed real. The wounds and destruction were real...So, what did the gear really do? Possess people was the thing they seemed to have in common.
They reached the apartment before he could figure it out. Alice sent Holly back to bed. After that, the angel and group stayed in the living room for a time to talk. They tried to figure out how to help Holly’s memory problem and talent issue. Boris could tell that his brother still felt guilty about that. Sadly, there wasn’t much. Felix had a few runes and therapy practices he knew of, stuff from the Dragon Mountains. Bendy geeked out, of course, but it would all have to wait until Holly was strong enough to start doing things again. Cala offered to talk with her too. She knew what it was like to be under the control of the gear. Alice offered for the girl to stay at the apartment. They had a pull out bed, and Alice could help her learn to walk. They could get a ‘real bed’ for her to room with either her or Holly if she decided she wanted to stay for good. That confused Boris a bit. Wasn’t anything that was called a bed, a bed? There were fake beds? Anything above a pile of cardboard and a ripped up blanket was a cloud to Boris. Then again...most of his young childhood was on cardboard and alleyways, so maybe he wasn’t the right person to judge. Cala was so surprised and touched that she cried. Cuphead reappeared after that. One warning look promised that he would leave again the instant someone tried to mess with him again.

Then, there was the last little tidbit of business they had to talk about…

“I say he can burn in hell!” Cuphead snapped. “He didn’t do his half of the deal. You and Alice shouldn’t have to go back there!”

“We made a deal Cup,” Bendy said exasperatedly. He dropped his chin in his hand.

“Well, at least let us come with you,” Mugs said. “He’ll be less likely to try something with us there.”

“But he specifically asked us to come alone,” Alice argued.

“Yeah, after we specifically asked him to help Holly get free of that thing! He didn’t pull through, neither should we,” Cup snipped and crossed his arms.

“But that would be against my word.” Alice shook her head.

“So?” Cup scowled.

Alice flicked a finger, making her halo appear. “I can’t go against my word! It’s honoring a deal. I don’t want to sink to his level.”

“Protecting yourself isn’t sinking to his level Alice,” Felix said. “And these two know him best. Maybe you should listen to them.”

“His level is hellspawn, and you don’t owe him nothin’!” Cup growled. He looked to Bendy. “No offense man.”

Bendy shook his head. “None taken.” Boris was worried too. They argued back and forth until Alice and Bendy won out. The rest didn’t seem happy about it. Boris wasn’t happy about it either. The guy had nearly killed Felix, Cuphead, and Bendy. He had tried to steal the cog. He wanted to hurt Holly even after they had caught her. He wasn’t a good person. But Alice was determined to keep her end, and Bendy wouldn’t let her go alone. Oddly enough, Boris couldn’t tell if Bendy wanted to go or not.

On one hand, they knew they couldn’t trust him, but on the other, Bendy had learned things about demons he hadn’t before. He had told Boris a little about it before bed. Fledgling things and smelling fear. He felt like Bendy had kept some of it from him, but the wolf didn’t push. Bendy always told him in time. They didn’t have secrets from each other. If Bendy wanted more answers, now was his chance...but Boris didn’t really see any excitement in Bendy. He was warier if anything.
They decided they would go tomorrow morning. It had already been a week. Cup kept trying to argue, but neither angel nor demon would move on the issue. Boris felt that pang of worry that was now almost his constant state of being. Eventually, it got late, and they had to leave. Bendy and Cup were nearly at each other’s throats, and Mugs and Boris had to hold them back. Boris was annoyed, but he also knew that Cup just cared and had a weird way of showing it.

They left Alice and Cala and headed home. Dinner was more simple than normal. They had to use most stuff they had in the house. Grocery stores weren’t getting new supplies yet, still Granny made the vegetable soup taste great somehow. Then, he and Bendy were turning in for the night.

Boris finished brushing his teeth and washing his face when Bendy spoke up. “You’re worried too, aren’t you?”

Boris sighed. “Yeah Bendy. He isn’t a good person, and he nearly killed you once!”

Bendy nodded. “So, are you going to demand I don’t go?”

The wolf shook his head and plopped onto his bed. He crossed his legs in front of him and looked to the other bed and his brother. “Why waste my time? You’re going to go anyway. You won’t let Alice go alone, and I know you still have questions.”

Bendy turned his light eyes on the floor. There was a breath of silence. Boris bit his lip. “Are you scared of the answers?” He couldn’t hold it back anymore. His ears dropped. Bendy looked up, and his eyes answered enough.

Bendy scoffed. “What do I have to be afraid of? The guy is a mook. Can’t believe a word he says anyway.”

Boris sighed, his shoulders dropping. He pulled his knees up and wrapped his arms around them. “You know you aren’t like him.”

“No kidding.” Bendy lifted his chin. His tail flicked. He sounded insulted that Boris even thought that.

“Then, you also know you won’t turn into something like him, right?” Boris dropped his chin on his arms. Bendy stopped. “I know you’re going through a lot, and there are some things that have been changing...I know you haven’t told me everything, but you’ll always be Bendy. You’re my brother. Nothing can change that.”

Bendy raised a brow. “You really think I’m that hung up about it?” Boris lifted his head to give Bendy a deadpan look. Did he really think he could pull the wool over Boris’ eyes? Did he have a clue how easy Boris could see through him? The frown on Bendy’s face seemed to indicate yes. “Alright, fine. So I’m a little worried about this whole...’demon puberty’ thing.”

Boris snorted and choked on a laugh. Bendy scowled, his eyes flashed red. They’d been doing that a lot lately. It didn’t scare Boris. Bendy would have to put in some real effort to do that. “Sorry. Go on.”

“Demon puberty!”

“Just feel like my control is slipping. Little by little, and every time I get one thing figured out, I find another.” Bendy lifted the wrist that held the Joy band on it. Bendy had told everyone how it seemed to help him keep a clear head while he was big. Felix had a few theories, but he wanted to do some research.

Boris nodded. “You’ll get it, bro.”
“Oh really?”

“You always do,” Boris said simply. There wasn’t anything Bendy couldn’t figure out. “And we have everyone here. They are all willing to help.”

Bendy fell back and landed on his pillow. He tossed an arm over his eyes. Boris crawled under his covers and turned to see his brother. “Promise you’ll be safe,” Boris muttered.

“Of course, Boris. I’ll be back after a few hours, and then we can beat the map into showing us where the next part is.” Bendy dropped his arm and got under his sheets. Boris nodded. “Now go to sleep, bro. I’ll see ya in the morning.”

Boris pursed his lips. “Night,” he muttered. Bendy was nervous. Boris didn’t like that. He needed to talk to Mugman tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

This week we got an art from fantastickingdomus. It's perfect timing really. Matches the chapter very well.
We also got this ADORABLE art of Snowball in Dr. Seuss style made by novicsink.
The Talk

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"Bendy and Alice go to Black Hat's casino, alone as promised," Mic said grimly.
"Hopefully he isn't trying anything underhanded."

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello my lovely readers!
I am healthy and free of midterms and the snow is melting...a little...
Life is fantastic! You are fantastic! What a wonderful day!!
...Except for Bendy. Always an uphill battle for the tough guy.
We'll finally see what Hat wants with him.

Bendy let out a heavy sigh. He really didn’t want to go do this. Boris was giving him worried looks.
“And you can’t bring anyone else with you?” he asked for the fourth time that morning.

“No Boris. It’s just me and Alice,” Bendy said again.

“If you ask me, I still don’t like it,” Cup muttered. Felix tilted his hat back. The sharp glance he gave Cup seemed to agree with him.

“Well, it’s a good thing no one asked you then,” Bendy snipped. Cup shot him a dirty glare.

“Cuphead has a point, Bendy. Hat has proven himself to be untrustworthy,” Felix said.

“And he’s a snake at best,” Cup said. “You keep your guard up, Bendy. That guy will want something from you.” Oh, all the warm and fuzzies today.

“Yeah? Well, I made a deal, and he did help,” Bendy said.

“Barely,” Boris muttered under his breath.

“And tried to steal the gear!” Cup snapped back. They glared at each other until a knock interrupted them.

That was when the door opened, and Alice greeted him to head out. They entered the car and with a last wave to the guys, he and Alice headed out of the city to the casino.

“What do you think he wants you there for?” Alice asked. “He said it was to talk?”

Bendy sighed. “I have no clue. Before we struck this deal, he was threatening to either take me to hell or kill me.”
Alice bit her lip. “Don’t worry. I won’t let him. We’ll stick together.”

Bendy raised an eyebrow. “I can put up a decent fight if it comes to that. I just hope that it’s only a talk.”

“It will be. With me there, I won’t give him a choice. If he tries something I’ll step in. If he tries to fight me, it would bring in the Upper authorities and most likely his king,” Alice explained. Bendy jerked his head up to stare at her wide-eyed.

“Woah! Wait a minute! I don’t wanna start a war here!” Bendy shook his head, horrified at the thought.

“Neither does he. Nor do I.” Alice smirked. “And that’s how I know he’ll mind his manners. Besides,” she lifted her chin confidently, “he knows he can’t push me around anymore.”

“Yeah? Well, everyone else’s opinion of the schmuck isn’t that high,” Bendy grumbled.

“Oh, he’s already *demonized* himself toward everyone in your group?” Alice chuckled. Bendy snorted in surprise.

“That was so bad,” Bendy chuckled.

“You’re right. It was downright sinful.” Alice grinned. Bendy laughed but shook his head and rolled his eyes. Oh no, what had he started? Alice cracked demon and angel jokes for the rest of the drive. It almost distracted him. Almost. He couldn’t help the ominous feeling when his eyes landed on the building.

When they got out of the taxi and walked in, the crazy looking girl was waiting for them in the lobby. “Greetings, tainted souls!” she said enthusiastically. Alice and Bendy stared at the odd and rather scandalously clad girl. She gave Betty a run for her money. Boy, that was a small skirt!

She swiveled around on her boots and waved them to follow her. “This way! Mr. Hat is waiting for you.” She bounded away gleefully. Bendy clicked his tongue. This dame was on a Warner level of crazy, wasn’t she? Too bad.

Bendy didn’t go after crazy.

She led them to the back of the building and down a staircase into a basement room. Bendy paused at the sight of the machinery. There were a number of things that seemed to be half-finished ideas and projects. He nearly took a step toward them before he remembered where he was. The strange girl opened a secret door in the wall. Bendy stared at it, wanting to figure out how it worked, but the girl was moving down the hall quickly, and he couldn’t lose her and Alice. Stardust, there was so much to look at now that the urgency was gone, but he had to leave it.

The angel walked with certainty. “So, are we going to the lab or the office first?” Alice asked.

The girl looked over her shoulder, her smile falling before spreading again. “You go to the lab, and he’ll go to office, silly.”

“Uh, no. I don’t think so. We stick together,” Bendy said. There was no way he was letting his eyes off Alice in this place.

“That’s a waste a time.” She waved him off.

“Demencia, please,” Alice said.
The girl huffed. “I guess I can take both of you to Black Hat first.”

She took a few turns leading them deeper and deeper into a maze of halls. Papers, blueprints, and childish drawings scattered down several of them. Not all the halls looked the same either. Some were carpeted, others weren’t. Some looked like a school hall, others like they belonged in a hospital. What was with this place?

They got to a hall that had a rich, dark carpet and a grand, carved door. The strange girl opened it and ushered them in.

“Ah.” Black Hat looked up from his desk, a couple papers in front of him and a feathered quill in his hand. “You’re here. Demencia, take Alice to the lab.”

“We aren’t separating Hat.” Bendy crossed his arms defiantly.

The other demon frowned. “But it’s such a waste of time for you t--”

“No,” Bendy claimed in a low voice. “We didn’t bring anyone else. There was nothing about separating us.”

Hat scowled. “Fine! Then both of you go to the lab! Return when you’re done!” He waved them away irritatedly.

With that, they both left and were led down a hospital like hallway. They reached a heavy metal door that slid open at their approach. The inside was an organized mess. Beakers of chemicals, machinery and parts, tools, notes, boards full of equations, and blueprints. Bendy let out a whistle. This guy sure had a big hobby space. Said person approached them, bag over his head, goggles firmly in place. He wore a lab coat, gloves, boots, and the casino uniform under the lab coat. Weren’t all of those layers hot?

“Alice! You’re here! Um, well, I mean, of course you’re here!” Flug motioned around the lab nervously. Bendy watched the guy eye him. “Uh, g-go ahead and take your position, you should be the last.”

Alice nodded and stepped to the side of the lab. Bendy followed. Flug gave him a nervous look but didn’t say anything. The scientist pulled a lever in the wall. The wall opened to a bunch of machinery and wires. Bendy raised an eyebrow. What in the world? What kinda machine was this? Two thin towers raised to waist height from the ground. Alice stepped up to them and placed her hands on hand holds at the top. Bendy frowned.

“What is this?” Bendy asked.

“A magic power converter!” Dr. Flug said proudly. He stepped up to Alice and placed two shackles around her wrists that had a thick cable run from her wrist to the towers.

“Is it safe?” Bendy asked, eyes the technology and the wall again. He could figure out the coolant tubes, electricity cables, and a few other things, but most of it was a mystery.

“As long as the volunteer doesn’t overexert themselves.” Flug eyed Alice pointedly. Alice grinned. Bendy slid a half mast gaze between the two. Uh-huh. So, that was how she got sick. Holly’s worries seemed to have been caused by this. Well, cuss. Should he really be letting her do this?

“Come on. You’ll want to be in the loft. Angel magic and demons don’t mix well,” Flug said and pointed to a set of circular stairs. Bendy looked to Alice again.
“You’ll be okay? This thing looks a bit...wicked.” Bendy gazed over the wall of circuitry behind Alice.

She smiled. “I’ll be fine. No worries.” She winked. Bendy hesitantly nodded and headed to the stairs. Flug pulled a strange orb thing out of a vault that Bendy was too far to look at closely. He could sure feel it though! It was like he was hit by a wave of light and warmth. It was almost too warm, like the sunlight on a hot day. A pressure settle over him, pressing from all sides and making it a little harder to breathe. The string bean of a man fitted the glowing orb to the center of the wall machinery before joining Bendy in the loft. There was a couch, a work table with more plans on it, and a control panel facing out over the room.

“You may want to put your goggles on,” Flug advised without looking at him. Bendy frowned but did lower the goggles to his eyes. Flug took some time to look things over and then turned a knob and flipped a switch. The orb and Alice lit up brightly. Bendy squinted. Geez, that was intense! “Get comfortable. This will take a while. Bendy frowned and stayed where he was. He tried to figure out the numbers and dials on the control panel, but sadly, he didn’t understand most of it. A power output gauge was the best he could figure. Those numbers could be her vitals, but he wasn’t sure.

Flug wasn’t kidding about the time either. The minutes dragged as Alice seemed to pump the orb with power. Ten minutes...fifteen...twenty...forty. Bendy would bug Flug with questions that seemed to irritate him. The stick didn’t want to explain much, to Bendy’s annoyance. Even though Bendy made sure to sound interested and knowledgeable. Prude. He tried to check on Alice often since this could be dangerous for her. It was hard to stay alert and worried though with both of them acting so calm and so much time passing.

After an hour, Flug flipped the switch and the machine died. Bendy perked as the light died too. He pulled his goggles up to look down on the scene. Alice stood calmly, if not a little paler. She smiled up at him. The orb was still really bright. The pressure from it had increased but not so much that it hurt. The smell of new rain and fresh greenery had filled the lab.

He and Flug went down. The pressure and heat increased. Bendy swallowed and finally stopped at the foot of the stairs, too uncomfortable to get closer to the ball of energy. It was like a jungle in here! Humid and way too hot!

“So, what is that thing gonna be used for?” Bendy asked, eyeing the ball suspiciously.

“If we’re lucky? To change the world,” Flug said as he passed Bendy and went to the orb.

Bendy frowned. “You aren’t using it for evil or anything?”

Flug laughed. “No, no. I think a lot of people will actually be very happy with the results.”

“Yeah? So, what does it do?” Bendy asked lightly.

“Right now? Nothing more than a nightlight. But you’ll see someday,” Flug promised.

Bendy frowned. This nook wasn’t gonna slip. He didn’t trust it for a minute. All of this. He didn’t trust Hat. The room felt too hot, too humid. It smelled like they stepped into the forest after it rained. It was hard to breath. His skin tinged uncomfortably. He itched to leave.

“It’ll be okay, Bendy.” Alice smiled again. She rubbed her wrists. “We better head back to the office. Mr. Hat has been waiting for a while now.” Bendy nodded in silent relief and the two left Flug and the strange orb alone in his clean but messy lab.

Bendy gave it one last uneasy glance before the door shut. He really hoped they didn’t come to
regret this decision. “So, you have no idea what it’ll be used for?” Bendy asked Alice.

“Nothing on the Surface or the Upper. I can only imagine that Hat wants to use it somewhere in the underworld,” Alice said.

“But won’t that anger the demons toward the angels?” Bendy asked, a bit alarmed.

Alice shrugged. “Are you angry at the person who built the gun or the one that fired it?”

Bendy frowned. She had a point, but it still didn’t sit right with him. “But he could frame you! And you didn’t push yourself too much?”

“No, with my halo it was easy. And there are three angels’ magic in there. All three of us can attest to our innocence if it came to that.” Alice smiled. “Our justice system is very different from the one here. They would know the truth instantly.” Bendy nodded. He took a deep breath. Just a little chat with Black Hat, and then he’d be back home in time for dinner. Yeah. Right. He was just waiting for this to all go south somehow. They got back to the dark hallway and entered the fancy doors after knocking. The cool arua from Hat was almost a relief after that suffocating heat in the lab.

“Finally.” Hat sneered. “Took you long enough.”

“Hello, Mr. Hat.” Alice nodded unperturbed.

“You can go wait out in the hall.” Hat pointed back to the door

“I already said we aren’t splitting up,” Bendy disagreed.

Hat scowled. “I won’t have an angel around for this conversation. It’s none of their business.”

“I could stay in the room and not listen,” Alice offered.


“I’m not a spy.” Alice frowned.

“And yet you won’t hesitate to use anything you can find against us. No, I won’t have it.” Black Hat shook his head. “The deal isn’t done until I talk to the fledgling, but I won’t in front of an angel.”

Alice lifted her chin. “Fine. I’ll go read a book!”

“I won’t listen if she leaves the room.” Bendy crossed his arms. He didn’t want his eyes off her. They could try to nab her or him with their backs turned. Hat growled. He snapped his fingers and a burst of green and black flames appeared next to the desk. Alice and Bendy flinched.

The flames dropped and a glass...closet? Appeared. It was completely see-through, had eight glass walls, and a curved top with red symbols set in glass. It was about eight feet tall and four feet wide. “This is a quiet box. She can wait in here and not be engaged. You’ll still be able to see her. Good enough?” Hat snapped.

“Why do you have something like that?” Bendy eyed the glass case. “And how in the world does it work?”

“Magic,” Hat snapped. “I don’t have all day!” Alice shrugged and walked toward the room. Bendy hesitated. He really didn’t like this, but...this creep was the only one that might have answers. He sighed and followed reluctantly. He looked around the room now that he knew they would be stuck here for however long this took. There were pictures and framed news clippings. All of them either
involved Hat, a disaster, or a villain of one kind or another. Was that him shaking hands with Al Capone? And the Big Bad Wolf! Wait...was that him in Pompeii! How—What—Cameras didn’t exist back then! Where the cuss did that come from! It had to be a fake! He glanced at Hat, the other demon made eye contact. He smirked knowingly.

What the cuss! Bendy turned away quickly.

Pedestals held odd items here and there; a delicate jeweled egg thing; a giant eyeball thing, it’s pupil showing an underwater cave and a large woman with octopus tentacles as her lower body laughing over a weird spiky calduran; a bust of Hat that looked ancient. Was that thing Greek? Felix would have known. And a necklace that Bendy swore whispered indistinct things at him ominously. Yeah, no, he did not like this room.

They got to the huge, dark, wood desk. Alice approached the glass closet. Hat held it open for her. She stepped in and gave Bendy an encouraging wink. “Look at the glass half full. We’re almost done!”

Bendy snorted and chuckled. Hat rolled his eye and shut the door. Alice’s face dropped in surprise for a moment, and then wonder, as she looked around.

“There, now take a seat Bendy.” Hat gestured to the two chairs across the desk from Hat’s large leather chair.

Bendy gave Alice one last glance before sitting. “She’s fine?”

Hat snorted indignantly. “Of course! She’s in a pleasant viewing, no need to tie your tail in a knot. It’s on dream mood.” Bendy frowned.

The older demon took a sit and leaned forward, his elbows on the dark wood, fists clasped together. “I’m not going to beat around the bush fledgling, you are a problem.”

“I take pride in that.” Bendy sneered sarcastically.

Hat chuckled. “Usually, I am all for chaos and mayhem, but in this regard I find myself having to step in, if just a little.” Bendy raised a brow. “You see, you are rogue, a demon on the Surface illegally.” Hat shrugged indifferently. “We’ve all done it at least once, but there is a difference between coming up here and staying up here.”

Bendy blinked and leaned back into the cushioned chair. He was being serious. “I’ve always been up here. I don’t know anywhere else.”

Hat frowned. “I know. What of your parents?”

“Never had any that I know of.” Bendy frowned and slouched in his seat. This was usually where he would get some pity look, but it was a fact Bendy had gotten over a long time ago. He didn’t wonder about his or Boris’ parents or how they had gotten in Sillyvision anymore. He was just grateful they had, and that they had each other.

To Bendy surprise, that look never came with the other demon. “A higher lord?” Hat furrowed his brows.

“What’s that?” Bendy tilted his head.

Hat’s sigh was long suffering. “I figured as much,” he muttered. He narrowed his visible eye like Bendy was a particularly difficult math problem. So, it was just the facts with this fella? Bendy was
fine with that. He didn’t want to have the whole pity party trip. “What do you know of demon culture?”

“About,” Bendy drew out the word and smirked tauntingly, “nothin.’” And he still wasn’t sure he wanted to know.

Hat sat back and tapped his fingers together. “I don’t think something like this has ever happened. At least, not for a millenia.”

“So, I’m special.” Bendy grinned. Hat glared at him.

“Hardly. You are pathetically weak, foolish, and idiotic!” The older demon sneered. Bendy lost the smile. “You are practically human!” Oh the...horror?

Weird to hear it like that was a bad thing. Bendy still took that as a compliment, regardless. He didn’t want to be like this guy or the creep he had met on the streets of the chaos torn city. Being a demon had given him nothing but trouble his whole life.

“Look, how about you explain the culture a little?” Bendy suggested lightly. No matter what, he was still himself. Boris was right. He had nothing to fear. “You could help a ‘fledgling’ out.”

Hat sighed warily. “Very well. I will give you the basics of your situation and what would be normal for this.” He waved his hands at Bendy. Bendy lowered his chin and raised his brows, unsure if he should take offense of that or not.

“So demon children all start out as budlings,” Hat explained. He sounded somewhere between annoyed and amazed, like he couldn’t believe that he had to say this, but he also couldn’t believe that he had found it was important to explain. “They remain budlings unless their powers and inner natures awaken.”

“So what? Demon puberty?” Bendy grimaced. He had been right? Stars. That was the last thing he needed. A second puberty. Sun and moon. Hat laughed.

“No, no.” He shook his head. “Budlings can awaken as soon as eight years of age or a hundred years, as a full grown demon. Many demons never leave the budling stage for their whole natural life. They make up the larger population of lower and mid demons in hell.”

“A hundred? How old do we get?” Bendy asked hesitantly. He had never thought of that.

Hat smirked. “Depends on the class of demon.”

“Class?” Bendy looked up, completely lost.

“Higher, mid, and lower.” Bendy just stared at him. “We’ll get there. First, budlings.” Hat lifted a hand. “So when and if a budling’s power awakens they become a fledgling. Demon’s can be adults and still be budlings, but they are usually considered weak and are low in class. Demons respect wisdom and strength. Without those, you’re filth. Remember that.”

Bendy gulped. That seemed rather harsh. Well, it wasn’t like he was planning a visit to hell anytime soon. Hat continued. “Now, being a fledgling is an unstable time for a demon. Your powers fluctuate, they react strongly to emotions, and your senses sharpen and can become overwhelming at times. And then, there’s the bloodlust.” Hat’s smirk became a dark grin. “Older demons usually can handle rampaging fledglings. We have a system set up down there. Everyone protects budlings, watches out for fledglings, respects higher demons, and so on. But here on the Surface, you won’t find that kind of support. If you ramage, the only ones that might be able to stop you are the angels,
and they aren’t merciful to demons.” Hat glanced at Alice. Bendy followed his gaze. She was turning around in the glass case, laughing silently.

Bendy snorted. “Unlikely, I don’t have any bloodlust.”

“Oh? You’ve never had fun in a fight? Never enjoyed defeating your enemies?” Hat leaned forward and rested his elbows on his desk, lacing his fingers together.

“Well, I, uh…” Bendy sunk in his chair. He could think of a…couple.

Hat grinned knowingly. His fangs gleamed in the light. “Don’t be embarrassed. It’s normal demon nature, after all.” But he knew better. Boris never liked him being violent, especially for weak reasons, excuses for a fight. He had always been careful. Always held back until it became natural for him to be restrained. Never throwing a punch at full strength, never going after a scumbag when he started to run. Even though he wanted to. “That glee in a fight will become stronger. The hunger for violence and fear will grow. It will be up to you to figure out how to manage the urges and when it’s okay to indulge.”

Bendy frowned. A creeping sick feeling twisted his stomach. Indulge. Is that what he called it? “And that’s not even the powers bit.” Hat shrugged. “That differs from demon to demon. They depend on their parents and their class.” There was that class thing again.

“Again, class?” Bendy asked flatly, a bit annoyed he had to repeat himself. Hat smirked.

“Yes, most demons will either get their mommy’s or their daddy’s powers,” Hat said condescendingly. “You get a rare case of some getting a meld of both their powers or even something completely new.”

“So, it’s genetic?” Bendy asked to just be sure. Hat rolled his eyes.

“Yes. Mostly. And the class is, again, usually the same as the parents,” Hat said.

“What determines class?” Bendy asked.

“Power level and subspecies most of the time,” Hat said. “There are sea demons, elemental demons, imps, animalistic, so on and so forth. Most demons start out as low class, no to little power. And then, there are beastly demons. They are strong, but if they can’t reason, they don’t work in higher society or any society really. They aren’t much over a common animal. Well, no, they are rabid and always hungry. It’s the bloodlust, you see. They can’t help it. Imps can be clever, but their magic is usually weak. Most are servants to higher demons, and I have only ever heard of two cases where an imp entered a fledgling stage. No, imps are usually budlings. Then, you have several levels of lower demons, mostly depending on power and wits to get by and forming some kind of relation to a higher demon.”

“So, just to make sure I’m getting it.” Bendy spoke up. “There are some races that are always low class demons either because they don’t have strong magic or…humanity?” Bendy furrowed his brows.

Hat nodded. “Close enough.”

“Okay. What about higher demons?” Bendy had no clue what this all led to. It was interesting though, despite his wariness.

“There are usually two types of class in the underworld for higher demons.” Hat smirked and lifted two fingers to Bendy. The younger demon frowned. Was he getting talked down to? “Those with
territory and followers and those without. The higher the demon, the more respect you have. The
more followers gained, the more territory claimed usually. A demon with territory can allow lower
demons to live there and serve him or her, and in turn, he or she offers them protection.”

Bendy pursed his lips suspiciously. “Protection?”

“Yes. But there are those higher demons that don’t care to be around others or have land. They roam
as they please and are mostly left alone.” Hat sneered. Bendy had a feeling the older demon didn’t
care for them or maybe a specific one? “So, they act like hermits. But only higher demons can do
that? What if an imp wants to just do their own thing?”

Black Hat chuckled. “What do you think hell is like? It’s a crammed space with limited resources
and no sunlight. Anything we grow depends on magic or the magma down there. The only sources
of meat are earthen bugs, snakes, mole people, and beastly demons.”

Bendy choked. Holy cuss, he’d said it! “So demons do eat other demons!” He gaped in disgusted
horror. “Wait! Since they can’t reason, it’s like mammals eating other mammals!” Hat blinked. “Like
a burger or steak?” Bendy tried again. “It couldn’t be that they really…”

Hat frowned, his eye narrowed. “One does what they must to survive. Like I said, they are hardly
different from another normal animal except with magic and bloodlust. And don’t think they would
hesitate to eat you. They run on pure instinct, but they are still demons, just like you and me. Don’t
look down on our people because they did what they had to to survive,” Hat warned. “It’s a
dangerous world to grow up in. If you can’t prove your worth, you are killed. If you can’t fight or
problem solve, you will most likely die. It’s a kill or be killed world down there. It’s brutal, but again,
we have a system.” Kill or be killed! What kinda system was that! He just confessed to cussing
cannibalism! That wasn’t a cussing system! That was messed up!

“So, when that other guy said he ate the last fledgling he dealt with?” Bendy asked hoarsely.

Hat nodded. “Many beastly demon are from fledglings that have completely lost their mind and
reasoning. They couldn’t tame their instincts, so when he said he had to eat the fledgling, it was most
likely due to the fact that the fledgling had lost complete control.” Hat shrugged. “That’s how you
get a beastly demon. A fledgling that failed to complete the fledgling stage of development. There
isn’t much more to be done at that point. If he had let the demon go, it would only kill others and
take away from our limited resources.”

Bendy gulped. “W-wait, you’re saying I could turn into some kinda monster? For good!” Holy cuss!
Holy cussing stars!

Hat snickered. “Depends on your definition of the word ‘monster,’ fledgling. Most up here already
think you are. Down there, they at least have a way to handle you if you go beastly.” Holy sun and
moon! His worst nightmare confirmed! Bendy slouched in his chair as the weight of this dawned on
him.

He could turn into a monster. And deal with him! Yeah, a slaughterhouse death! He didn’t really
think that was much of a system. He understood doing what one had to in order to live. He and Boris
stole, lied, cheated, anything to get them what they needed for the next week, but killed? Eat another
of your own kind? Now he cussing wished it was just a second cussing puberty! Bendy’s heart
dropped into his toes with the thought. His stomach turned nauseously. A monster. Bendy looked at
his gloved hands like he expected them to suddenly turn into claws.

Hat rested his hands on top of the desk. “So, back to the system. Higher demons get land. It’s limited
down there, so it’s extremely valuable. Using their magic, they can grow crops and bring lower
demons in to manage the land under the protection of the higher demon. The only time a higher demon needs to worry about their territory is when there is another trying to take it, and the stronger usually wins. If they are too close in power and the fighting starts to get messy, the Devil will step in. There is also the chance of it becoming overrun with mole people or beastlies, but that hasn’t happened in centuries.”

“Th-the Devil?” Bendy stammered surprised. “So, he’s really real?”

Hat laughed, he threw his head back. “Is he-Of course he is! He is the king of demons. The smartest and the strongest. All the underworld is his. Any demon can be the Devil if he overthrows the Devil in power, but no one has in centuries. That’s politics for you.”

Bendy gulped. “Ce-centuries?” How old could they get?

Hat raised a brow, and that creepy smirk returned. “The higher the demon class, the stronger they are, the longer they live.”

“And that depends on a demon’s parents?” Bendy asked slowly. He thought he was starting to get it a little.

Hat’s smirk became sharp. He lowered his head until his hat almost hid his eyes. “Oh no, not completely. A demon can raise their strength by learning…and getting stronger. You see, as a fledgling, you are at the perfect time to get as far as you can. Your powers will fluctuate. Depending on how you use them and how much you push yourself, you could easily become a high class demon. You did well with those accursed horses, after all. Not many have ridden one and walked away from it.” Bendy stared at him owlishly. Hat chuckled. “And my advice would be push your powers as far as you can, but these circumstances won’t allow that.”

“What circumstance?” Bendy tilted his head. It wasn’t that he would. Of course he couldn’t.

“Being on the Surface. If you went nuts up here, you would lay waste to that city like it was a pile of blocks. You would make that little pet of your’s rampage look like a child’s fit.” Hat waved a hand at him. Bendy’s eyes widened. “And if it was the days before, I would be excited to see it, but sadly with the angels and that cursed peace treaty, we can’t have that without another war.” Hat sighed. Bendy strained the urge to shiver. What?

“I’m not going to rampage,” Bendy claimed sternly. Hat chuckled grimly.

“Oh every demon goes on at least one rampage. It’s part of the process of getting stronger. As long as you regain control, it’s fine. If you don’t, well…We’ll get to that.” By Bendy’s tailspike, they weren’t talking about it later! Stars and cuss! Hat waved a hand. Bendy opened his mouth, but Hat kept talking.

“That brings up another problem. When you finally have your instincts rear up, and you go off on a killing spree, I am now liable to get into trouble.”

Bendy stared at him in confused horror. When? He was serious! And what the hell was this about him being liable! “Whadda mean?” Bendy fought to sound calm.

Hat rolled his eye. “After the chat with that other demon, I laid a light claim on you so I wouldn’t have to either kill him or face any consequences of not reporting you when I first realized you were a rogue fledgling.” Bendy scowled. A claim? He didn’t like the sound of that.

“What the hell is a claim?” Bendy leaned back, untrusting. This was just getting worse and worse. Hat scoffed.
“All in good time, child.” Hat waved a hand away. Again! Bendy was going to bite that hand off if he kept waving it at his face! “I have the papers to make it official, though it will take some time for the processing portion.”


Hat chuckled darkly. “Then, you’ll be killed.” Bendy tensed, and Hat laughed at him. “Oh, not me. I like this carpet and would rather not stain it. No, it’ll be someone else. Maybe your little angel here or some other demon that finds you down the line.” Hat shrugged, uncaring. “But if you don’t agree, I will have to report you to the Devil, regardless. I’m not going down with you.” What the hell was this! That’s it! Cup was right! This moonrock schmuck was the worst!

Bendy crossed his arms and glared at Hat. He didn’t know what went into a claim. It sounded like some legal nonsense. But Hat said he was here illegally, and that made him nervous. Would he really be killed just because he lived up here? It had never mattered before! What about Boris and his friends? Would they get in trouble? Bendy glanced at Alice. He wished he could ask her.

“So, is this thing like adoption or something? Am I signing away my soul?” Bendy muttered reluctantly as he looked back at the other demon. “And what the hell is a claim?”

Hat scoffed. “Me? Make you my heir? Hardly! You’d really have to impress me then.” Hat shook his head. “Think of it more as a student/mentor thing. I will teach you the things you need to know, keep you in check, and allow you the passes you need to live up here. You in turn, will follow my directions.”

Bendy frowned. He did not like that arrangement at all. He crossed his arms and leaned back. “I have a problem with authority,” he stated bluntly.

Hat chuckled. “Most of our kind does.”

“I have things to do. I can’t stick around here and be your errand boy,” Bendy snipped. And like hell he would.

“Good, I already have followers for that. As my underling, I would be sending you below for some proper training in fighting, magic, and etiquette first.”

Bendy shook his head again. “No. I won’t be going to hell.”

Hat raised a brow. “It’ll take time for the papers to go through, and you can be up here legally.”

“I can’t afford to wait on anything. I have stuff to do,” Bendy said.

“Oh really?” Hat raised his voice a bit, sarcasm dripping from his tone. “Something more important than protecting you from angels and demons alike?”

“Yes.” Bendy didn’t even hesitate on that one. “People are dying. I don’t have time to run your circles.” He was going to stay determined.

Hat raised an intrigued brow, his sneer falling away. “Does it involve that item the girl was using?”

Bendy felt his nerves rise a notch. It wasn’t like he could lie about it. The guy had seen what Holly could do, and besides...Bendy doubted he could lie to this guy and get away with it. At least, not without paying some consequence later. The more he talked, the more Bendy felt like he wasn’t gonna shake the guy easily. The walls were closing in, and all the signs said ‘death’ on them.
“Yes,” Bendy said slowly. “It’ll help cure ink illness.”


“The almost plague that’s been spreading around?” Bendy prompted. “No cure? People melting into puddles of ink?”

Hat tapped his chin, a strange glint in his eye. His monocle flashed in the rooms light. “Is it as big as...the Black Plague?”

Bendy stared. How did he not know? “No.” He drew the word out. “It hasn’t killed or infected that many people.” Yet. “But we don’t know how it spreads, what it really is, or really how to stop it except for this—” He cut himself off. Hat knew about one of the parts. He didn’t need to know about the whole machine. “This method we found. It’s not done yet, either.”

Hat scoffed and shook his head. “That has nothing to do with us. The worms of this Surface will die at the drop of a hat.” He smirked. Was...that a pun? Had he just made a joke! “You will greatly outlive most of your followers and pets. Don’t get too attached to any of them.” Outlive...

“They’re not pets!” Bendy growled. “They’re my friends.” So what? If he cussing survived this damned disease and this cussing demon thing, he would just...outlive everyone? Be alone?

Hat laughed. “That was a good one!” Bendy scowled. “Oh by the Devil’s horns, you’re serious!” He laughed harder. “De-demons don’t have friends!” He chuckled. He was gasping for breath now. Bendy lifted his chin but took a moment to really think about that.

Before leaving Sillyvision, Hat would have been right. He had his brother Boris and Sasha. And now, looking back, she had always treated them like her little brothers, despite his best efforts. Other than that, no one had cared about him. No one had wanted to get near him. They had seen him as a monster, a thief, a troublemaker, or simply bad luck.

He had pulled together a tiny family, but that was it. If he had dropped off the face of the earth, those two would have been the only ones that had cared.

Now though...

“I have friends, Hat. Goods friends,” Bendy said. Friends that spent all evening arguing with him, because they thought this was dangerous. Friends that spent days looking over books and research to figure out the parts. Friends that would stay up late to try and help with an ink attack. Friends that would fly into the middle of a nightmare storm to save a girl with him. Good friends. Hat’s laughter died down. “And they would rip this place apart if something happened to me. And I would do the same for them.”

Hat wiped a tear from his eye. “He has friends!” He started to laugh again and bang his hand on the desk in his mirth. Bendy was counting to ten. If this guy didn’t knock it off, he was leaving. Luckily for the older demon, he did get control of himself.

“My, my, that was rich. So, you are doing all this to save your ‘friends’ lives?” Hat asked gleefully.

“Yes and no,” Bendy stated. Hat’s raised brow had him continue, even though he really didn’t want to. “I’m also sick,” he grit out reluctantly. If the mook was going to try and get him legal up here and ‘help’ him, he might as well know why whatever the hell he had cooking in that head of his wasn’t going to work.
Hat blinked. “Excuse me?”

“I have ink illness.” Bendy sighed.

Hat stared at him. The smile dropped. “You have it?” He narrowed his eyes.

“That’s what I said,” Bendy grumbled and sneered.

“And its mortality rate?” Hat lost any sign of humor. He leaned over the desk now, his hands in fists.

“A hundred percent,” Bendy said slowly. “What’s wrong?”

Black Hat stood and walked over to one of the walls, his gaze sliding over the photos in a sharp, searching glare. “Do you know that the angels once tried to wipe out the demon race with a disease?”

Bendy blinked. What was with this change in topic? “No,” he muttered uncomfortably.

“It didn’t work,” Hat chuckled darkly. “But since then, the king of demons has been very wary of things that can affect our kind.” He seemed to find what he was looking for among the pictures. Bendy followed his line of sight. It was Hat with another demon and a human man. The man was dressed similar to the Flug, he had a bald head, a pointed beard, a mustache and somerather impressive eyebrows. The other demon was tall, furry, with two huge horns curving back, and a very sinister grin. There were numbers on the corner of the photo. A phone number maybe?

“What does that have to do with ink illness?” Bendy asked uncertainly. “You think the angels did this?” That was insane.

Hat hummed and turned his back on the picture. “Well, if you’re sick, I should probably kill you so it doesn’t spread.” What!

Bendy choked. “It doesn’t spread like a virus! We don’t know how someone gets it! People just get sick! It attacks some people and doesn’t others!” Bendy said in one big rush. Holy cussing stars!

Hat chuckled and walked back to his desk. “Don’t worry. I won’t touch you.” He grinned. “For now.” Bendy gulped. Yeah...Bendy didn’t like how this was going at all. “I’ll have Flug look into this disease.” Hat grinned and opened a drawer before pulling out a small stack of papers. “Moving on, as your...sponsor,” he smirked at the title, “I will allow you to stay in the above world in secret due to your ‘situation’ and hoping that this ‘ink illness’ doesn’t spread to the underworld or you get killed.”

“Oh thanks, how thoughtful of you,” Bendy snarked. His heart was still lodged somewhere in between his throat and pounding in his ears. He would be killed for being sick? Stars and moon, this demon culture was brutal. “I’m not signing that.”

“But you must.” Hat raised a brow and smirked. “Don’t worry. I won’t be unreasonable. Let me show you how things are going to go in regards of us.” He spread out the documents and handed Bendy a number of papers. “These are the claims and protection I offer to you for agreeing to be my underling while in your fledgling stage.” He pointed to one paper with a quill. “These are the limitations of training and training practices in regards to your strength and powers on the Surface world.”

“Woah, wait. I can’t use my powers.” Bendy lifted his free hand.

“What?” Hat paused, quill half raised to another page.
“It makes the illness worse. I can’t use my powers while I have it,” Bendy stated simply. Why was he still letting this guy talk? He wasn’t going to sign, damnit! This guy had threatened him a number of times in just this one conversation! Hat sighed and pinched the bridge between his eyes.

“But I saw you,” Hat said, sounding like he was holding back his frustration. “You had changed forms!”

“Yeah, and I ran the risk of dying in doing so,” Bendy said lifting his chin. Hat growled like that really bothered him.

Hat grimaced. “But that would mean no powers, no magic. You’d be like a--a--”

“A normal person?” Bendy offered. The older demon shuddered, a forked tongue slipped out of his fangs as he pulled a face of disgust. “Oh brother.” Bendy rolled his eyes at the dramatic overreaction.

“Yes, well. We will have to...hold off on that as well, then. Any training you will do will have to be with my power.” Hat grimaced again but shook it off.

“Your power?” Bendy asked.

“Yes, like the last time I leant you power. I can give you portions,” Hat said simply. Bendy stared at him owlishly. Hat rolled his eyes like he was an idiot. How many times had he done that now? Bendy huffed. “Well then, moving on. You will have to come when I call for your interview with a representative from the Upper. Otherwise, you won’t be licensed to be up here legally. Don’t be late to that.”

“I can’t promise I’ll be in town. The minute we have a lead on the cure, we’ll go after it,” Bendy explained.

“That’s fine. I’ll be able to find you wherever you go as my underlining,” Hat waved it off. Bendy frowned. Hat saw it and chuckled. “The same will go for you.”

“But I’m not going to agree to be some kind of lackey! I don’t want to be under your control,” Bendy snapped.

Hat laughed. “It’s not like I’m running off with your free will, boy! This isn’t a soul contract! What I expect from you is so simple even an idiot can do it. I want updates on your health and training. Any changes with your powers, instincts, feelings, and body are also to be reported on. Exercises on control twice a week. Combat three times a week.”

Bendy shook his head. “I can’t! I’m not sticking around here to--”

“Cuphead and Mugman are traveling with you, correct?” Hat raised his brows expectantly. Bendy fell quiet, his eyes widening. Hat smirked. “They can handle all the combat. They know what to do. As for the magic,” he tapped Bendy’s hand full of papers, “your exercises are in there, and so are the rules and regulations for demons allowed to live on the Surface world. Even if you are a rogue now, go over them and keep them.”

Bendy growled but crossed his arms, crinkling some of the papers, and leaned back. He didn’t want to take training with Cuphead. That big mouth of his was annoying. He probably would just taunt him the whole time. Plus, he would probably flip his straw when he found out Hat was ordering him to do something. The guy really didn’t like Hat. “What the hell is it with you and them anyway?”

Hat paused and frowned. “I...made some mistakes.” What the hell did that mean? Was is complicated? Looked like it. Hat shook his head.
“And finally, if you do end up breaking the laws and get caught, it will be my responsibility to deal with you,” Hat said with a smile.

“Deal with me?” Bendy said incredulous. That didn’t sound good.

“Yes, your punishment. But if you screw up enough, I might get punished too, so don’t get caught. Oh, and if you do lose it and go on a wild rampage with the promise of becoming a beastly unreasonable monster, it’ll fall on me to kill you, understood?” Hat asked pleasantly. Bendy stared at him aghast. H-he had just said it so bluntly and matter of fact! He really could turn into a murderous monster!

“Just like that?” Bendy whispered in quiet horror.

Hat raised his brows and laced his fingers together. “Would you rather I allow you to run amuck and kill everyone around you?”

Bendy gulped and shook his head. He didn’t want to be anywhere near Boris or the others if something like that were to happen. “Then, we are in agreement! Sign here, and we will be--”

“Wait a moment.” Bendy leaned forward and placed his hands on the papers. “Why are you doing this? What do you want from me?” There had to be more to this, right? Hat wanted something, didn’t he? That’s what Cup said.

Hat rolled his eyes. “Weren’t you listening? I’ll get in trouble if I don’t do something. And besides, if you do become a high class demon with strong powers, maybe I can get a favor from you.” Hat smirked. “It’s as easy as that, kiddo.” Moonrocks, as easy as that! This snake had something up his sleeve!

Bendy narrowed his eyes at the older demon. He didn’t trust him. Not in a million years...but what if it was all true, and he was in danger? Was a danger? What if this all put Boris in danger? And what if he did go crazy? It would be kinda nice to know that someone was around that could stop him. “I’m not signing anything I haven’t read yet.”

Hat chuckled, his shoulders shaking. “I’d expect nothing less. When you are done, sign here, here, here, and here.” He circled the lines and passed them to Bendy. “You’ll be able to tell an immediate difference.” Bendy frowned but took the pages. A magic contract then? Maybe he should have Holly or Alice...Hat didn’t want Alice to know about this. Holly wasn’t really in any shape to help. So, Felix then? Was he really listening to this guy? Bendy felt dirty admitting to himself that he was. Still, if there was a trick or a loophole, he’d find it.

“Are we done then?” Bendy stood up.

“Yes.” Hat followed. He turned to the glass case and paused. “Oh, one last thing.”

Bendy sighed and looked up at the thin, grey-skinned man. “Yeah?”

“What are you planning with this?” Hat gestured toward Alice. Bendy raised a brow, his face deadpan.

“Let her go home?” Bendy guessed. Hat rolled his eyes.

“No, you idiot! In the long run! Why are you keeping her around?” Hat demanded with a snarl.

Bendy blinked. “Nothing, she’s just a friend.” What was his problem? More cussing angel and demon dust?
Hat sighed longsufferingly. “Oh imptails.” He closed his eyes, brought his hands together, palms and fingers flat in front of his mouth. He took a deep breath and pointed the hand gesture down to Bendy. “Demons and angels don’t become ‘friends.’ Ever. Not in a million years! Not even when the sun burns out!” Oh for the love of Pete!

“Look Mr. Hat I d--”

“I mean, I am all for getting an angel to fall. It’s a very encouraged thing, a badge of honor even! But I have to advise you from her.” Hat waved a hand at Alice. Fall? What did that mean! He lifted a finger and opened his mouth to refute Hat, but the other wasn’t giving him a chance. “She’s an archangel. She doesn’t know I know, but honestly, she is terrible at hiding anything! I can practically smell it!” He sneered.

“An archangel? Is that a big deal or something?” Bendy asked, his hand falling back down limp at his side. Hat looked at him like he was stupid. Okay. Fine! Don’t answer! Cuss!

“Just distance yourself. This angel is only using you. When she can return to her home in the sky, she won’t give you a second look.” Hat lifted a finger and pointed it at Bendy. “Don’t you forget. She is our enemy and the reason our people have been dying and suffering.”

Bendy narrowed his eyes. “That was a long time ago, Hat. She didn’t do anything. ‘Sides you just told me you would kill me, that demons cussing eat each other.”

Hat flashed his sharp fangs. “Because they sent us down there! Things would have never gotten this bad if they hadn’t locked us away! And if she is ever sent down with armor and weapons, she will slaughter us without a second glance. Angels are ruthless. They see everything as black and white. They won’t give you a chance to plead for your life. They hate us. End of story. If you want to make her fall, that is up to you. But remember, I warned you. The Upper doesn’t like their groomed pets stained.”

Bendy grit his teeth. He understood only about half of what he was talking about, but he was sick of it. “Let her out. We’re leaving,” he growled.

Hat let out a huff of air like a sarcastic laugh. He opened the door. Alice blinked and looked around in a daze. “Oh, are you two done?”

“Yeah, we’re going,” Bendy said flatly. He turned to go.

“Ah! Bendy, don’t forget your papers,” Hat called out to him in mock cheerfulness. Bendy paused. He was really tempted to just keep walking and stick it to the high-horsed moonrock. But the thought of Boris being in danger because of him had him turn on his heel and walk back to the desk. Hat held out a folder, all the papers tucked away neatly inside, his face silently gloating as he knew this was a hit on Bendy’s ego.

The demons didn’t make eye contact as Bendy snatched the folder and headed for the door. “And please, have them signed before the end of the week, will you? I am a very busy man.”

Bendy sneered as he opened the door and slammed it behind him and Alice. Alice stared at him with wide eyes. “Sign? He wants you to sign something?”

“It’s nothing!” Bendy snapped. “I’m not going to do a damn thing he asked.”

Alice stared at Bendy for a long moment as they walked down the hall. “Is he making some kind of offer? Did he threaten you Bendy? Is ther--”
“It’s fine Alice,” Bendy cut her off. “Really. It is. He offered me help with my powers. I don’t think I’ll take him up on it.”

Alice pouted thoughtfully, her dark lower lip jutted out in a cute way. “I...don’t think it’d be a bad idea, Bendy.”

Bendy’s eyes widened. “What?” he breathed in disbelief.

Alice blushed and shrugged. “Well, he is a demon. He may be the only one that knows how to help you get control. The cup brothers know him and how he is. They will know when he tries something fishy, and he is under the laws of the treaty, so I know what to look for if he is trying something shady.” She bit her lower lip at Bendy’s baffled staring, her face darkening more. “I-It’s just that your powers seem to be a source of distress for you, and if he can help you feel comfortable with yourself and what you are, then maybe it’d be worth it. And we’ll all be here for you to have your back if you decide to do this. I don’t really know what goes with being a demon, but I know you’re a good person and only want to do what’s right. If Hat tries to pressure you into something you don’t want to do, I won’t let him.” Alice shrugged and looked away bashful.

Bendy tried to smile. He still felt pretty uncertain. “Thanks Alice.” She thought it was a good idea?

She lost her smile and look at the floor worriedly. “I,” she swallowed and cleared her throat, “I know that Mr. Hat didn’t want me to know what you and him talked about, but I hope you know that if you ever need someone to talk to, I am a pretty good listener.” Bendy looked at her for a long moment. Could he? Did he dare? Alice had never given him a reason not to trust her. Maybe he could ask some questions.

“I do have some questions,” he admitted out loud. He turned to look down the hall instead of her.

“Ohkay,” she agreed.

“Am I here illegally?” Bendy asked quietly. She didn’t say anything. Bendy peeked at her from the corner of his eye. She had bit her lip, her thin brows drawn together in worry. “Alice?”

She sighed and looked at him with sad dark eyes. “Yes, Bendy. You aren’t supposed to be here.”

“So, what does that mean?” Bendy asked quietly. “Am I supposed to be arrested or something?” He couldn’t really imagine Alice trying something like that.

Alice shook her head. “Following protocol would be banishing you down to hell for a first offense. Three offenses will put you at a death sentence unless the judges found a reason to forgive you.”

Bendy blinked and watched the sad angel look away from him. “Were you...supposed to banish me?” Wow, and he thought their first meeting was the worst case scenario. Apparently not.

She pursed her lips and laced her hands together behind her back. “I couldn’t without my halo. I didn’t have enough magic.”

Bendy stared at her with wide eyes. “And now?”

She lifted her eyes showed a flash of pain before she smiled and looked away. “I...don’t want to. You’re a good person, and you’ve never been there. I know that banishing you would just send you away from your family and friends.”

“But that’s what you’re supposed to do,” Bendy pushed. His stomach turned to lead and fell. “And you’re not doing that. Aren’t you going to get in trouble?”
Alice gave a small shrug. “Not unless they find out, and even then, I’ll have a good explanation. I don’t think they’ll be too angry with, ‘He gave me my stolen halo, so I returned the kindness,’ do you?”

Bendy shook his head. “I have no idea,” he muttered. So, if he didn’t sign these, not only was he going to be in trouble if he was caught, now Alice too. “Would you still be able to get your wings?”

She turned away and brought her hands around to fiddle with her hair. “That’s a no, isn’t it?” he guessed.

Alice’s shoulders dropped. “Bendy, you don’t need to worry about that. You have enough to do.”

“But it would be my fault you don’t get your wings! Isn’t that a big deal for an angel?” Bendy frowned at her. Why was she trying to dismiss all of this? This was huge!

“So, what do you want me to do, Bendy?” Alice turned to look at him, exasperation in her tone. Her eyes were hard and voice gentle. “Banish you? I can’t. I won’t. Report you? How is that any different?” She stopped walking. He did too. “You are trying to save lives, Bendy. You and Boris. There are people depending on you. Acting on your legal status and taking you away from that work is a greater evil in my eyes. If I lose my wings over that choice, so be it.” Her dark eyes burned with conviction. She had thought about this a lot. She had looked at it from all sides. She wasn’t going to budge on this. Bendy could tell. And what did he want her to do anyway? He didn’t want to be banished, but he didn’t want her to get into trouble either.

The folder in his hand suddenly had greater weight. It wasn’t just him or Boris. It wasn’t even Alice. It was everyone that needed the machine too. This choice was going to affect everything. He couldn’t just wave it off because he didn’t like Hat. There was a lot at stake here. Lives depended on him.

Cussing politics.

“Is that what Hat told you? That I should have banished you?” Alice frowned.

Bendy shook his head. “Not really. I... just don’t want to agree to this, but,” he grimaced, “I think I might have to.”

Alice nodded. “Sometimes we have to do things we don’t want to for the greater good.”

“What the hell even is that? Greater good?” Bendy muttered. Alice chuckled weakly.

“The betterment of the world as a whole?” Alice said it like a question. Bendy snorted and tucked the folder under his arm.

“Sunblaze that. I just care about Boris and my pals,” Bendy huffed and lifted his chin.

“Bendy, language!” Alice gasped. “And that is the worst lie I’ve ever heard. You care, even if you pretend you don’t,” she said certainly.

Bendy smirked. “And what if I don’t?” he teased.

Alice let out one sharp laugh. “Then, I was completely wrong about you!” she declared and started walking again.

“Maybe I’m just a good actor,” Bendy suggested.
Alice snorted. “No way, sir! I’ve seen you around everyone. You can’t convince me otherwise!”

“Not even when I turn into that giant monster?” Bendy asked thoughtlessly. He stopped. She froze a step later, when what he’d said registering with her. He felt his throat go uncomfortably dry. Cuss. He hadn’t meant to say that. It had just slipped out! He didn’t even know why it was still bothering him, but her look of horror at seeing him still flashed through his mind. And how cussing strong her fear had been. She had gotten over it and had worked with him to save Holly. But...he had scared her. “Or when you are scared to be around me sometimes?” What the hell was he doing! It sounded like he was accusing her! It wasn’t like that. He saw her back and shoulders tense. “Not even when I make you shiver?” He was just tired of pretending it was all okay.

She whirled around and wrapped him in a hug. Bendy tensed at the unexpected contact. “That’s not it! I’m sorry! I don’t want to react like that, Bendy! Like I said, I know you’re a good person.” Her breath brushed by him as she spoke. He could smell the forest in fresh rain. Her warmth, the kind that must only come from angels, wrapped around him like a blanket. Still, he didn’t move.

“Then, why?” Bendy asked in a strangled voice, reluctant to hear the truth. He was still reeling from what Hat told him. Why the hell was he doing this? “It’s because I’m a demon, right? I still scare you.” Like so many others, regardless his actions or intentions.

“It’s not your fault! It’s mine!” She pulled back enough to look him in the eye. Her face was a little pale, but there was determination in her large dark eyes. “I react to your arua like any demons’ arua. It’s very cold sometimes, and yes, even dark. But you haven’t ever threatened me, Bendy,” she declared. “You have only ever protected and helped me. That makes you different.”

Bendy shook his head. “But back at the building with Holly--”

“I was scared. I admit it. I know demons can change their shapes. I’ve seen Mr. Hat do it a number of times. I just wasn’t ready to see you like that! I was afraid that something had happened to you! Your aura was a lot stronger than I had ever felt from you. I was worried. That you wouldn’t be-- wouldn’t be--” She faltered. Her face fell, and she looked down in shame.

“Wouldn’t be myself?” Bendy guessed. She pressed her lips together in a tight line.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered. She looked him in the eye again. “I still have a lot to get over and get used to, but you’ve already taught me so much Bendy.” He furrowed his brows. Before he could ask, she continued. “Like how forgiving you are and understanding. I didn’t know that a demon could be so gentle with someone that had been his enemy not long ago,” Alice said.

First Cup, tearstained and full of despair, came to mind. But she must have been talking about Holly. “And I didn’t know that a demon aura could just be cool and calm. I always thought it was icy and malicious, like Hat’s is.” Bendy blinked. “And I had no clue that you could be warm.” She smiled and shrugged. “I’ve learned a lot about demons thanks to you.”

Bendy felt his face heat. She pulled back. “So please, be patient with me, Bendy. I have to let go of some things that I now know are wrong about demons. It takes some time, and I can’t say I won’t make some more mistakes.” She winced. “But please, don’t think it’s because I don’t like you. I consider you my friend.”

Bendy looked away. His face was burning. He had not expected all that. Not at all. “Yeah.” His voice cracked, and he cleared it loudly. She had meant all that? Alice giggled. “Yeah, I think of you as a friend too, Alice. You’ve been a big help.” Was it hot in here? He started for the exit again, Alice beside him.
She said she liked him! Sure, it was as a friend, but still! Then something Hat said crashed into his somewhat hopeful thoughts. “Alice, can I ask you about something that might be a little...uh, sensitive?”

Alice blinked and looked over to him curiously. “What is it?”

“Well, it’s just, uh, how does an angel...” He gulped. This felt like a bad topic, but he couldn’t not ask. “Fall exactly? What does falling even mean?”

Alice blinked, her brows nearly disappearing into her raven hair. “Fall?” she whispered. Bendy gave her a little nod. She shook her head and cleared her throat uncomfortably. “Um, well f-for an angel to fall, they would have to betray the Upper and it’s laws, turn their back on their society or those they swore a duty to.”

“And what does that mean in plain english?” Bendy asked. Alice gave a small chuckle at his question. What? Was it a dumb question? Was he overthinking this? He was, wasn’t he? Oh stars, help him.

“Mostly, if the angel causes a hole in the defenses of the Upper either on purpose or accident. The runes there are ancient, and things like invites and destruction could put our home in jeopardy.” she explained as they got to the wall. She kicked it gently, and it moved up to show the messy basement. “Another way is for the angel to start acting selfishly and shirk on their responsibilities to others. That could be a number of things. Money, fame, beauty, power. A lot can corrupt someone, but it has to be pretty bad to conflict with work,” she told Bendy as they continued up the stairs and into the casino back halls. “And the last one is if the angel’s loyalties goes away from the Upper.”

Bendy furrowed his brows. “Goes away?”

Alice nodded quickly. “Like if the angel decides to protect a Surface city or even a single person more than they are willing to protect or serve the Upper. If that person or community stand against the Upper and the angel sides with them, it’s their fall. Well, they’d fall before that. But you get what I mean.”

Bendy’s jaw dropped. Oh no! Oh no, what did he do! “Then, you covering for me is--”

Alice laughed and waved his panic away. “No, Bendy! It has to be pretty severe. This would be a slap on the wrist for me. You haven’t done anything wrong besides being here.” Bendy let out a sigh of relief. Thank the stars. He’d feel lower than hell if she lost her home because of him.

“Thanks then, Alice. For everything.” Bendy smiled. Alice blushed and turned away.

“N-no problem!” she stuttered. “We better hurry! I’m sure everyone is worried about us!” She hurried away. Bendy chuckled and rushed to catch up.
An Important Date

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls!" Mic waved a hand. "So much happens to our hero! Is he close to a breaking point? Find out today!"

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello!

How have you been? I've been great! Life is going good. Awesome stuff is happening on the tumblr. Anon and Nunni are awesome artists, doing a comic. And LollingCat started her own spin off series called 'Holly May in the Cog's Mystery,' an AU where Felix did not...Well, if you're interested, go take a look. Wow! So many creative people! ^w^ I'm honored to have you around!

As for this story. Everything is chaos. XD But M and I have it under control. So enjoy! Have fun! And read responsibly! ^^ We are soon to reach 100 chapters, after all.

Bendy sighed. Boris had him trapped in a hug. “So what are we going to do?” Boris asked.

“Don’t know yet. We’ll figure something out,” Bendy promised. It had been quite a show to return to last night. The cup brothers had been tied to chairs so they wouldn’t follow Alice and Bendy to the casino. It had been hilarious. Holly had nearly lost it with Alice. Apparently, the angel hadn’t told the girl. Seeing her face haggard with worry had been less fun. Things were calmer this morning.

“Yeah.” Boris pulled back and smiled. “And it’s a good thing to know what’s going on now.” Bendy nodded.

“Ya think we should tell the others?” Bendy asked. He was still on the fence about it himself. Alice had been a bit quiet after their little talk. He could tell she wanted to ask more about the conversation he had with Hat, especially after his questions, but she didn’t. He hadn’t volunteered information either. She probably thought they had talked about her. Which wasn’t completely untrue, but what she was and what that meant wasn’t the biggest worry Bendy had at the moment.

“How do you feel about it, Bendy?” Boris leaned back on the bed and stuck his hands on his folded legs.

“I don’t know. Mixed? A little overwhelmed, maybe?” Bendy admitted. Boris was the only one Bendy refused to keep secrets from. No matter how uncomfortable. Beside what had happened in Holly’s head, Boris knew it all.

Boris stared at him with his large, trusting eyes. One of his ears twitched. “Then, how about you
don’t say anything until you’re sure?” Boris suggested simply. “It’s technically none of our business anyway.”

“But I could destroy the city!” Bendy grumbled and glared at his hands coldly. Something like that would have been a joke to Bendy in the past, a concern people had in Sillyvision that he laughed at. But after what happened to Holly...The mere suggestion was terrifying, and then there was the stuff Hat could do. Bendy guessed he could see why people were afraid of demons now. It was a bitter realization that he might be a walking time bomb. That those schmucks...may have been right.

“You won’t,” Boris said with absolute certainty.

“How do you know?” Bendy glanced over at him, a bit surprised.

Boris smiled. “Because you’re my brother! I know you don’t want to do something like that, so you won’t.” Oh Boris. What had he ever done to deserve such a wonderful little bro?

Bendy felt his shoulders drop. “But the bloodlust, Boris.” He cringed at reminding the kind wolf. “You know I can jump into a fight pretty quick.”

Boris pouted thoughtfully. He lifted a hand to his chin. “I guess, but you’ve never hurt someone so bad that they couldn’t walk away from it. At least, not on purpose. Some things were out of our hands no matter what.” Boris lifted both his hands and shrugged. “I don’t know, bro. You’ve always stopped when I’ve asked you to. I just can’t imagine you turning into some kinda violent monster.”

“But you have seen it.” Bendy dropped his head dejectedly. What if he hurt someone?

“What?” Boris chuckled. “You mean when you fought the giant sea monster Cala? When you were protecting all of us and trying to save Mugman?” Boris shook his head and rolled his eyes. “Bendy, I don’t know what you consider a monster, but that isn’t it to me. Sure, you were different. And at first, it was a bit scary.” Bendy sighed and fiddled with his tail spike. Boris put a hand on his shoulder. Bendy looked over at the wolf. “But you were only scary because I didn’t know what was going on with you! I was worried. Now that we know, it’ll be better. And even then, you were still my big brother. Nothin’ will change that.”

He didn’t deserve Boris. Bendy hated this uncertain feeling. Feeling out of control. He pushed it back, and that seemed to lighten it a bit. Bendy raised an eyebrow and gave Boris a small smile. “So, even if I end up nine feet tall with giant claws and bat wings?”

“Still my brother.” Boris nodded quickly.

“If I get six eyes?” Bendy smirked.

“Just tell me which ones to focus on when I’m talking to you.” Boris shrugged.

“Tentacles?” He asked, wiggling his fingers.

“Just don’t shake my hand before we eat. I don’t want slime on my food.” Boris smiled. Bendy chuckled weakly. “See? It’ll all work out. I believe you’ll be fine, bro. Even with six eyes.” Bendy allowed the worry to lift away. It was almost easy with his brother’s words.

“Anything from the map since I’ve been gone?” Bendy changed the subject.

“Nothin’.” Boris pouted. “This waiting is drivin’ me nuts.” Bendy agreed there. How long until the part revealed itself? They were on a time crunch, sun and moon!
A knock came to their door. “Hey Boris!” Finley’s voice came through the door. “We’re droppin’ off some pills in the upper part of town! Wanna come and say hi to Mick?”

Boris’ eyes widened. He glanced at Bendy, but the demon was already waving him off. “Go on. Have fun. Hell, help out. I don’t have a problem with it.”

“You sure, bro?” Boris asked.


“Thank you!” Boris jumped and ran for the door. Bendy chuckled.

“Crazy pup,” he muttered after he was gone. Bendy sighed. He got off the bed and went over to the desk. Bendy opened the folder with the documents. Hat wanted it back at the end of the week? With this fine print? Cuss. What a nightmare. “Ugh. Paperwork is the worst.”

“You’re telling me. They always repeat themselves five times before getting to the point,” a warped and slightly echoing voice said behind him.

“If they ever get to the poi-- What!” Bendy whipped around.

“Ah!” The guy jumped back, face twisted in fear. He straightened up an instant later. “Don’t do that! You scared me!” he pouted. Bendy’s eyes widened so far he thought they would drop out. The intruder was covered in ink. He had on a white vest and tie with light dress pants, all stained with the ink that was dripping off of him. His black hair was slicked back and dripping. A halo hung over his head and a tail with a spike flicked behind him. He was tall, with broad shoulders.

“W-w-what the hell are you!” Bendy gasped.

The man frowned. “There’s no need for the language, Bendy.”

“How do you know me!” Bendy stumbled back and hit the table. Was he a new patient? Why the hell was he in their room? And wasn’t he in pain? It was an attack, wasn’t it!?

“Calm down.” The guy lifted his hands placatingly. “My name is Angelo Wrath. I’m here to warn you.”

“Are you an angel? Are you having an ink attack? Do I need to get the doc?” Bendy asked. Cuss! One day after Hat told him, and they were already showing up! He’d been here for years and never heard a thing about it! Now, angels were popping up out of nowhere! There was no way his luck was this bad!

“Fallen actually.” Angelo folded his hands behind himself and shrugged. He smiled, showing off sharp teeth. “And it’s not an ink attack. Don’t worry. I’m already dead.”

“Dead!” It was official. He’d lost it. Bendy had finally lost it. Hat was right, but instead of a bloody killing spree, he was hallucinating.

“Yes, well. That’s what most people call a ghost.” Angelo shrugged again.

Bendy snorted. “Yeah right.”

“No, really.” Angelo stepped up to Bendy’s bed and stuck his hand through it. “See?”

Bendy frowned. “How the hell am I supposed to believe that? It could be an angel trick for all I
know.”

The man sighed and dropped his shoulders. “Seriously? What do I have to do to prove myself?”

Bendy crossed his arms and frowned. Angelo rolled his eyes. “Okay fine. Forget it! I’ll just tell you what I need to tell you.” Bendy blinked. Well...he wasn’t attacking him at least. That was something, right? Unless, Bendy really was going crazy... “That cog is still a problem.”

“How do you know about that?” Bendy snapped.

“I’ve been in this house the whole time! I was there when you guys first came to see Dr. Oddswell!” Angelo stated. Bendy opened his mouth. The inky angel threw his hands up in exasperation. “Stop talking! Let me finish! That cog is still messing with you people! Sure, you locked it up, but none of you did anything about the magic! It’s starting to get in your heads!”

Bendy narrowed his eyes. “Prove it. Prove you’ve been here long enough to know us.”

Angelo frowned. “You kissed the angel girl in your sleep.” Bendy’s eyes widened. “Everyone was devastated when the squirrel child passed.” Bendy’s jaw dropped. “And I was very sad the Blue Fairy passed. She was kind company, and she did it saving you.” Angelo frowned at him. “You didn’t even make it to her funeral.”

Bendy...didn’t have words. How could he? He knew about Steven. And what happened with Alice. The Blue Fairy. And he had just thrown it all in his face. If this was a hallucination, it was a blunt one.

“Now that it seems I have your attention, listen to me,” he stressed. “Get that thing’s magic contained before anyone else becomes a murderous monster!” And then he was gone. Bendy didn’t blink, the guy didn’t walk away, he just...vanished. Bendy collapsed in the chair, his head reeling.

A ghost. A ghost? He just talked to a ghost. An angel...ghost. Could angels even become ghosts? Apparently. Did anyone else know about this ghost? Should he ask? Wait, no. There was more important things to be worried about.

But the cog? The cog was still a problem? Bendy took a deep breath. Holy cuss, that guy was intense! He shook his head and stood up. He needed to go. He got to the door and halfway down the stairs before he paused. It sounded like Holly was here, and she was arguing.

“What about you, Cuphead?” she said, sounding exhausted. “You’re the one who’s always suspicious. Haven’t you noticed something weird about the way everyone reacted to Alice and Bendy visiting Hat? They tied you up to keep you from just watching from the shadows and making sure things were okay. That’s not your typical response. Especially since they care.”

“Well, sure, but they were caring in their own way. I mean, what would have happened if we had been caught?” Mugman said.

“It’s not like everyone here completely trusts us either,” Cuphead muttered. Bendy frowned. Holly had a point though.

“Sure, but I get the feeling that what people think matters less than the lucky penny down the street to you. Especially when it comes to that demon. And Mugman, you didn’t seem that worried about being caught yesterday when you were jumping up and down in a chair. And then there’s the atmosphere. It’s heavy. Can’t you feel it?”

“Isn’t it always heavy here?” Cuphead asked. No. No, it wasn’t. Bendy hurried down the rest of the
stairs. “I mean, a lot of sad stardust happens here, H.”

“Not that sort of heavy. I mean, a sort of...sleepy heavy. For example, I fell asleep in the middle of a heated discussion yesterday.”

“No?” Cup said uncertainly. Bendy came around the corner.

“That’s because he came here the same time that cog did, Holly,” Bendy said.

She was slumped at the table. She blinked and sat up when she saw him. “Huh?”

“What?” Cup looked over to him from his seat.

“It’s the cog, guys. That thing is still a problem,” Bendy said. And the ghost had convinced him...that easily...or he was paranoid. Probably the latter. But honestly, if it nearly destroyed the city using Holly, he didn’t want to see what happened if someone like Cuphead got wrapped up in it. If weird stardust was happening in the house it was because of the cog...or the ghost?

“What do you mean?” Mugs asked with wide eyes. He glanced at Holly. She gave him a shrug.

“We locked up the cog, but what about the magic? That magic didn’t just change Cala. It changed those boulder spiders too right?” Benedy pointed out. The moment he said it, he realized it was true. The cog didn’t need to touch things to change them. Now, Mugs was on his feet.

Holly’s eyes widened. “Horsefeathers.”

Cuphead scowled. “Well, cuss! What the hell are we supposed to do?”

Bendy had no clue. It was cussing magic! He looked to Holly. “Do you have any idea, Holly?”

She scrambled for a moment, rubbing the edge of her nose between two fingers. “I-I’m not sure. I hardly remember anything about the cog...” She trailed off. Then her eyes narrowed. “Wait. I think I might have a little idea...but we’ll need Felix and Alice.”

“Then, we need to find them,” Bendy said.

“Felix left for something or other,” Cup said.

“Any idea when he is gonna be back?” Bendy asked. The two shrugged. Well that was just swell! “What about Alice? Where is she?”

“She’s at work,” Holly said.

“Call her, will you?” Bendy asked.

Holly was already getting up. She nodded, moving to the hallway.

Bendy started to pace. Was he missing anything? He felt like it. Then again, he didn’t know what that starfallen thing could be doing to him. For all he knew, that ‘ghost’ was from the cog itself. But why warn him about it if he was from it? Who the heck was that Angelo guy?

The rest of the morning was him and the cups stopping to talk to everyone to warn them about the cog. Finley and Sammy were both understandably alarmed. Boris looked sick with the news. Granny and Dr. Oddswell were a little less. Eventually, Felix did return. Bendy nearly tackled him.

“Mr. Felix!” Bendy exclaimed.

“We think the cog’s magic is still a problem in the house,” Bendy said.

“What! Did something happen?” Felix asked with concern. Yeah, a dead guy showed up, and Bendy nearly had a heart attack.

“Not...really,” Bendy admitted brokenly. He didn’t know how to even begin with the ghost guy. Besides, he wasn’t the concern right now. “It’s just a...feeling. Yeah! A feeling!”

“A feeling?” Felix furrowed his brows. Don’t look at him like that! He wasn’t crazy!

“Look cat, does it really matter?” Cup asked from the entrance to the hallway. “If that cog is trying to get a new host to play with, then we should probably do something.”

“I can’t argue with that. Even if it isn’t, containing any possible magic is safer,” Felix agreed.

“Remember the boulder spiders. They were huge,” Mugs said. “And they weren’t touching the cog.”

Felix nodded grimly. “Right. We better plan then.” The next hour or so was figuring out a safe location and the pros and cons of certain places. Alice came with Cala, and the dining room table was quickly crowded with people.

Bendy went over his fears about the cog and its magic again.

“But how do we tell that it's affecting us?” Dr. Oddswell asked. “And when we are free of its influence?”

“I don’t know if we can tell until it’s locked properly away,” Holly pointed out. “I certainly couldn’t tell anything was wrong when it was affecting me.”

Silence fell on the table. All of them considered the morbid possibilities.

“Well, that’s creepy,” Cup said finally. “So, we all could be acting like pre-psychos ready to snap and go for that thing at any moment?” Oh Cup, you idiot. Why did you have to say it like that? Now Bendy had to worry about being a time bomb for two reasons! Stars above! Where the hell was his vacation?

“That may be the case, but...according to my journals, it seems direct contact with it is what rushed the process forward. I think we’ll be okay as long as we quarantine direct contact to Mugman and Felix for now and monitor them,” Holly replied, fingers laced together. Snowball sat on her shoulder, pressed up against her neck as she watched the discussion.

“Us?” Mugs perked up in his seat surprised. “Why us?”

“Because you’ve already touched it,” Holly said bluntly. “And so far, you don’t seem to be driven to go see it again.” Holly raised a contemplative brow. Snowball gave a suspicious meep as if to add emphasis. “Unless there’s something he hasn’t been telling us?” Holly looked at Cuphead.

Cup eyed Mugs suspiciously. He hummed and tapped his chin. Mugs frowned. “Cup,” he said, deadpan. Cup tilted his head. “Cup!” Mugs scowled.

“I dunno. He is the quiet one after all,” Cup finally said. “You know what they say about the quiet ones.”

“Oh my stars, Cup. Seriously!” Mugs rolled his eyes. “I’m fine! I don’t got any plans on takin’ over
“the world or gettin’ revenge on anyone.”

“Or so you say.” Cup smirked. Starfallen schmuck. He was enjoying this!

“That’s exactly what I would have said before,” Holly added, a deadpan expression of her own in place.

“You guys can’t be serious!” Mugs’ jaw dropped.

“You could become the devil himself if we aren’t careful.” Cup shrugged. “Hell, I remember that time you framed me for stealing a cookie. Diabolical.”

Bendy threw a paper wad at him. “Be serious!”

“I am!” Cup laughed. “You should have seen the smirk he gave me while I was being dragged away for punishment!”

Mugs groaned. “You really are never gonna let that go, are you? We were kids!”

“What about you, Felix? Anything tempting?” Bendy ignored them and looked toward his idol.

Felix frowned and stared at the table while he considered. “I mean, I want my research papers approved and for the next manuscript to be published, but that's not something that I’d need magic for.” His ears fell. “I’m not sure, though. I can’t say I’m ‘tempted’ but maybe?” He shrugged. Bendy tried to hold in his excitement for a new book and focus on the matter at hand.

“See, now that’s an answer I believe,” Cup said.

“Would you shut it!” Mugs growled with a smirk. Cup laughed.

A second later a hand smacked across the back of both Cuphead and Mugman’s heads. “Would you two take this seriously?” Red said, putting her hands on her beautifully curvy hips.

“Sorry ma’am.” Mugs dipped his head. Cup grumbled and rubbed the back of his head.

“So, what do we do?” Fin asked, sounding a little shaken. “Lock it up or something?”

“We need a way of stopping that cog,” Felix said with a thoughtful frown.

“But how?” Alice asked a bit choked.

“I’m thinking it will take you, me, and Miss Holly here to find the right spells and runes we’ll need. Until then, I think we should move the cog to the other location we were considering, hopefully the distance will help with these side effects,” Felix explained.

Holly turned to Alice. “I have an idea of what could help us. The mural at the school. I don’t remember much about what happened, but I do remember a brief flash when I was heading for the library. For a moment there, the cog’s influence was gone.”

Alice turned to her with wide eyes. “A mural.”

“The mural at the school? Isn’t it simply for calming people?” Felix asked. “That’s what the runes on it indicate.”

Holly folded her arms, a flash of energy coming to her eyes. “They do far more than that. They take a peek into the soul, reflect it back on itself even. That’s why people experience different things
when they walk under it.”

Bendy blinked. Reflected the soul? “So, that time Boris and I were all giddy and such?”

“That’s was the mural?” Boris asked. His ears perked.

“Our souls?” Cup muttered. His gaze was turned downward, gazing off unseeingly. Holly nodded. “In the most basic sort of explanation, it shows you what your soul feels about itself.”

Cup and Mugs shared a look. Bendy didn’t get it, but neither of them seemed comforted by the explanation.

“You guys good?” Bendy asked slowly.

“Yeah fine.” Cup shrugged. “It’s just weird. Didn’t think a school would have something like that.”

“It was made by Yen Sid. He was the most talented, intelligent, powerful wizard in history since the Micco people. He used runes regularly.” Holly smiling a little dreamily. Her eyelids fluttered downward. Her head dipped a little. Snowball meeped in her ear, and she jerked upright again.

Cup hummed, proving he wasn’t really paying her any mind.

“So, what about it?” Boris asked. “What makes it so important?”

“Because Holly’s soul and her mind weren’t the same!” Felix smiled excited. “If that mural gave you clarity, it allowed her soul to overcome the effects the cog was having on her mind! Brilliant!” He looked to Holly and Alice. “Would we be able to recreate that? Maybe the mural will have what we need to contain it.”

Holly nodded slowly. “I’m not sure. But it’s a start.”

“Well, it wouldn’t hurt to look,” Alice said.

“Right, I think there is no time to lose,” Dr. Oddswell said.

“I agree Professor.” Felix stood up and pulled on his hat. He turned to the girls. “Let’s go.”

Bendy stood up. “I’ll help carry it to--”

“No Bendy, we don’t know if it’s affected you more or not. Like you said.” Felix turned to him apologetically. “We don’t want someone like you or Alice to be corrupted next. Mugs and I have handled it without too much trouble. I think we will be able to carry it.” Felix glanced at the cupman. “If that’s okay with you?”

Mugs looked up. He bit his lip and nodded. “Yeah, of course. Whatever I can do ta help.” Felix stood and patted him on the shoulder with worried eyes.

“Be careful, you two. We don’t need another catastrophe,” Dr. Oddswell said.

Felix nodded. “Of course, we’ll call when we have it at the new location,” he told Oddswell.

Holly nodded and looked at Bendy as Mugman and Felix moved to go to work. “Are you okay, Bendy?”

No, not really. “I will be,” Bendy said quietly. Once that gear was handled, he could move on to Hat
and now a ghost. Cuss. What was happening to his life?

Holly turned fully towards him, concern on her face. She considered him for a moment and put on a small smile. “Well, if you need some distraction or a chance at relaxation, I actually wanted to invite you to go somewhere.” She pushed a bit of her hair behind her ear. “Like we had planned an eternity ago.”

Bendy stared at her. Planned? What was she talking about? Oh wait! “O-our date!” His voice cracked with surprise. He cleared it roughly. “Uh-uh, I mean, our date. Yeah, of course. I knew that.” She covered her mouth, shaking her head a little. Boris pursed his lips and turned away.

Cup laughed out loud. “Smooth spikes, smooth!” Shut the cuss up, glass brain!

Fin’s shoulders were shaking too. Cala, Granny, and Red were giving amused and sympathetic looks. Bendy felt too hot. Was there a rock anywhere nearby? A cliff maybe? A cliff sounded nice.

“You have anywhere in mind?” Bendy grumbled to the floor. He shouldn’t. He had so much to do...but he felt like if just one more thing went weird on him, he’d break.

Holly laughed, her hand dropping. “I do, actually. There’s a fair outside of town today. It would have been in town but...” she trailed off, smile dropping a little. “But I think it’ll be even more fun out there,” she said, smile back. Ah, she was probably still feeling responsible for that. It would be good for her to get out of here for a little while. Hell, him too. A break sounded nice. No, heaven sent. They both needed to get out of this starfallen city.

“Okay, that sounds great.” Bendy smiled at her.

“Can I go to the circus too?” Boris asked. “They took a lot of damage, and I wanna help them clean up a bit.” Boris looked at Bendy pleadingly. Bendy agreed easily. It was the least they could do. Hell, if there was still stuff to get done, he’d go with Boris tomorrow too. So, without much delay, Bendy dressed up in his nicer shirt and vest. It felt like he was escaping.

Because the fair was outside of town, Holly and Bendy ended up taking a cab at the edge of the reconstructed roads that had been fixed. And because his luck was what it was, they ended up having Droopy as a driver. Bendy clung to the car door after ten minutes of driving like their lives depended on it. Did this dog ever chill!

By the time they arrived, both of them practically collapsed out of the car doors. Then, Bendy got a good look around. There were three rows of tents of all different patterns. At the back there was a giant ferris wheel. He could smell food, and he heard music.

Holly grinned, looking at a giant clock fixed to the ferris wheel. “We’re just in time,” she said, turning to Bendy.

“In time for what?” Bendy asked. She looped her hand around his arm and tugged him around.

“So, this small town here is called Porcus. They are famous for their pig farms,” she said as they moved down a row of tents. “Can you guess what’s their theme for the fair?” She gave him a wink.

“Pigs?” Bendy guessed slowly.

“Nope. Bacon. And their bacon themed eating competition is just about to start.” She raised a finger. “Which, I might add, includes bacon soup.”

Bendy gaped at her. “B-B-bacon soup!” he gasped. Wait, a pig place had a bacon theme. Wasn’t that
a bit messed up? Then, the smell hit him, and he didn’t care. “What are we waiting for?” He grinned.

Holly laughed, and they both ran for it. They barely made it in time to sign up for the competition and were immediately ushered into another tent. It was a long one with a pointed top and a large table running down the center. It looked like there were about fifty contestants in total. And Bendy was the smallest one there. Some of these eaters were twice the size of Snoutfer! Was...that an elephant! Wait a second! He recognized that elephant! Wasn’t that the guy they saved from the killer lettuce?

As if he had some strange sensory ability, the elephant looked up and spotted Bendy. His mouth immediately widened into a jovial smile. He waved. “Small cat!” he called out eagerly. Small! Bendy grit his teeth and waved back. He wasn’t going to bite the fellas head off. Not right now. He had to be blind or something, thinking he was a cat. Holly raised her brows at Bendy curiously. He turned away from the elephant and took his seat.

The beefy guy next to Bendy glanced down at him and chuckled. Bendy narrowed his eyes. This guy too, huh? He’d show them all that size didn’t measure to apetite.

Holly sat on his other side, taking a look down the long row. An elk with an enormous rack sat next to her, rubbing his hooves together in anticipation. Looking back at Bendy, Holly grinned. “So, on a scale of one to ten, how ready are you for this?”

“Are you kidding? I was born for this!” Bendy licked his lips. And announcer on a microphone called out to the cheering crowd. He explained that each bowl would be brought out to the contestants as they finished the bowl they were on. The last to fall would be the winner.

With that, the servers brought out bowls and placed one in front of all of them.

Holly leaned over, breathing in the smell as the announcer started to count down towards the start. She turned towards Bendy. “You know, I’ve never had bacon soup before. This is a bit exciting.”

Bendy felt his mouth water. “This will be an experience.” He chuckled. The guy called out, and they dug in. Bendy practically inhaled his soup. The next bowl was in front of him and gone just as fast. It was hardly any different from when he and Boris had nabbed food and knew it wasn’t going to last. Eat as much as possible as fast as possible.

The bull next to him was gulping down soup just as fast, his beady eyes on Bendy as he matched him bowl for bowl. Not bad. Holly was falling behind, but she was still laughing, trying to juggle her bowl while watching the other contestants. A stork was having a bit of trouble with bringing his bowl near to his mouth. The soup kept on sliding out the sides. The elephant had just buried his trunk in the bowl, breathing it in like a straw. Five bowls in and people were starting to slow down or drop out. The stork tipped his bowl completely and was disqualified.

Bendy and the bull were still head to head at bowl ten. Bendy was starting to feel his stomach, but he easily ignored it. The bull glared at him. Bendy winked at him as he lowered the eleventh bowl he’d finished.

The bull slammed his down, snatching up another as Bendy lifted his twelfth bowl to his mouth.

The elk bumped his bowl against a low hanging horn, and the soup clattered to the ground. A server quickly replaced it, but Bendy could see he was getting queasy. Holly had a hand over her mouth, snorting as she tried and failed to lift another bowl. The next moment, a judge disqualified her for waiting to long. He felt bad but didn’t slow down. From his limited view around the rim of his twelfth bowl, he saw he was one of the ones still going strong.
There was a thud, and the elk collapsed on the ground with a gurgle. His bowl flipped and landed on his head. Holly was laughing so hard now she could hardly breathe, head put down on the table.

The bull grunted. He lowered his bowl with a thud, and his elbow hit Bendy’s shoulder. Bendy face planted and choked on his soup. Bendy gulped around the last two mouthfuls, ignoring the irritation and forcing the soup down. He coughed as soon as he lowered the bowl. He glared at the mook, soup still on his chin. The bull smirked as he took his thirteenth bowl, Bendy getting his a beat later.

If this guy was gonna play dirty, Bendy was gonna be sure that he at least didn’t win from cheating. He shifted his tail up on his back discreetly. At the end of their thirteenth bowl, the mook tried the same thing. Bendy’s tail spike stuck him in the arm instead of him knocking Bendy around again. The schmuck cried out in surprise and jerked back. He looked at the cut on his arm and glared at Bendy. The demon grinned and shrugged.

“Oops,” he said with a careless shrug and picked up the next bowl. The announcer came up to them.

“Is there a problem, boys?” he asked in his big voice. Holly looked up, turning away from the rest of the scene. Bendy hummed in the negative and eyed the bull, daring him to say anything. He grunted.

“No sir.” He lifted his bowl. “Just an accident.” And started eating. Now, both of them were glaring. Lightning fired off between them. There were only a few people left now, not that Bendy was taking close notice.

On bowl sixteen, his stomach gave a little protest. His tongue was still as happy as a lark. To his annoyance, the bull was still with him. The elephant was still going too, humming to himself as he gulped up breath after breath of soup. Nothing seemed to phase the guy.

A sharp pain went up his tail as a hoof landed on it. Starfallen cuss! He jumped and spilled a bit but saved himself from dropping the bowl completely.

“Oops.” The bull snorted at him, smirking and making his nose ring move. Bendy growled but didn’t lose focus. The tail pulsing with pain. He better not have broken it! The bull lowered his bowl first and got the next one. Bendy followed. No way was he gonna allow this!

The both of them started to eat faster and faster. Eighteen, nineteen, twenty bowls of soup. Bendy’s stomach was protesting more. The bull’s stomach was making a strange groaning sound. The elephant was struggling on his bowl. Wait, was it just the three of them? Holly and the rest of the crowd watched the three in fascination.

“You can do it, Bendy!” Holly urged, eyes bright with the challenge. Easy for her to say, her stomach wasn’t asking her to stop. It wasn’t begging yet, though! Twenty-one, twenty-two. The elephant was down. He fell face first into the table, making the whole thing shake. Both he and the bull scrambled to save their bowls.

Twenty-three. Twenty-four. Now, some of the spectators were looking sick just watching. Holly was staring in pure aghast, counting and recounting the bowls on her fingers. Now Bendy’s stomach was upset with him. Dangit, no! Think Bendy! Think back to when you hadn’t eaten in two weeks! Remember it!

The bull let out a miserable moan, lifting his twenty-fifth bowl to his mouth and slowly tipping it back. Bendy had one idea. It would either make him or break him. “Well pal, this was fun,” Bendy said. The bull looked over at him in surprise—which is exactly what Bendy wanted him to do. He took his bowl and chugged it like his first. His stomach rolled, but he muscled through. No pain was as bad as an ink attack, after all. The bull choked and gagged. He dropped his bowl.
“And we have a winner!” the announcer called, grabbing Bendy’s wrist and raising it high. The other spectators cheered. The bull stared at him, then his eyes rolled back and his chair tipped over with a resounding thud.

Bendy winced. “Ouch.” He smiled at the crowd, mostly at Holly.

She had a smile back on her face. She put a hand on his shoulder. “Are you sure you can get up after all that?” she said with a giggle.

Bendy laughed. “Yeah, sure. I was not planning to win that.” He scratched the back of his head.

She raised an eyebrow. “You looked pretty determined to me.”

“I just didn’t want that joker to win after he messed with me.” Bendy shrugged. “Not my fault he ended up being the second best.” Sorry stomach.

She shook her head, looking sideways. “Well, I hope you’re ready for the consequences because you just won a ten-pound ham roast.”

“Granny is gonna be so cussing excited.” Bendy smiled proudly. A ham? Really? For eating too much soup? Oh stars, his inner child was weeping. Why didn’t they have this back in Sillyvision! “Think that’ll be enough for dinner for everyone?”

Holly nodded, giggling again. “Yes. I think that’ll be enough.”

The two of them made their way out of the tent, the ham coming along with them in a small cart that had been provided. Outside, the sun had started to set, and Bendy could see the lights coming off the ferris wheel. Somewhere nearby, he also heard country music. Bendy took a moment to rub his throbbing tail. Luckily, it was not broken or bent but definitely sore. Cussing hooves.

And then there was a thud as something very large and heavy stomped near them. “Small cat!” the elephant cried out and swooped Bendy up into a bone-crushing hug. Oh cuss! So much for not being broken! “I’m so happy to see you again!” he said enthusiastically. “And wow! You fight monsters, and you can out-eat El Emenopio, too! You’re a real superhero!” he gushed.

“Yeah, great! Can’t breathe!” Bendy choked.

The elephant’s eyes widened, and he dropped Bendy unceremoniously. “Oh dear. I’m sorry. Sometimes I get too excited. Are you alright?” Holly looked on in concern.

Bendy stumbled, his stomach turned warningly. He took a moment and looked up...and up...and up at the elephant. Boy. He was a big fella. “It’s fine. And I’m not a cat! The name’s Bendy.”


“Nice to meet ya,” Bendy said. Oh boy. “And I happen to be a demon.” Here we go.

The elephant blinked, and his jaw dropped. His ears fell. He leaned forward, staring. “Oh...wow! I’ve never met one of ya before,” he said uncertainly. He blinked again. “Wait! Are you that guy from the news? Gee whiz! No wonder you were out fighting monsters.”

Holly was trying to smother a laugh.

“Uh?” Bendy’s jaw dropped a little. “Say what?” That wasn’t the normal response. No disgust? No
wariness or fear? What was going on here?

“Unless there’s another demon in town saving people?” the elephant said with worry. “I have been sticking my foot in my mouth a lot lately.”

“I...I think that’s me?” Bendy said uncertainly. “The Bbros, right?” That was the only public name Bendy could think of having, after all.

The elephant nodded. “Right! Thank you for what you’ve been doing. My dear old pap has been struggling so much. Without those pills, I don’t know where we’d be.”

Bendy sobered a bit. “Oh, sorry to hear that. Glad the pills help.”

The elephant waved an ear. “Don’t worry. We know he’ll be able to hold out until a cure is found.” His trunk fiddled with the bottom of his large ear. “We all start singing whenever he has a bad moment, and it helps everyone hold up.”

Bendy nodded. “I’m sure it helps. We’re working as fast as we can.” Except, he was here instead of wherever that next part was that would save them...But he really couldn’t do anything until the map showed something so... “You send him our well wishes.”

Elliot nodded enthusiastically. “And give mine to the cup man and the cat.” He slapped Bendy on the back. Bendy stumbled but saved himself. “Well, must be going. You keep having fun!” He chuckled and waved as the elephant disappeared.

Holly smiled as the large creature went around a corner. “That was unexpected,” she commented.

“No kidding,” Bendy muttered and rubbed his shoulder. What was with all the touching lately? Stars, his stomach was still mad.

Holly’s brows bobbed a little and a smirk formed on her face. “You realize this means you have a fan.”

“Oh stars, what strange world have I woken up to?” Bendy shook his head. Him? Have a fan? Really? First ghosts and now fans? “I think that’s more unbelievable than all the other weird I’ve dealt with so far.”

“Even more than fighting a woman for a doll, befriending your assassins, or kissing a very ‘angelic’ woman?” Holly raised a brow.

Bendy choked. “WHA! WHA! WHAT! What do you mean by ‘kiss’!” How did she know about that!

Holly’s lips wavered as she tried not to laugh again. “That’s what they usually call it when one person puts their lips on another person’s, isn’t it? Cup told me.”

“T-t-told you what!” Bendy was dying. He was hot. It was embarrassing. What the hell had she learned! What had he said! “I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

Holly shook her head. “Well, at least both you and Alice have your stories straight. She said the same thing.”

Bendy took a deep breath. “She did?” he forced out.

“What! Wait, hold on! We’re on a date! What is this about talking about another woman!” Bendy frowned and tried to control his face. He was cool. Calm, cool, collected. Yeah right. Him, liking Alice? “What’s that to you anyway?”

She shrugged, still smiling. “Just wanted to know your true feelings.”

“My true feelings?” Bendy muttered. Stars, his feelings were in a state of constant confusion. About everything.

“Dating is about getting to know the other person, after all.” She winked.

“I...don’t really know. I’ve never thought about it,” Bendy admitted honestly.

“Oh really?” Holly blinked. “What do you think about when you think about dating, then?” Holly put one hand on her other arm as she walked. “By the way, what do you want to do next?”

“Having fun, showing a good time, um.” Bendy looked around. “The ferris wheel has some promise. I can sit down and do nothing for a bit,” Bendy suggested, half joking.

Holly grinned and nodded. “Sounds fun to me.” The two of them made their way through the crowds and up to the line for the ferris wheel. It wasn’t very long, because most people were more interested in the games at each of the tents or one of the other contests. Soon, they got into the hanging seat and were being lifted into the air.

Bendy sighed and leaned back into the chair. “I needed this. Thanks Holly.” He turned his head to look over at her. “But I feel a bit bad. What about the stuff you love to do?”

She pushed a bit of her hair back behind her ear. She seemed thoughtful for a moment. “Actually, when I found the fair I realized it was perfect,” she said, pointing out at the booths and games beneath them. “All of this reminds me of home.” Her finger lifted and motioned towards a small race course to one side of the fair. “I used to ride.”

“Really?” Bendy looked over. “I keep forgetting you aren’t from Toon Town. You just fit in so well there.” He smiled. “So, what do you miss the most?”

She hummed, sitting back. “The ocean, I think. And my Aunt Olive. Maybe her four nephews.” She gave a little laugh, holding her fingers up with a tiny space between her thumb and pointer finger. “Just a little bit.”

Bendy hummed. The ocean? That sounded interesting. Bet it was different from the docks. There was probably a beach there, like at the lake he and Boris wanted to put that cabin. “That sounds nice.”

She nodded. “I used to take my mother’s horse and wander the beach or the woods. I’d try to hunt down the local spooky tales to see if they were true.”

Bendy snickered. “So, you were used to chasing weird things back then. Let me guess, when you saw me and Boris come into that college, you had to know what was up with the demon and wolf, right?”

Holly blinked, giving him a blank stare. Then she laughed a little. “Of course. That’s probably exactly what was going through my head.” She tapped her lip. “If anything, I think I must have been interested in the way the murals affected you both. After all, back then I’d heard as many stories about scary demons as anyone else.” She wiggled her fingers spookily.
Bendy rolled his eyes. Then he noticed something. “Wait, you saying you don’t remember?”

Her mouth opened and closed. “Well…” she said awkwardly. “According to my journal, I used it to pay a mirror spirit to test a spell?” She laughed nervously. “Another strange thing that happened during all of the chaos.”

Bendy’s face fell. Her memory? His chest tightened a margin with guilt, and he searched her expression for any sign of distress. She seemed nervous but not heartbroken. This was a date, so distressing her was not the goal. She had lifted his spirits--and embarrassed him. Time to return the favor. “That’s too bad. You probably forgot how handsome you thought I was.” He gave her a teasing wink.

She blinked in surprise. She blushed and laughed. “That must be why I chose that memory. I just couldn’t stop thinking about it.”

Bendy chuckled. “So, what do you want to do next?” He looked out over the view. They were high up now.

She moved next to him, looking out as well. Her smile was back. She placed her hands on the edge and put her head on them. She glanced at the race course. “How does a ride around the course sound?” she asked tentatively.

Bendy eyed the course. There was a pair riding horses on the track. Horses. Those damn glitter toys. Did Holly bring Snowball just in case? The tiny critter was seated on the top of one Holly’s seat, licking her paws and adjusting her bristles. These were horses! They were different...Right? He didn’t need to rely on a rodent the size of his fist. “Sure.” Hopefully, this would go over alright.
They finished the ride and headed over to the track. When they got to the track, Holly glanced at him and then at the horses. “Actually, this may not be the best idea,” she murmured.

Bendy followed her line of sight. One horse on the track eyed him warily as it passed. Nope! It was the same glare. Cussing kid rides. He jerked a shoulder up. “Worst we can do is try.”

She raised both brows, an amused expression on her face. “Okay.” The both of them went up to the mounting paddock. Holly put a foot up on the middle of the fence and swung herself easily into the saddle. The gate attendant released the horse, and the girl directed it with her knees a few feet down the fence where she waited for Bendy to mount the next horse.

And of course, the horse shifted nervously. Bendy gulped. This would be fine. Flashbacks? Him? Nah! The horse pressed against the sidewall, as far as it could get from Bendy. It whinnied at him and stomped it’s hoof nervously. Bendy lifted his hands placatingly. “Woah there, I just want an easygoing ride. That’s it.” The horse shifted again, not seeming to believe him. The attendant covered his mouth, probably to hide a laugh. Bendy sighed, have him face down a herd with spears and see if he still laughed! Regardless, Bendy gave up on negotiations and went for it. He had to hop where Holly stepped and landed in the saddle. The horse startled and stomped around. Bendy swung his arms, not balanced yet. He nearly fell but clung to the leather saddle to save himself. The attendant was able to calm the horse.

“You sure about this, sir?” the attendant asked.

No. “Sure,” Bendy said half-heartedly. He looked down at the beast under him. At least this one didn’t have a horn.

“We can always go back and try to pop some balloons at a booth,” Holly offered, moving next to him with her horse.

“Tsk, I can handle this,” Bendy scoffed, lifting his chin defiantly. He lifted the reins and glanced at her. “But just in case, how do you control these things?”

Holly gave a little giggle. “Keep the reins close. Too long, and you won’t have much control. Tug on one side gently. He’ll go that way.” She put a hand on his shoulder. “And relax your body. They can tell when you’re nervous. If you’re tense the entire time, it’s going to make you sore and your horse grumpy.” That was easy for her to say. She’d never been gouged by its cousin.

“It’s already grumpy,” Bendy muttered, but did his best to relax. He relaxed his muscles, allowed his rod straight tail to fall limp and tugged the reins gently to the side. The horse gave a nervous huff and
took a step in that direction. Okay, not bad.

“Give him a little squeeze with your legs,” Holly coaxed. “That tells him you want to start walking.”

“And stopping?” Bendy asked. He wanted to know the brakes before he hit the gas.

Holly drew both sides of the reins back, slowing her horse as she circled around. “Just do this. Gently. You don’t want to hurt his poor mouth,” she said in a baby voice, leaning over and running a hand down the long face of Bendy’s grey horse. The horse huffed and relaxed a bit. Then it shifted and tensed.

Bendy realized he had tightened up again and relaxed himself with a huff. “Right, ‘kay, easy.” He squeezed the horse’s sides with his legs. The beast shifted and took a few steps forward, shaking its head as it walked. Bendy felt the creature’s lumbering movement under him. It was amazing and alarming. The animal felt like a coil of potential power...and he felt so small on top of it. And high. The ground was very far away. Still it did what he directed. Holly had praised it so...Bendy gingered reached down and patted its side. “Good job there.”

The horse gave a little shudder and shook his head before continuing forward at an even pace. Holly looked at him, grinning. “How does it feel to be taller than everyone else?”

Bendy frowned at the horse’s reaction. Fine, guess his demon cooties were too much. Whatever. “It’s one hell of a view,” he admitted as he looked around, noticing what Holly was talking about. Everyone was several feet shorter than him, the view was much wider on top of the animal, like a mini ferris wheel.

“Wow,” Bendy said, letting some of his awe slip into the word. He looked over at the girl. “Did you do this a lot growing up?”

Holly nodded as she urged her horse to keep pace with Bendy’s. “Yes. I especially loved racing. Sometimes I would race the quadruplets down the beach,” she said. “Other times, I would just wander. Although, with so many zanies around, my mother tried her best to keep me inside with her so I wouldn’t end up in the middle of some crazy scheme.” Holly smiled.

Bendy chuckled. “Oh, if she could see you now.” The horse shied away to the side. Bendy tugged on the reins, gently of course, to straighten it out. “Calm down. You’re doing fine.” The horse shook its hairy neck and gave a quiet grumble, arguing with Bendy but complying.

“So, I know you and Boris did a lot of mechanic work to get by, but I’m curious, how’d you figure out that you liked working with machines?” she asked, leaning over and patting the side of his horse gently. It relaxed a bit, moving a little steadier.

“Whelp.” Bendy thought back as his horse continued on in an easy walk. “There were a lot of parts in the dump. I’d seen people using things like toasters and televisions from their windows, and I was curious about how they worked. I ripped them apart in the junkyard to see the parts,” Bendy explained. His horse shook his mane again. “It took awhile for me to figure out how to put them back together and longer still to get them working. I just thought they’d be nice to have with us. And as I figured out more, I realized that I could sell fixed things for some money since we didn’t have a home or electricity to power nothing.” He shrugged. Bendy smiled. “After some time, it just sorta became a game, a puzzle I guess, taking things apart, finding the failing bit, and putting it back better than before.” He chuckled. “It was funny, I couldn’t name most of the parts, but I could put it back together without a problem back then.”

He glanced at Holly. “I don’t really know when it went from something I did for survival to
something I liked doing. Maybe it’s always just been a bit of both,” he mused out loud.

She lifted a finger to her mouth, still holding the reins. “That makes sense to me. I’ve noticed you have a knack for,” she took a moment to find the word, “pushing through your problems. And some problems can’t be forced through. So, you figured them out.”

Bendy raised a curious brow. “Push, uh?”

Holly raised her own. “You grew up on the streets with no way to support yourself. But you and Boris managed to learn how to be full-fledged mechanics while still in puberty,” she said shaking her head. “You caught an incurable illness with little way of knowing how to cure it. You found the map.” She gave a small laugh. “You got accused of murder and went on trial. But you got acquitted despite the slimiest of lawyers trying to find a way to put you away.” She gave a little nod. “Yes. Push is the word I would use. Bendy B-Brother. You and your brother are a force of nature.”

Bendy laughed. B-Brother? What, like a last name? It was turning into a title he was used to. His horse shied to the side again, stomping nervously. His leg brushed the side of the fence. “You make us sound impressive.” He shook his head. He steered the animal back.

Holly winked. “That’s because you are.”

“No way.” Bendy pointed at her. “We had years of struggle and theft before we got the mechanic gig down. There were plenty of cold nights we went to bed hungry. And the machine and trial were thanks to others like Wilson and the detectives.” He smirked and looked ahead. “We got a lot of help. Without everyone, we wouldn’t be at this point.”

Holly pointed back at him. “But if you both weren’t what you are, no one would have given you help in the first place.” She squeezed her horse into a light trot. “Do you think people would believe that toons are dissolving into ink just like that?” She snapped a finger. He hadn’t. Bendy swallowed a lump of guilt with Wilson’s haunting face staring at him pleadingly.

“Guess you have a point,” Bendy murmured softly. Still, the owl had practically handed them everything except the map.

Holy seemed to notice his change in mood. She slowed for a bit, coming back to be level with him. “Do you want to try going faster?” she asked.

Oops. He did his best the brighten up. “Sure.” Oh, how long before this thing tried to buck him off? No horn, Bendy. Remember, it isn’t a glitter dream...but it did have hooves, and he had already been stepped on once today.

Holly looked back towards him. “Okay. Just give this old fella a little bit more of a squeeze,” she instructed. “Not too much, though. And lean down to his neck when he goes, okay?” There was a little bit of a sparkle in her eyes now. It was closer to the old Holly he was used to. Excited, optimistic, and hungry to learn something new and interesting. Not the beaten down guilty girl that was shuffling about like a depressed zombie the last few days since ‘the cog incident’. Though, she had been trying the last few days.

He nodded his head and watched her get her own stead into a trot. Seemed easy enough. He squeezed his legs and the horse started to speed up. The trot was a jumpy sort of motion that he found a bit annoying, to be honest. He motioned for it to go a bit faster. Holly sped up with him, grinning. “Go a little faster,” she urged, leaning into her own horse. He did as instructed, and the horse was off in a canter. The motion smoothed out as they seemed to fly by. The wind rushed against his face as they whizzed down the track and around the corner. If he didn’t look too closely
at his horse, he could almost imagine that he was actually flying across the ground.

Holly pulled ahead. Her hair whipped behind her. Her smile was huge, carefree, and wild. Bendy laughed, which was a mistake. His laugh seemed to remind the horse that it wasn’t a normal human on his back. No, his laugh startled the poor thing, and it gave a loud cry before it bucked wildly. Bendy wasn’t prepared for the sudden move and was sent tumbling through the air.

“Bendy!” The world around him spun like he was in a washing machine, and he landed on a bale of hay with an umph. Hay went everywhere. He took a moment to figure out which way was up, his tail in the air. He had to turn around to find the sky again.

He pulled himself into a sitting position and spat out a straw. “Well, that was an experience!” Bendy gruffed. Holly raced up to the fence, hopping over the side of her mount and climbing down the wooden structure.

“Are you alright?” she said, her eyes wide. She ran to him and dropped down, looking him up and down. “Did you break anything?”

Bendy snorted. “Of course not!” He pulled himself up and tried to dust off the hay. “I’ve had to deal with way worse than a little toss. I’m fine.” He glanced back over the fence to his traitorous horse. It was half turned away from him sheepishly, chewing dolefully on a bit of grass in the middle of the course.

Holly raised an eyebrow at it when she turned to see what he was looking at. She shook her head. “Well, at least you got a chance to see how it feels like to be on a horse moving fast.” She grinned, turning back. “That’s what I wanted to show you.”

Bendy shrugged. “Thanks. That was fun. Sorry it ended so quickly.”

She shook her head. “It was fun just watching you figure out how to ride.” She gave a little laugh. “And I figured if they were carnival horses they might be a little more placid.” She frowned. “Although, not placid enough apparently.” They both got up, and Bendy brushed off the straw. Holly plucked a few from his horns and goggles.

“You can go back and ride some more if you like. I don’t mind watching,” Bendy offered. “Or we can try some of the games.”

Holly eyed her horse, who had wandered to join Bendy’s mutinous mount. “Just once around,” she said raising a finger. “Then, we go try the games.”

Bendy nodded and hopped up on the fence to sit and watch.

Holly grinned, giving him a peck on the cheek before scrambling up the fence again and over to her horse. Bendy froze in surprise and stared after her. She hopped, pulling her upper body over the white horse’s back and swinging a leg over the side. The moment she was fully seated, she tapped the horse’s side twice, squeezing. The animal lifted its head and shot off down the course, leaving bits of dust and her hair streaming behind it.

It was quite a sight. She seemed younger and free somehow compared to the usual Holly. Bendy leaned back a little to relax when his stomach rolled painfully. He winced. Guess all that bacon soup was still settling, and the horse ride didn’t help. He turned as nausea got a bit worse. Cuss, he was going to lose it here on the fence. Instead of trying to swallow, he spat. That’s when he saw the black hit the ground.

Cussing! Bendy tried to get down but slipped and fell instead. He grunted, but he knew the bruise on
his back would be nothing compared to what was about to hit him. The nausea was already shifting
to a deep, larger burn that seemed to reach for his lungs and heart. He tried to reach in his bag for the
pills.

“Bendy?” He heard the sound of Holly’s horse near. Feet hit the ground a second later. “Bendy!” He
grit his teeth as the pain and burning began to build. He coughed as his throat closed up. Damnit! Where were the pills? He choked and spit up a mouth full of the disgusting ink. Acid burned his
tongue as he withered.

A moment later, Holly dropped next to him, snatching up the bag and sticking her hand into it
frantically. She yanked out the bottle a moment later and hurriedly poured out the pills, pressing them
to his mouth. He fought to swallow, the ink and pain making it more difficult, but eventually, he
managed. He brushed the Joy rune. It helped with clearing his mind, but he still had to bite his
tongue to keep from screaming. He could only wrap his arms around his burning, melting chest and
weep as ink dripped into his eyes and out of his mouth.

“S-so-sorry,” he managed and groaned.

“Hush,” she replied. At some point she had shifted to support him, her arms wrapped around his
shoulders. “Concentrate on what’s important. You’re going to be okay. We’re going to go home.
You’re going to see Boris. You and Alice are going to start making jokes. Cup will probably pull a
prank on you,” she said in a soft, soothing tone. Bendy couldn’t help whimpering. It hurt. It hurt!
But she was right. He couldn’t die here. He continued to wither and groan. His screams barely
contained and then finally, slowly, it started to recede. Bendy lay limp, gasping for air. He was spent.
Still, he at least had his senses. It was scarier when it had all disappeared into a sea of pain.

“I...I’m okay,” he croaked.

She hummed softly in response. “Don’t push yourself.”

Push himself? He could hardly move. There was no pushing anything for the time being. He
chuckled weakly. They sat there for a time. Holly softly brushed back his hair and cleared away any
excess ink, continuing to hum. Finally, Bendy was able to sit up.

He sighed. “Sorry about that,” he muttered. His throat hurt a bit and his chest ached from holding in
the screams.

She frowned, but then leaned forward to kiss him on the forehead. “I called a cab.”

Bendy sighed. “Yeah.” Stupid cussing sickness! “What a way to end a evening.”

“You’re still here. I consider this a great way to end it,” Holly muttered.

Bendy scoffed. “I’m not dying today! I have too much to do!” He stood up and stretched.

“Exactly.” Holly smiled at him and shifted to stand as well. Bendy offered her a hand. She took it, a
little unsteady as well.

“Seems we’re both spent. Guess you’re right to head back,” Bendy said. “Thanks for this, though. It
was fun.” At least the parts where he didn’t make a fool of himself were.

She winked. “Then, I guess we accomplished what we set out to do.”

“I guess.” He headed to the road. The cab was waiting for them at the edge of the fairgrounds.
Thankfully, it wasn’t Droopy this time, so the drive back was much calmer. They got back to the
house. Bendy tried to be cheerful, but Boris saw right through him.

When Felix and Alice eventually showed up, Holly woke up from a doze she’d been having on the couch, and the three of them disappeared. Cuphead and Mugman were also missing. It was strangely quiet without all of them. Finley and Sammy did a good job entertaining them, though. They came up with a new skit to show everyone. It was great. They were both hilarious, despite Sammy’s discomfort. His awkwardness actually worked really well for the routine. They were a great pair. He thought about the despair Sammy had shown when he found out the truth. He thought about the elephant and his dad. Hell, even Holly and her muttered comforts that were hidden worries. He knew she had been scared...he had been able to smell it. It didn’t just affect those that were sick. It was everyone that knew someone that was sick. They had to get moving again. The nagging at the back of his mind was only growing worse with each passing day.

And of course, he couldn’t help looking around every once in a while. He felt watched. He felt tense. He wondered if that ‘ghost’ was around.

Cup hugged his coat closer to himself. It was cold and dark. The moon was rising in the distance, nearly full. Mugs was next to him. When Mugs had come back from helping with that starfallen cog, they had left so they could talk. They had been walking for twenty minutes now and neither of them had said anything. The truth was Cup didn’t know where to start.

He glanced at Mugs' expressionless face for any sign. What was he supposed to say? His fingers were going numb.

“Mugman,” he said softly. His brother stopped. He didn’t look at Cup. He didn’t speak. Cup waited. Nothing.

Cup sighed. “C’mon Mugs, we came out here to talk.”

Still nothing.

Cup frowned. “Not saying anything won’t make it go away.”

Mugman sighed. “Can’t it?”

Cup sighed and stopped. Mugs took a couple more steps before stopping and facing him. “Mugs--”

“Please Cuphead?” Mugs begged. “Can we just not talk about this?”

“And what Mugs? Pretend everything is all hunky-dory?” He pulled his hands out of his pockets to throw them up in the air. “Pretend we aren’t here to eventually steal the parts? That we have ownership of our souls? That Cala is as free as a bird, and we can go wherever the hell we please?”

“Shut up Cup!” Mugs snapped. Cup’s eyes widened. It had been a long time since Mugs had really snapped at him. “Maybe I do want to pretend! Ever thought of that? Maybe I want Cala to be free and for Bendy to get the cure.”

Cup grit his teeth. “We can’t allow that, Mugs!”

“Why not!”

“Because it’ll be our heads if we do!” Cup grabbed Mugs’ scarf and pulled him up to his height.

“Well, maybe that’s better!” Mugs spat in his face. What! Cup’s grip loosened, and Mugs yanked
back, shoving Cup.

“Excuse me!” Cup croaked, taken aback.

“You heard me! I think they deserve to live, maybe even more than us!” Mugs declared. He couldn’t mean it!

“But what about everything we’ve done up until now!” Cup threw his arms out. “All the people we’ve hurt! Everyone that we’ve failed! Everyone we planned to save! What about them! Don’t any of our sacrifices mean anything to you!”

“Of course they do!” Mugs snapped. “I have the same nightmares you do! But I don’t see a point to any of it if we have to walk over the graves of our friends to get home!”

“So, you’re fine with it being you and me instead?” Cup put a hand to his chest. Mugs’ face fell in distress. “You’re okay with killing me for them?”

Mugs shook his head quickly. “Of course not, Cup!”

“That’s what you’re saying!” Cup accused.

“No, it isn’t! We have to jus–just find another way!” Mugs shook his head quickly.

“What way, Mugs? What way?” Cup gestured for Mugs to speak. Mugs gazed back at him, lost. He shook his head, his eyes hardening.

“They need the parts, Cuphead,” Mugs said determinedly. He wasn’t budging.

“Damnit, Mugman! I told you to not get attached!” Cup growled and turned away from him.

“Don’t give me that! They’re your friends too!” Mugs pointed an accusing finger at Cup. “You said so yourself!”

“That doesn’t mean I’m willing to kill us for them! I’m not breaking my promise!” Cup put a hand to his chest. “I’m getting us home, damnit! There’s no point unless it’s both of us, Mugs!”

“So, you’re going to kill Bendy?” Mugs demanded.

Cup scowled.

“If you take those parts, Bendy will die! And so will Finley! And Granny! And Snow White and Sneezy! And all the toons that go to Oddswell for help! You’ll be killing hundreds of innocent people! And your friend!” Mugs claimed. Did he think Cup didn’t know that? “And could you really look Elder Kettle in the eye after that?” Mugs shook his head. “I know I can’t.” He glared at Cup. “I’d rather rot in hell.”

Cut grit his teeth and marched up to Mugs. He threw a punch, Mugs blocked. His brother went to sweep his legs out from under him. Cup jumped back and dodged. “Don’t you dare say that load of moonrocks ta me!” Cup snapped. “You already have blood on your hands, and not all of it is from low lives and criminals! You’ve already killed innocent people! This is no different.”

Mugs choked. His eyes widened with hurt. He dropped his head. “But most of them had a choice,” he said. He was shaking. “Th–they didn’t deserve it, but they made a choice. A mistake. Like Cala.” He was rattling. He looked up with tears in his eyes. “Bendy and the sick never had a choice in any of it! This is different, Cuphead, and you know it!”
Cup’s chest felt hollow. Sure, he was right. And it was the cussing worst. “I still am not taking us to hell for them,” Cup hissed coldly.

“Well, I’m not going to kill them. So, when the time comes, I’ll do everything in my power to stop you,” Mugs declared boldly.

Cup’s eyes widened. Everything seemed to stop. Mugs was going to betray him? Had he just said that? “What?” Cup breathed. He must of heard wrong.

Even Mugs seemed a bit surprised by his words. He swallowed and took a moment to answer. “I-- I’m not doing it, Cuphead. I’m not killing Bendy and all those good people. If you try to take the parts...I’ll try to stop you.”

Cup stared at him. He heard the words, he saw the determination, the rebellion, but he just couldn’t quite understand. Mugs would fight him? Kill them for these twerps? “So what? That’s it? All these years of blood, sweat, and tears? Everything we’ve been through? All the sacrifices and the pain we’ve faced? How very cussing low we’ve sunk, and how dirty we’ve become--Everything...You’re throwing it all away for this is half pint demon and his pup, Mugman?” Cup couldn’t keep the hurt out of his voice. “You’re going to betray and kill me for them? You throwing us and the chance of us ever seeing Elder Kettle again away? For them?”

Mugs face cracked with despair. Tears ran down his face freely. His shoulders shook with suppressed sobs. “You don’t even know how close we are with the debt, Cup. We could be doing this for the rest of our lives,” he said, barely over a whisper. “I’ve already done so much. I’m tired, Cuppy. I’m tired of hurting people. I’m tired of this. Hoping to see Elder Kettle, it’s starting to hurt to hope anymore. I’ve been hoping for a decade, Cup. How much longer? I can’t keep doing it. I can’t hurt Boris. I don’t want us to suffer. I don’t want to betray you, but I just can’t anymore.” His eyes were pleading, his shoulders heavy. Cup’s heart felt like it was cracking.

“This is a big one for the boss. Surely it’s after this job. We’ll be home after this,” Cup muttered.

“You don’t know that,” Mugs wept. “And how can I be happy knowing I destroyed so many families just to see mine again? Would Elder Kettle be okay with this? Would he smile at us, knowing what we did to get back to him?”

Cup felt a lump form in his throat. Tears burned his own eyes. The sky suddenly darkened. He looked up to see a few clouds move in front of the moon. It looked like a storm was coming. “I don’t just want to see Elder Kettle and the islands again. I want to make him proud. I’ve let you make the decisions for a long time, Cup. I’m sorry for that. I put so much of the burden on you. I should have done more to be your equal.” Cup opened his mouth, but Mugs keep going. “But this time, I can’t just agree. I don’t want to see their deaths in the papers at home. It would destroy me, Cuppy.”

Cup swept an arm out. “How is this any different! We are going to die if we don’t get those parts Mugs!” Cup tried to sound firm, but his voice shook. His head was buzzing and pounding.

“But…” He took a shaking breath. “But I don’t want you to die,” he admitted as the tears escaped him. Mugs sniffed and rubbed his large nose.

“I know. I don’t want either of us to, but I have to do the right thing, Cup,” Mugs answered. “I’ve been ignoring it for too long.” He turned to go. This was all stardust.

Cup frowned and put his hands in his pockets. “So, is that it? You gonna tell them and just leave us
high and dry now? Maybe call the boss and tell him the cussing news?” Cup tried to cover the pain with anger.

Mugs paused. He looked over his shoulder. “No. I’m not going to say anything. I’m going to help Bendy and Boris get the parts and build the machine. Whatever happens after that happens. I can’t stop you from reporting me, Cup, but I won’t go down easy.”

Cup growled. “You actually think I would report you!” Tell the boss he was turning traitor? It was a cussing death sentence.

Mugs shook his head. “No. You just told me there’s no point unless we both get home. You can’t force me, and I can’t force you.” He gave Cup a watery smile. “But I really hope you come around before you do something you regret.”

Cup grimaced. Mugs started walking again. Cup nearly raced after him. But then what? Fight him? He had just said Cup couldn’t force him. Another side of him wanted to run again. Go find a corner of the world and either drink himself silly or blast away until his hands hurt. The indecision left him rooted to the spot. What was this? What was he going to do? Mugs was going to get them killed. They were going to die before they could ever get home. Promise dead. There was no hope.

Mugs went back to the house alone. He half hoped that Cup would chase after him, but he never came. Mugs kept quiet. This had been the first time he’d done something like this since the islands. Not that he and Cups never fought. But to oppose each other so completely...

No. This was the right thing to do. He and Cup didn’t deserve to go home if it meant killing all those good people. Besides, the Devil wasn’t really going to ever let them go. They had already done so much these last ten years. He didn’t have it in him to do anymore. He was going to make Elder Kettle proud. He was going to be a hero.

He was just worried what Cuphead was going to do now. He shook his head. He thought his brother would at least consider it. Mugs hadn’t seen him this happy or relaxed for years. It was almost like his old brother was coming back to him. And for some reason, it seemed to be thanks to Bendy. He let Bendy get away with saying things that would normally set him off. He wondered how Cup and Bendy had formed that strange friendship. He knew Bendy had saved Cup’s life. Cuphead had said so himself a number of times, but he still didn’t know the full story. Well, it wasn’t just Bendy. Boris, Felix, Holly, Finley, Sammy, Granny, and hey, even Red were influencing Cup to act more openly.

It was almost tempting to tell them...but he wanted to stick around and help. If he blew their cover, the boss would have them pulled. No, that was tame. He’d have Mugs killed and Cup pulled. So as long as he stayed quiet, he stayed...but Cup wasn’t able to leave either since this was the mission. Man, things were going to be awkward.

Mugs kicked a rock into the street. Maybe he should get a separate room from his brother, stay quiet, and keep his head down. Now that Cup knew he wasn’t going to follow orders, he wouldn’t tell Mugs what he was planning. He would have to stay on guard...against his own brother.

And what about his contract? The thought had him stop and glance behind him. The empty street greeted him. The clouds had consumed half the night sky. The chill was becoming arctic. Cup wouldn’t do anything with it...Would he? Mugs didn’t think so. He wouldn’t sink that low. He and Mugs had seen what happened to those that messed with their contracts. Cup wouldn’t. He admitted that Mugs was so important to him. Mugs was sure he’d never...Right? Mugs shook his head. No!

A breeze on his back had him pause again. Was he wrong? Would Cups be desperate enough to try
something stupid? Stars. A dreadful feeling coiled within Mugs chest. A fear for his very soul and well being. He shook his head and started walking. That was a stupid fear. Cuphead wouldn’t hurt him like that. He could be so angry he’d go all rage red, and still he wouldn’t. Mugs believed that completely and totally. Cuphead still had his humanity. He wasn’t as heartless as he pretended to be. He would come around. Eventually.

He reached the front porch and entered the house. Warmth instantly wrapped around him. Sneezy was reading a book in the front room. Finley and Sammy were working on a new show thing. Fin was going to be a famous movie star. He was sure once he was better, Snow White could introduce him to the right people. She had promised, once this was all handled, everyone would know his name. Right after the illness was cured and her wedding.

He walked past the dining room. Bendy and Boris were sitting together looking through books, the blank paper in front of them obviously the map that only they could see. Other papers with weird symbols and notes were scattered around it. Must be ink machine rune junk that made no sense to Mugs. Felix had started those two on lessons with runes and history stuff with those old people that built it or something. They were so focused they didn’t notice him.

He reached the kitchen. Cala, Granny, and Red were talking, each holding a mug with steam rising. Cala’s face lit up on spotting him. Red’s darkened and then relax...a little. Mugs always felt guilty every time he saw her. That was one of the things that convinced him he needed to do this. He was tired of the guilt.

“Mugman! You have to try some of this! It’s delicious.” Cala lifted her steaming drink.

“Sure.” Mugs lifted one corner of his mouth, hoping it came off as a smile. From the concerned look of the three women, it didn’t work. Granny poured a hot cocoa and handed it to him.

“Here you go, dearie,” Granny said. “You’ve had quite a long day.”

“Thanks,” Mugs said and took a sip. It was sweet, rich, and just right. Granny really could do no wrong. She and Kettle had a lot in common. They’d probably be friends if they ever met.

“How is your brother?” Granny asked, returning to her seat with a tap-tap of her cane.

“Who knows.” Mugs sighed into the drink.

Cala lifted a hand to her collar. “Did something happen?”

Mugs shrugged. “We just had a fight. Don’t worry Cala. It’s fine.”

“A fight?” Granny asked lowly. “I hope you two plan to work it out.” She turned her thick-lensed eyes on him.

“Eventually?” Mugs said sheepishly.

“Young man, whatever you are fighting about will pass over time. What won’t change is that he’s your brother.” Granny smiled.

Mugs frowned. “I’m not going to go easy on him. He wouldn’t on me.”

“Just because he wouldn’t, doesn’t mean it’s right,” Granny said. “You make sure to clear this up with him. If he has been struggling, he needs people to turn to and rely on, not be shut out.”

Mugs shoulders dropped. And how was he supposed to do that? “He needs to let me in before that
happens. No, not even me. Anyone.”

“He will.” Red spoke up.

Mugs blinked. He could count on one hand the number of times she had talked to him directly.
“What?”

“He will. You’re important to him, and he doesn’t want to disappoint you, right? He also has Bendy to confide in if he chooses to,” Red said. “Just don’t let him run, if you know what I mean.”

“How can you be so sure?” Mugs asked.

Red looked at him for a long moment. “I know,” she said simply and went to put her empty cup in the sink. “Now, I need to get back to work.” She sauntered out of the kitchen, Mugs staring after her curiously. The kitchen was quiet for a moment, then Mugs turned to the old gopher and Cala.

“Am I dreaming, or did Ms. Red just say something almost nice to me?” Mugs asked.

Granny laughed. “People can surprise you.”

“But what did she mean by run away?” Mugs asked.

“I think she meant emotionally,” Cala said.

Mugs frowned. Cup was usually pretty aloof. He had to get used to his brother’s subtle hints and changes to figure out his mood. It wasn’t easy, especially since his coping method was anger. Mugs had to guess if he was being defensive, upset, or trying to cover something. Even after spending his whole life with Cuphead, he got it wrong sometimes. Still, he had started to open up more and more here. It was another reason Mugs wanted to protect this place. It was good for his brother. “I don’t know how much further he can go,” Mugs muttered.

The two women shared a worried look. “But I’m sure Bendy and I can manage him.”

“Okay dearie, just remember you can ask us anything. You are a part of this strange family as much as anyone now.” Granny smiled. Mugs nearly choked on his cocoa.

“Fa-family!” Mugs croaked. Cala patted his back gently, looking equally surprised.

“Well.” Granny smiled amused. “What else would you consider this? All you kids under the roof, living together, working together, struggling together. We have laughed and cried and comforted one another. How is it different than a family?”

“B-but we aren’t related at all,” Mugs said.

The old gopher rocked back with laughter and shook her head. “Oh please, boy! I know you don’t really believe that! Blood only goes so far! I wouldn’t dare say that in front of Bendy and Boris either!” she cackled.

Mugs grimaced. She had a point, but him? Family? Oh boy. Cuppy was right. He was in it deep.

“He shouldn’t say what in front of us?” Bendy and Boris came into the room. Bendy had a mild interest in his eyes, but he looked exhausted. Mugs noticed a bandage peek out from his shirt sleeve. He wondered how the demon was healing up. He hoped quickly.

“Oh, I’m just explaining how our family works here,” Granny said warmly.
Bendy raised a brow. “Family?”

Granny smirked. “What would you call this noisy house? I think of all of you youths as my grandchildren at this point. Cooking and cleaning are the most I can do for you, but one can’t help but be inspired by all this determination. I have been so moved, I can’t help it. I want you to succeed not only on our missions but in every aspect of your lives. Snow White’s wedding, Finley’s dreams of stardom, Sammy’s writing, Felix’s research, Xedo’s newspaper, and oh so much more.” Granny grinned. “I love every moment with you all.”

“Aw, Granny!” Boris grinned and hunched his shoulders.

“That’s so kind of you,” Cala said. “I’m sure you are just as appreciated.”

Mugs shared a startled look with Bendy. He seemed just as surprised and taken back as Mugman. Boris stepped over and hugged the old gopher. She chuckled and returned the hug. It was touching.

A family? Them? Bendy smiled. “Well, I’ll be damned,” he muttered so quietly that Mugs was sure he wasn’t supposed to hear.

“Thank you, son. Oh! Would you boys like some cocoa? You have been studying hard. Take a break,” Granny said, gesturing to the cups on the counter.

“Thanks,” Bendy said.

“We don’t feel right sitting around while Felix and the others are working so hard to seal up the cog with magic,” Boris said, joining his brother in getting a cup.

“I would have thought you two would be over there helping with that,” Granny noted.

“We would have, but Mr. Felix didn’t want Bendy any closer to it then he had to be.” Boris sighed.

Mugs frowned. “Why?”

Boris took a big drink and smacked his lips appreciatively. Bendy answered instead. “Remember the last two times that thing has been really active? That I,” he waved a hand vaguely, “you know. Felix wondered if there was a pattern, and instead of risking the chance he was wrong, he’d rather be safe.”

Mugs tilted his head and blinked in confusion. “A pattern? Huh?”

“With Bendy changing.” Boris spoke up. “The first time that had ever happened was at the cliffs.”

“When you all had to fight me?” Cala asked with wide eyes.

The two nodded. “And the next was during Nightmare Night. Both times I was near the cog. Felix decided it was too risky.” Bendy frowned and took another drink. He went to the table and picked out an apple.

Mugs puckered his lips and frowned. “But you also changed at the casino when we were running from Black Hat. I saw you.”

“That’s what I said,” Bendy muttered, disgruntled. He took a bite of the apple.

Boris smiled, but it was strained, the kind of smile he wore when he was getting tired of something. This argument must have been going on since Felix had put down the law. “Yeah, you said it was your own power but that Hat said he gave you some of his so you could change and ‘show yourself’
or something. And you didn’t pass out at the casino like you did the other times.”

Bendy huffed. “Doesn’t mean it’s the cog. Besides, I’ve been in complete control of myself and was even able to defeat the starfallen gear for Holly.”

Granny shook a finger at him. “But the doctor told you that you’ve strained yourself, and look at the bandages! You’ve been in pretty good shape when you’ve been around it. We don’t know what could happen in your weakened condition, young man.”

“That hunk of metal doesn’t scare me. And Holly is near it too! I say if we were over there, we could help get it sealed up faster,” Bendy said around a mouth full of fruit.

Cala looked at Mugs, distressed. He shrugged. He didn’t know what to say.

“But Felix and Alice are also there to manage her and handle it,” Granny stated. “Besides, you’ve just had an ink attack, and you are lucky it wasn’t worse than it was! In your state, it’s a miracle you pulled through. You should thank the doctor for the pills and Holly for the bracelet that probably saved your life and start thinking about your health!” Granny banged her cane on the ground with a sharp snap.

Boris’ ears fell. Bendy sighed and looked away. There was a beat of tense silence before Granny sighed. “Look boys. I know you want to do everything you can and that you both are extremely capable, but you need to trust others to do their parts! Felix and the ladies have this. They are all experts in runes, and they will make sure that cog and doll are locked up safely. Trust them.”

Bendy groaned and tossed the apple core in the wastebasket. “Granny,” he whined. “Don’t make it sound like that! It’s not that I don’t trust them. It’s just--just that I don’t want anyone else to get hurt.”

Granny smiled. “That’s kind of you Bendy, but you know better than most that life is painful. Trust that your friends are strong and are doing their best. Right now you are the one that needs rest, not them. You need to recover and get back to hunting down those parts.”

Bendy sighed and dropped his head in defeat. Granny one. Bendy zero...Oh wait. Granny two. Mugs lost to her as well.

“If that map ever decides to show us the next part,” Boris muttered flatly into his drink. Bendy agreed with him, his face deadpan.

Mugs sighed. So, still no luck with the thing. After a week around the house, Mugs had just assumed they would tell everyone where to head. He wondered if King Dice or the boss would have any idea how to fix it, not that Mugs would ever take it to either of them.

“Hey Mugs. Where’s Cup?” Bendy asked after looking around the room.

Mugs shrugged. Boris gave him a confused look. “Didn’t you two leave together?”

“He decided to stay out,” Mugs muttered drily. Bendy furrowed his brows.

Cala leaned forward. “They’re fighting.” Mugs frowned. Everyone didn’t need to know that...But then again, it wasn’t like he could keep it secret either.

Bendy looked from her to Mugs. “Why? What’s this about?”

Mugs scowled. “Can we just leave it? It’s between me and him.”
“But--” Bendy’s face fell into a disagreeing frown.

“Bendy dearie,” Granny interrupted him. Bendy looked to her. “They’ll need to figure it out themselves. You just support your friends.” Bendy frowned and opened his mouth. “You wouldn’t want to hear anyone tell you how to treat your brother, would you?” Bendy snapped his mouth shut and crossed his arms.

Granny three. Bendy zero.

Cala gave him a worried look. Mugs hid his grimace. He wouldn’t be able to hide the real fight from her. She was a debtor too. She already had some idea of what was going on. He went over to her.

“Hey, want to go out tomorrow and look around the city? You haven’t seen much except the stuff between here and Alice’s house, right?” Mugs offered. “I can show you the university. It’s fall now, so there aren’t flowers, but it’s still a nice place to look at.”


“Great!” Mugs said. Hopefully, that would give him the chance to explain.

Mugs wished he could say he spent the rest of the evening enjoying the company of his friends, but sadly that wasn’t the case. They had just gotten Cala a taxi back to Alice and Holly’s apartment. It was just getting late when he felt something change. It wasn’t anything visible. It was magical. It felt like a glass broke and an arctic wind came in. It was like all the peace was ripped out of the house, and Mugs head spun with the sudden change. It was like someone taken his perspective of reality and tilted it on its side.

It was still all the same, but his view was different. Fear and panic rolled in him with the change.

Oh stars, what had he been thinking? He was abandoning Cuphead. After everything his brother had done for him. After admitting he’d rather die than go home without Mugs. He had just turned his back on him! Sure, he didn’t want to kill Bendy. But they didn’t have to die either! With these parts, maybe they’d be able to defeat the Devil! Felix was smart! Bendy and Alice were strong! Maybe with their help he and Cup could beat the Devil! They had other options besides us or them! Why hadn’t he thought of that instead!

Cup still hadn’t come back either. The worries he had while coming back hit him like truck. Had he gone off and done something stupid? Mugs’ soul contract was fine so...It wasn’t like Cup would just disappear on him, right? Stars if he knew!

He could see similar panic and confusion on everyone else’s face as they experienced their own changes.

“What the hell was that!” Finley snapped out in the silence.

“I...think that was the cog,” Boris said slowly. He looked pale and shaken. He moved closer to Bendy. Bendy was still lost in his own mind.

“Golly gee, I hope that means Felix and them did good,” Mugs said. The phone started to ring. Granny stood and answered.

“Oh, hello Felix. Yes, yes, we are okay here,” Granny said. Everyone got up and crowded around her to see if they could hear him. No luck. She frowned at them and waved her cane a little, asking for room. “So, the gear and doll are okay? You three were able to seal it away? Oh...?” Mugs and Boris shared at look.
“Can you hear?” Mugs asked. He had great ears after all.

“Just mumbling on his side.” Boris frowned.

“Says they got it. What we all felt was the spell or whatever-that-thing-had-on-us breaking,” Finley said.

“You heard?” Bendy raised a brow.

Finley frowned. “Oh, I’m sorry. I thought that was obvious. I’m a fennec fox. Have you seen how big my cussing ears are pal!” He lifted a hand to point at the ears that were half the length of his small form.

Bendy rolled his eyes. “I had no clue.” His voice dripped with sarcasm.

“Okay, Felix. Yes, that’s fine. See you soon.” Granny hung up.

“What happened, Granny?” Boris asked, cutting off the nonsense between Finley and Bendy.

“They did it. Felix thinks anyone that was around it is feeling the effects of the break,” Granny said. “He’s coming back to spend the night here. Alice and Holly are heading home, but they wish us well.”

The phone started ringing again, and Granny answered. “Oh Xedo. Hello...No, that was the cog being sealed away...Yes, everything is okay.”

Mugs sighed in relief. At least they didn’t have to worry about anyone else turning into a huge monster or evil villain. Something bugged the back of his mind.

“So then, it’s not a problem now?” Sammy twisted his tail in his hands nervously.

“No Sammy. I think we did it.” Boris smiled. The cat let out a sigh of relief. Bendy went into the front room.

“Oh good.”

“Oh good?” Finley raised a brow at Sammy. “My friend, it’s great! We got it all covered now! No more worries! We can all focus on the next part and helping the sick now!”

“Oh no. What if the next part is worse than the gear?” Sammy fretted.

Mugs left them to it. He saw Bendy just leaving through the front door. Mugs went to follow. Bendy stood in the yard, his hands in his pockets. He was taking deep slow breaths. Mugs hesitated but decided to approach him.

Bendy looked up at him for a moment before turning back to the cold night air. “Everything okay?” Mugs asked.

“Yeah, just need some fresh air. It was a bit...overwhelming in there,” Bendy said.

“Oh, okay,” Mugs said.

“You needed something?” Bendy asked him.

Did he? “N-no,” Mugs muttered. Bendy gave him another glance before turning back to look at the night sky. Mugs leaned against the wall. There were only a couple of stars. The city washed the rest
out. The dark cloud drifted over the moon.

“You worried about Cup?” Bendy broke the silence.

Mugs shrugged. “He’s been out all night before.”

“Yeah, but you think he handled whatever that thing was well?” Bendy asked.

Mugs sighed and looked at his feet. “Probably not,” he admitted quietly.

“You want someone to go get him?” Bendy asked.

“Go get him?” Mugs looked up. Bendy smirked at him.

“Well, you’re fighting, right? Boris or I can get the idiot for you. Just gotta tell us where you think he is.” Bendy shrugged.

“Thanks, but there are literally a dozen places he could have gone, and it’s late. I think if he wanted to come back, he would have,” Mugs said simply. He looked down again. “This is going to sound random, but what would you do if you had to choose between what you thought was right and what mattered to you?”

Bendy was quiet for a long moment. “That’s tough,” Bendy finally said. “The selfish side of me would always pick what matters to me, but I don’t know.” He shook his head. “If it was something big, I guess I would do the right thing.”

“Even if that means losing what you care about?” Mugman asked.

Bendy looked at him for a long moment. Mugs had to look away first. It felt like Bendy was looking at his soul. “If it’s that important—and it would have to be—Yes,” Bendy said softly. Mugs glanced at him. The demon was looking up at the moon. “Everything that matters to me are the people I care about, and they expect me to do the right thing. So… I would do my best.”

Cup was angry with him for wanting to do the right thing. But he wondered if his brother was a little proud too. He knew Cup didn’t want to hurt them. Not really. They both knew that this was the right thing to do. He hadn’t argued about that. Mugman did know that Elder Kettle would be proud at least.

“Thanks Bendy,” Mugs said and went back inside before the demon could say anything more.

Chapter End Notes

Weeeeee haaaaaaaaave aaaaaaaarrrrrrtttttttt! Okay, okay. Here we go.

First off, we got a fantastic depiction of Bendy after the bacon soup eating contest. It was drawn by xxbrindadaringdemonxx.
Next we have art from blookyberry! I'm not sure who's more annoyed Hat's chandelier ended up in hell.
"Weeeelcome! Ladies and gentlemen! Boys and girls! To this exciting chapter today!"
Mic waved an arm out and grinned at the audience. "Today is such a special day! The one-hundredth chapter of Tap's Inky Mystery! Her and Mercowe have worked so hard this week! They made this chapter extra long for it too! Today is all about the Cup brothers. Thank you for being a part of this journey so far! We are so happy to have you! And before you begin the chapter your author has a special announcement."

HELLO!
Holy heavens this is really happening. Three digit chapters. Wwwwwwhhhhhaaaaa! I'll try not to panic. I NEVER thought it'd get this long. Wow. Okay. First thank you all! We hit a 100 chapters and over a 1000 kudos. My mind is a mess on the wall, I am so shocked. I reflected on all the ol' cartoons, the new games, Disney, and all the other people, sources, and media that has influenced me over the past two years. How big this story has become. How amazing you all are. Writing to me. Drawing. Asking questions. And THANKING me?! Me?! I SHOULD BE THANKING YOU!!! It never would have gotten to this point without you reading. Thank you. Thank you so much!

And to celebrate this I invite you. Join me in a little competition.
A poetry contest! (Don't worry no pressure, you don't want to, you don't have to. You don't owe me a thing.) Sometime in the far future I will have a poem in the story. It will be important. I decided instead of doing it myself to invite you and let your work be apart of this world. ^^ It needs to be something catchy, like a child's poem. Creepy too, as dark as you want. The subjects involved will be:
Getting lost
A maze or labyrinth
Voices
A ghost town
A monster with four mouths
And disappearing
Hehehehehehehe! I get giddy just thinking about it! XD
Send in all pieces to mercoweeditor@gmail.com
I will announce when the contest will be closed. Don't worry, you have time. Tons of time.
After it's closed, M and I will pick a winner. ^^

And again. Thank you so much for being a part of this journey with us! Enjoy the chapter!
Mugs shifted in his seat as he waited. After everything that had happened the other day, Mugs had a lot to think about. He didn’t think he knew what could be done.

How many times had they been separated?

Was this gut feeling like back in New Orleans? No, he knew what happened to Cup even if he didn’t know how to save him. No. This was like the incident with Black Hat.

That three-day scare where Hat had caused Cup to be taken away by the boss, and there was no sign if he was alive or not. How old had Mugs been? Thirteen? Something like that. He thought he had lost Cup forever. For three days. As a kid. He had no idea what had happened to him. Hat was gone too because the boss took them to hell at the same time, and that had left Mugs with a crying 5-0-5 and a panicking Dr. Flug. He had no one to ask if they would come back, or what really happened. Flug and Hat had done something. Mugs comforted the bear and ignored the hysterical mad scientist after he proved he wouldn’t answer Mugman.

It had been half Mugs fault anyway. He hadn’t spoken up. When they wanted to test whatever the hell it had been, Cup had spoken up, told them that he’d do it if they left Mugman alone...and Mugs had done nothing. As usual.

Mugs shook the memories away. It had been a long time ago. Why was he thinking back on it now? Must be the anxiety from that cog spell breaking. The worry and fear. Just like in New Orleans, except he had at least been able to do something back then. With the ‘Hat incident,’ he had only been able to sit there. Useless. He'd had to start thinking about what he would do next. How he would continue without Cup. He hadn’t figured it out before Cup was back. He had been so relieved he’d cried shamelessly, even in front of Hat. He didn’t have to think about it in New Orleans, because he was too focused on trying to find a way to save his brother. But here he was again. No Cup in sight...and he was thinking about it. Again.

Mugs sighed. What was he going to do about his brother?

Why was he feeling this?

This feeling of abandonment. The hospital. Alone. Only to have his brother tearfully return. That was probably closer to how he felt now than those other times. The anger, the abandonment, the fear and worry still swirling around in his mind like a trapped bird. Well, there was one other time he had been this angry with Cuphead and really done something about it. That damn day back home.

But Cup had nearly been killed when he went off on his own to get the contracts. Should Mugs be worried? Was he in trouble? It seemed whenever Mugs left Cup on bad terms the worst happened. Was he thinking too hard? His head hurt.

Mugs sighed in defeat. He had no clue. He kept getting distracted by past memories instead of planning for the future. What was Cup going to do? What had he been doing? Did he go to the boss? Was he plotting something? They didn’t have all the parts, so hopefully not.

Why did it have to be like this?

Cup and Mugs were surrounded by people that seemed to actually care. First Boris and Bendy and then Felix. Cala had called them heroes. Alice too. And now after this cog madness, the house seemed to have relaxed around them...at least until Xedo and Felix had cornered them. Then, it was like they were back to square one. Still, they seemed kinder, if just a bit cautious. Mugs hadn’t been
around people like this since he was ten years old.

He felt like a fish out of water, but... he also was so happy here. He wanted to protect this, even if it was against his brother’s plan. Cup was going through his own things. The Cup of just a year ago wouldn’t have given Holly a flying leap. He would have left Snowball in the living room and left. No, not even that. He would have handed it to one of the others to return. He wouldn’t have even come. He would have attacked her after the griffin thing. He would have been in a few real fights with Bendy instead of pranks and arguing. Hell, even Felix. If the fox had come to them at a different time, they would be planning on how to make him ‘disappear’ instead of just warning him.

That’s how Mugs knew he cared. He didn’t get involved unless he cared or was ordered to. Even with his weak list of excuses, Mugs knew that Cup cared about other people now, and that was wonderful. Cup seemed more like his old self here than Mugs had seen in years. If only he could see they were worth risking their plan and hopes for. He really thought that if they told them the truth, they might be able to help!

“Mugman?” Cala walked into the front room. He was ripped out of his thoughts by her soft voice.

Mugs smiled. “Hi! Ready for a walk?”

Cala gave him a gentle smile and a nod. They had started going on walks so she could see the Surface world a bit. She would ask questions and share stories from under the waves. Cala Maria was a very curious person, and she was excited to learn. It had been a nice way for Mugs to get out of the house and away from his thoughts too. But now, it weighed on him too much to be forgotten. She must be curious too. She knew about their situation after all.

Cala wrapped her hands around Mugs’ arm, and the two started out on their walk. Today they were going to walk to the university.

“How’s Holly?” Mugs asked as they left Baker Street. Cala stared at the road construction with wide eyes. She blinked and looked up at him.

“She’s better, I think,” Cala said slowly. “She’s quieter than Alice. I think I made her uncomfortable at first.” She looked down at the concrete, their feet moving in step with each other. “They are both very tired after last night. I think the cog strained them, but they are both relieved it’s been locked away.”

Mugman was surprised to hear that Holly had been uncomfortable. Cala was so nice, he couldn’t imagine anyone disliking her. Then again, he didn’t really know Holly. She looked smart, as smart as Felix or the doc; which meant half the things they said went over his head. She looked innocent enough without being evil witchy and all...but she also had been spying on the mob, so maybe there was more to it? Mugs knew he was a little quick to be trusting sometimes. Another thing his brother found annoying.

Ugh. Cuphead.

Cala pouted quietly for a moment. “Well, I think she still feels bad about what happened, even though I assured her over and over that it’s fine.”

Mugs chuckled. “Just tell her that if things had been the other way around, you would have eaten her.”

Cala gasped and smacked his arm lightly. “Mugman!”

“What? You ate me! It turned out okay, right?” Mugman snickered. Cala’s face darkened with a
“You’re terrible,” she mumbled and looked away. Mug smiled proudly. After a bit of silence, Cala sighed. “And there’s one more thing.”

“Yeah?” Mugs tilted his head. She was cute when she bit her lip like that.

What had he just thought? At a time like this!

“There’s more going on between you and your brother, isn’t there?” Cala asked quietly, like she was afraid of the answer.

“Uh?” Mugs blinked and slowed down. Cala slowed with him. Whelp, he knew this was coming.

She huffed and brushed one of the tentacles out of her face. “Well, I mean. It’s not like I knew you all those years ago, but you two have to be close after everything, right? I-I mean you two still work for the...that man and everything, but you are always watching out for each other and everyone else too! You both seem to have fun together. So, even though something so serious happened, I can’t imagine that you would just walk away from him. I mean, everyone from the islands know that he was the one that got you, uh, ‘involved’ in your line of work. If anyone had a right to hold a grudge it’d be you, yet you’ve stuck with him through it all. So, it’s odd to me that you two would just fight. I know that there has to be more going on,” she said in such a rush that Mugs head almost spun. “Is it...something to do with your job?” She practically whispered the last part.

Mugs chuckled, but his heart dipped. “Well, you see, Cup and I are supposed to take the parts to the boss once we get them all.” Mugs scratched the back of his head. Cala paled a little but didn’t really seemed surprised. Mugs understood though. The idea of something like the cog in the boss’ hands was a terrifying thought. To think there were more things that scary that they hadn’t found yet only made the concern worse.

“But the parts, what about the sick?” Cala asked with large worried eyes. Paul wiggled nervously, reflecting her concern.

Mugs lost his smile and dipped his head down. “They won’t be able to make the machine without them.”

“B-but they’ll all die!” Cala gasped.

“We know,” Mugs murmured.

Cala stared at him in horror. She pulled her hands away from him and took a stumbling step back. “You-you can’t! Not Granny and Bendy and Finley! They seem so kind! And Bendy is a hero! You can’t do that to them, Mugman! They all trust you!” She clenched her small hand and shook her head.

“I know, Cala!” Mugs said quickly. “That’s why I’m not going through with it. I’m going to help them build the machine instead.”

Cala came up short at that. She straightened up like he had shocked her. Mugs gave her an uncertain half smile and shrugged. “I want to save them all, so I won’t be stealing the parts.”

He could see the wheels turning in her head. Her face went slack. Her arms lowered. “But wait a moment. Won’t you get into trouble? And you are saying just you. What about your brother?”

“Well.” Mugs winced. “See, that’s kinda the reason we’re fighting right now. These parts are a big
deal to the boss, so Cup thinks that betraying him will be...a...well, a death sentence.” Cala gasped, and Mugs pushed forward before she could say anything. “And Cup is hellbent to get our debt wiped, so he doesn’t agree with me.”

She was quiet for a long moment. Her large sad eyes searched his face for something. She looked like she was about to cry. Her full lips parted. “Oh Mugman,” she whispered. And then she was falling forward. Mugs caught her, half surprised half worried. She wrapped her arms around his chest. “I’m so sorry. I’ve been so worried about myself and my own contract and choices that I didn’t even think about you!”

“Hey, it’s okay. It’s not your problem, Cala.” Mugs hugged her back as she buried her face into his shoulder.

“Not my problem! You saved me, and now you’re covering for me! If it’s not my problem, then I’m going to make it my problem! We are going to figure out a way to save you and the machine parts!” Cala pulled back and declared with watery eyes. “And convince your brother too.”

Mugs chuckled. “Okay, okay. We’ll work on it, but you can’t risk yourself either. That’s not how we are going to play it.”

“Shouldn’t you tell the others?” Cala asked. “Since it involves the parts?”

Mugs shook his head. “No. It’s still the boss, after all. If we say anything, he might pull Cup and I away.”

Cala frowned but didn’t object. The boss didn’t do loose ends.

They started walking again. She tripped on a curb and squeaked in alarm. Mugs caught her around the waist and righted her like it was second nature. After all the tripping she had done the last few days trying to learn how to walk, it had.

“Thanks.” Her face darkened, and she glanced up at him with a little smile.

“No problem.” Mugs smiled. “We’re almost there.”

The library was a burned husk of a building, but the rest of the campus was mostly untouched other than a few uprooted trees and the completely defaced statue of Yen Sid. Cala loved the gardens regardless. She loved the little stream that bubbled and swirled. Most of the trees were already bare of leaves, and the flowers were gone. Mugs did his best to describe what she could expect in spring. That made her even more excited.

She was curious about the buildings, so Mugs showed her the places that were unlocked. Apparently, Surface classrooms and sea classrooms weren’t so different. He did stop at the circular room, the one with that thing in the middle of it. There were a few employees, but the students were off until the roads around the campus were fixed.

Cala approached the magical circle thing with big eyes. It seemed to glitter at her happily. The symbols danced in the shifting light, changing the picture as the sun moved across the sky. Guess he should be impressed that it was still in one piece, but then again, it was some kinda magic. Mugs was a bit more hesitant getting near it. It reflects your soul. He didn’t really want to feel that chill again. He opened his mouth to warn Cala, but she had already stepped over, leaving him at the edge.

“Can I walk on it?” She gasped. Her face lit up even more. “Oh, Mugman! Can you feel that?” She gave a little hop and teetered before regaining her balance. “It’s amazing!”
Mugs blinked. “What does it feel like?” Mugs asked curiously. He had thought the chill and hollow void in his chest had been because he didn’t own his soul. He was in one sense, empty. Sure, his soul was still with him, but it was tied to that contract and thus the Devil.

Cala turned back to him. Her eyes sparkled like diamonds. Her smile was full of wonder. It was like all the world’s problems, all her worries were just gone. She glittered in the light like she was an angel, and Mugs would know. He had seen an angel in action. “What do you mean, silly? Come here, and feel it for yourself!”

Mugs looked down at the line between the light of the mural and the shadows of the room he stood in. He glanced back up at her. “Tell me first.” Cala had a contract too, but she was giddy. So…it wasn’t the contracts that made him feel that bad?

Cala giggled. “It’s like I’m back at the happiest moment in my life. That I’m completely at peace and calm. I love it. I never want to leave.” She spun and swung her arms out. She tilted too far and started to topple. Mugs dove out to catch her without thinking about it. He was fast enough to her save from hitting the ground.

He tensed, waiting for the hollow, disgusting feelings to sink in like the first time. Cup and he had been surprised then, but this time he was ready!

They didn’t come.

Mugs looked around confused. At least, it wasn’t like last time. There was still a bitter weight on him, but there was also a warmth. There was a calm, and he didn’t feel like he was hollowed out.


“Huh?” Mugs looked at her. What did this change mean? “I guess it’s just different for me.” Before, and now had changed. What his soul thought? Then before and now...

“Why? What do you feel?” Cala asked, looking him in the eyes with worry.


She blinked. “What does that mean? Why is it so different?” She looked down at the carvings and then up at the glass. “Oh Mugs! Don’t cry!”

Mugs chuckled wetly. “Sorry.” He lifted a hand to brush them away.

“Don’t be sorry! I’m sorry it’s different. I don’t know why. Don’t be upset,” Cala fretted.

Mugs chuckled again. “’M not. Who knows? I’m just glad I caught ya in time.” Mugs smiled and tightened his hold. She turned back to him, blushing. It might have been the weird magic circle thingy, but Mugs was still so happy.

That happiness lasted until about halfway back to the house when they passed a paperboy selling the day’s news to the few that were out and about.

“Cupman hero goes unnamed after saving dozens of lives in the Nightmare Night!” the paperboy shouted. Mugs almost cracked his face from tripping in surprise.
“Mugman!” Cala called out in alarm, her hands going to her cheeks. Mugs popped back up and rushed to the paperboy.

“Hey, can I have one of those?” Mugs asked.

“Sure t’ing, it’ll cost ya a--” He turned around with the paper and froze at the sight of Mugs. “A-a-a-a.” The kid’s jaw was hanging open. Mugs frowned and snatched the paper from the boy’s limp hands. He tossed a coin to him and began retreating. “W-w-wait!”

Mugs didn’t. He hurried back to Cala and made a quick exit. She tripped a number of times, and Mugs had to half carry her to save her from falling.

“Mugman! Slow down! What is it?” Cala asked. He went around a corner and stopped against the wall. He pulled out the newspaper and unfolded it.

‘THE UNNAMED CUPMAN HERO’ was the title. Mugs scanned the article. Witness story after witness told the story of a man with a cup for a head who had killed or scared off monsters with blue blasts from the sky above or on the streets. It was Cuphead alright. In the news. He looked up and wasn’t surprised. Written by that crafty fox Xedo Tiptail from Toon Town Times. Cussing fabulous. This was the worst thing that could happen.

“Mugman? Are you okay? Why are you upset? Sure it doesn’t say his name or mention you, but look! You’re heroes!” Cala said. She rested a reassuring hand on his arm. Mugs fists bunched up the paper. Cala’s eye widened. “I-isn’t that a good thing?”

“A good thing!” Mugman snapped. Cala flinched and shrunk back. Mugs pursed his lips and tried to rein in his anger. It wasn’t her fault. She’d never really been involved in the Surface criminal world until now. She didn’t understand how it worked. But that fox should. “Sorry,” he was able to say in a more controlled tone. “This is going to bring Cup and I a lot of trouble is all. I’m not sure how the boss is going to react, either. He wants us out of the limelight, even spelled us and everything.”

Instead of calming down, that seemed to upset her more. “Him? He’s going to be mad at you?” She swallowed. “M-maybe you should just run, Mugman! If I can, then--”

“We’re in the ‘inner circle,’ Cala. We wouldn’t get far if we tried. No. We’ll just have to do damage control and pray that the boss isn’t so angry he’ll, uh, take us,” Mugs muttered, rolling up the now wrinkled paper. Cala looked like she was about to burst into tears. Mugs waved a hand. “Not that I think he will! I mean, we’re this close to those parts. It would be dumb to pull us now.”

Cala nodded. “Then, what are you going to do?”

Mugs tapped the rolled up paper into the palm of his hand. “I’m going to go talk to the writer of this here article.”

Cuphead was having a hell of a day. It all had gone downhill after his fight with Mugs last night. With the realization that years of work and their lives were going to crash and burn, Cup had gone to the shooting range. It was on the outskirts of the suburbs. It wasn’t as far as the casino, but it was a spot he could shoot without worrying about killing anyone. It was, of course, closed and empty when he got there after a long walk, but that didn’t stop him.

The owner knew the cup boys, and since they never damaged his guns or wasted his ammo, he let them shoot whenever for a fee. Cup had gone a number of times growing up. Sure, it annoyed the owner that Cup would go whenever he felt like it, but the cash always kept him quiet. Cup broke in and left the cash in his usual spot as he flicked on the lights and set up targets.
It was routine and comfortable, and that was what Cuphead needed. It wasn’t that he was able to erase this mountain of moonrocks he was under, but at least he could take out his frustration. Peashooter bullet after bullet hit the targets, leaving burn marks. It was during the second round when the world broke, and the concern turned into blind panic.

Next thing Cup knew, the back wall was gone, along with the setup stations. Smoking holes were everywhere. Literally the floor and the standing wall were all that was left. Trees outside were splintered and broken.

Cuss. He’d blacked out.

It’d been a while since he'd suddenly had an episode like that. Sure, there had been the stardust with the Bbros, but he had snapped out of it! At least then, he had a trigger and knew what it was. He thought he had lost Mugman forever back then. This time, he had no clue what set him off. He didn’t remember a thing.

Damnit.

He looked around at the destruction with a sick feeling twisting his gut. He was lucky no one had been around. How long had he been out of it? He had no clue. With a grimace, he went to the fee stash he had left and threw a few more bills on it. He’d have to come back to pay for the rest of the damage at some point. Starfallen cussing damnit.

He left feeling worse than ever. The sun was starting to rise, so he’d been there for a few hours at least. In ‘red rage mode,’ as Mugs described his blackouts. He let his feet take him anywhere, not really caring where he ended up. He just didn’t want to go back to that house right now. What if Mugs had told them?

Cussing Mugs! And what the hell had that been last night? He felt like the world was flipped upside down. The worry was burning anxiety now, and he didn’t know why. What had changed? It was all the same, yet so much worse. He wandered into the first open bar he came across and sat down at the bar. He didn’t look up when the bartender came up to him.

“Just get me something strong,” he muttered. The bartender retreated as Cup wallowed in his own mind. He went over his options again and again, trying to figure out how he could still end up on top of all this somehow.

Fight the boss? Yeah right. They had all their powers and their supers back then and still hadn’t won. They were better fighters and faster shooters now. But without those powers, he and Mugs could kiss any hope of that victory goodbye. Run? Ha. He and Mugs had worked their way into being some of the best. They were the ones sent to take down the big traitors and runners. If they ran themselves, the boss and his right and left hand men were the only ones more powerful than them in the boss’ organization. King Dice or Marcus would be on them in minutes, the boss not far behind. It was a doomed repetition of option one after that.

Tell someone? And what? Have them and their loved ones dragged into the mess? He’d already seen entire families and organizations taken down by the boss and his underlings. Cup didn’t want to drag anyone else to hell with him. Having his brother by his side hurt enough as it was. He doubted a young demon like Bendy could do anything against a demon that was hundreds, if not a thousand, years old. Felix and the rest weren’t even close to being strong enough. And Alice? She was stuck with politics. Technically, she had no say. They had a legal contract with the schmuck. If she raised a finger to save them, it would be war.

So use the machine parts? He doubted they could get anything like blood or hair from the Devil to
give to the doll. And that cog, though powerful, was just too uncontrollable. Cup already had control
issues, and he didn’t want that thing in his brother’s head for anything. Maybe one of the other parts?
But he doubted they’d make enough of a difference against the Devil.

Round up all the other debtors and make an army to stand against him? It would take one rat to ruin
that plan. And knowing debtors the way Cup did, he was guaranteed at least one desperate, stupid
rat. Not every debtor could be Cala Maria, after all. Scum sold their souls too.

The drink was placed in front of him.

“Well now, that is quite the long face you have there,” the bartender said in a chipper tone.

Cup grit his teeth. For the love of all things under the sun. He really should have looked at the damn
sign above the door. He looked up to see the bored, perfect tombstone smile of Mr. Winky. “Now,
no need to glare like that! I was just making an observation.” This was just his cussing luck. Cup
took the drink and tossed it back. “Woah there, drink like that and you’ll be on the floor.” It burned
going down his throat. He didn’t care.

“Shut it, Wink. I have nothin’ to say to you,” Cup grumbled at the sleazy man. Mr. Winky raised a
curious brow and tugged at his curled mustache.

“No? Not even a threat? Well, that’s great news! I thought for a minute you had shown up to do to
my bar what you did to the Syke’s warehouse,” Mr. Winky commented lightly. He was fishing. The
rat was always fishing for information to sell and use. It was what he was good at. Way better than
being a cussing lawyer. Cup didn’t like going to him because the guy always got more out of any
conversation than anyone else. Honestly, Cup was surprised he wasn’t a debtor. The creep was a
stone’s toss away from putting the pieces together. He always seemed to crop up in the boss’
business one way or another when it came to Toon Town. Probably because the boss and the sleazy
only aimed for the big game stuff.

“I said shut it, Wink. You fish, and I very well might burn this place down with you in it,” Cup
growled.

“Ah, that’s more like you. Wher’s your brother?” Mr. Winky asked as he got a second glass for
Cuphead.

“None of your business,” Cuphead said, glaring at the man.

“Oh come now. I’m just worried. You two are rarely apart,” Mr. Winky said. “I hope nothing
happened after that dreaded night everything went to Halloween Town.”

“Halloween Town?” Cup muttered as Mr. Winky placed a second glass in front of him. Sure,
Cuphead knew the Halloween Town locals. Oogie Boogie was one of Hat’s regulars, but it was
always better to play dumb with scum like Winky around. He drank a bit. It was more bitter than he
liked. But the buzz seemed to be coming, so to hell with the taste.

“Why, yes. Those fellows that usually are only around for their holidays? You must know about
Jack the Pumpkin King, and didn’t Oogie Boogie used to go to Black Hat’s casino often?” Mr.
Winky said conversationally. This creep. He knew that Cup knew them. No point with pretenses
then.

“Well, yeah, sure. The guy’s luck is worse than a broken mirror’s, and he throws a tantrum every
time he loses.” Cuphead chuckled. He remembered losing a few hands against the pile of bugs, and
then had caught him cheating. Instead of admitting it, they had gotten into a huge fight. Hat had to
intercept so they didn’t destroy the whole room. Cup smirked into his disgusting drink. Hat had
offered to fix it so he, Cup, and Boogie had a game together; demon rules, of course, since it was
Hat’s territory. It had been terrifying. But in the end, it had put Boogie in his place. Hat couldn’t do
anything to Cup, so it was fine that the demon won. Cup had been surprised to learn a sack of bugs
could cry.

“I’d believe it,” Mr. Winky commented lightly, like he hadn’t call Cup’s bluff.

Cup glared at him. “So, how’s life been since you quit being a lawyer?”

Mr. Winky sneered. “Well, you can imagine it’s been rough since I opposed the ‘little angels’ of the
starfallen city.” He picked up Cup’s empty glass and took it away. “Now, the public sees me as a
heartless businessman. Profits have been dropping, and with the Syke shipments being cut off for
‘other supplies,’ the gangs are getting antsy.”

Cup snorted. “You are a heartless businessman. And you can tell them to stick it. The Sykes aren’t
coming back.”

“Ah, so your boss gave them the boot then.” Mr. Winky smirked shrewdly.

Cup glared over his half-empty glass. “You wanna be next?”

Mr. Winky lifted a placating hand. “Heavens no. I’m just thankful the heat isn’t on me.”

Cup sneered and returned to his drink. Cussing snake. Roughly an hour or so passed like this, him
deflecting the bar owner and slipping into a comfortable buzz way too early in the morning. Not that
he cared at this point. And if that snake thought he would get loose-lipped with his drinks, he had
another thing coming. The only thing he would let loose was his trigger finger.

Little by little others came in. Cup didn’t pay them much mind beyond a glance. None that he really
knew, so none that would really know him. Good.

A weasel came from the back, and Mr. Winky disappeared for a minute. Cup was grateful for the
temporary quiet. Well, not quite. The room behind him was buzzing with noise from the other
customers, but it was nice to have the snake gone for a time.

It wasn’t until Mr. Winky came back with a broad, troublesome grin that Cup realized it was a little
too full in here for a bar at this time of day. He glanced around to see most eyes on him.

“Well, well, well.” Mr. Winky dropped a newspaper in front of Cuphead. “Seems you were quite
busy that night. And most on the street know that if your doing something, you're involved with it.”
Cup looked down. It was an article. ‘THE UNNAMED CUPMAN HERO.’ What the cuss?

He heard chairs move as men got up from their seats. They weren’t here for drinks. “So tell us
Cuphead, what happened that night, hmm? What caused all of that chaos? What had the power to
turn this city on its head, hmm? I’m sure the underworld of Toon Town is just dying to know.”

Cussing starfallen fox! What the hell was he thinking! He glared up at the bar owner. “Just protectin’
the boss’ assets. What’s it to you?” Cup sneered.

He heard the click of a gun and the distinct sound of a knife being pulled. Cuss! How many had
come in?

“Tsk, tsk Cup. No one likes a liar,” Mr. Winky chastised. “Is this why your brother isn’t with you?”
Cup grit his teeth. “Go jump in the bay.”

Mr. Winky sighed a little dramatically. “I was trying to be a gentleman here, but I’m sure others have their own way of doing things.” He looked behind Cup. “Right, ‘hero’?”

Cup scoffed and smirked. “Me, a hero? You cussing wished.” Then the first gun went off.

Mugs slammed the door open a little louder then he had meant to. Cala was behind him. Sammy jumped, startled by the sudden noise. Finley frowned. Mugs didn’t both apologizing.

“Is Xedo here?” Mugs demanded.

The short fox raised a brow and smiled. “Oh, so you saw?” he chuckled. “Congrats on the fame.”

Mugs eye twitched, but he didn’t snap at the fox. “Yeah. So is he here?”

“I don’t think right now, but he’ll be by some time today. Wiston is here,” Finley told him.

“Cussing great,” Mugs grumbled.

“What’s wrong, pal? You look mad,” Finley asked. He glanced at Cala. “And you’re scaring the miss.”

Cala quickly shook her head. She was too pale. “I’m fine.”

“Mugman? That you?” Boris came down the stairs. “Hey, that’s great! Can we train a bit?”

A physical outlet for his frustration? Sounded great. Taking it out on his friend? A little less great. “Sure,” Mugs muttered. He could hold back, after all.

“Can I watch?” Wiston and his strange pet appeared from the stairs a moment later.

“Yeah!” Boris smiled at the fox. Cala watched him with worried eyes, but Mugs shrugged it off. He and the two went to the backyard. He couldn’t get angry at the younger brother. It wasn’t his fault he was related to a news journalist. They were both lucky Mugs didn’t know where the fox was or where he lived, though. Maybe taking a moment to cool his head was a good idea.

If he had gone to their apartment or house and found no one, he couldn’t promise he wouldn’t do something stupid. He was on the verge of boiling here.

...Cup was such a bad influence on him.

“Hey Wis, any idea where your brother is?” Mugs asked as casually as he could while Boris and he warmed up.

“I think he is meeting with someone. He said he should be here for dinner,” Wiston said with a shrug.

Mugs hummed. “What about Cup? He show up yet?”


A night out wasn’t odd for his brother. A full day? Something had happened. No, it wasn’t a full day yet. He had until nightfall, but with this paper, he really doubted anything good could come from it.
“So, I was hoping you’d show me how to use the pipe you gave me. I think I could really be good with it if I could move like you, Mugs,” Boris said and lifted the metal.

“You sure you want to stick with that thing? There are better weapons,” Mugs said.

Boris shook his head. “No. This is good. It kinda reminds me of the tools we used in the garage back home.” Mugman shrugged. If Boris was happy with it, so be it.

He and Boris started with simple grips and movements so that Boris didn’t lose his hold or get the pipe knocked out of his hands easily. There was a lot of dropping and wrist rubbing for the wolf. He was a bit of a clutz, and he wasn’t confident in his grip either. But he was patient with himself as he slowly figured out what Mugs showed him over and over.

Mugs was grateful for the distraction, but it didn’t really work. Worries and angry rants twirled around in his head like a carousel. Time passed, and Granny called them in.

“Hey, where’s Bendy? I would think he would have come out at least once,” Mugs commented as Granny poured them all some lemonade.

“Oh, he and Mr. Felix left to go look at the contract Hat gave Bendy. They want to be sure that he isn’t signing anything that would get him in trouble,” Boris said. Anything with Hat was trouble, but Mugs refrained from saying it. Mr. Felix was smart. He’d catch anything that creep would try to pull. Still, the word ‘contract’ had Mugs twitch. No, Hat wouldn’t use a cussing soul contract. For some reason, demons didn’t do that to other demons. Just everyone else. Wonder why that was.

They were roped into helping with dinner. Mugs tried to get out of it. He wanted to go look for Cup or Xedo, but Granny wouldn’t hear of it.

Granny four. Everyone else zero.

“Why are you upset, anyway? Most people are thrilled when my brother calls them a hero,” Wiston asked at one point while Mugs washed potatoes.

“I’ll talk about it when Xedo shows up,” Mugs muttered. If he said anything now, he’d get steamed.

To Mugs growing annoyance, it wasn’t until the damn dinner was on the cussing table that Xedo finally showed up with Alice and Holly for some reason. He very well couldn’t just blow up around the girls. He wanted to but didn’t. Bendy and Felix weren’t long behind them. Soon everyone was there...except Cuphead. The tension mounted the moment the fox sat at the table. Mugs couldn’t stop glaring. Should he just say it? Ask to talk to him privately? Cala probably wouldn’t let him. Then, maybe he should call him out now and throw his starfallen paper in his face.

Everyone seemed to notice Mugs mood and the lack of one person. But nobody quite knew how to comment...except Bendy.

“Okay, I’ve had enough of it. Where’s Cuphead?” Bendy asked pointedly. The table went quiet.

Mugs frowned. Well, this was a good enough chance. “I have no clue. And I’m worried.” He turned a cold eye on Xedo. “Thanks to you.”

The fox furrowed his brows. “Me?”

“Yes you! What the hell is that in the news!” Mugs demanded.

“I asked around and besides monsters, unicorns, and storms; a brave hero was mentioned again and
again. I think some hope is just what the city needs while recovering,” Xedo said simply with his smug muzzle.

Mugs pointed at him. Bendy and Boris tensed. “Don’t mess with me fox!”

“Mugs don’t!” Boris stood up.

Cuphead groaned. He was at a new bar. A run down, hole in the wall that only had a couple of people in it. He had spent the good part of the day dealing with the fall out of being a ‘hero’ in the underworld. He had a ‘meeting’ with a number of the underworld’s biggest bosses. Little John, Clayton, Gaston, Cruella, and a couple others that Cup couldn’t give a cussing flying leap about right now. He had been questioned, and he had given them his best comebacks. They were less than impressed. And despite his reputation and knowing that his boss was a zero tolerance kinda person, they had decided to have him ‘disciplined’ for his actions. They really thought goons with bats and pipes would scare him? Like he’d ever talk! Cowards wouldn’t even untie him. They knew he was full of cussing stardust, but they couldn’t really mess him up without getting in some big trouble with the boss. It got under their skin enough that they had done something this time. They crossed a line, but not far. Pansies, the load of them!

Still, they were cooling off and backing down. Mostly. It was just bad luck that the Sykes' shipments and the Nightmare Night had happened so close together. The loss of some of the biggest suppliers was a blow, but control of the city with it? Too much for some of the shorter fuses in this cussing city. Didn’t help that Nightmare Night hinted at powerful magic, and if anything had power, these cussing sharks wanted it.

Little John, the cussing coward, was a debtor and cussing knew what Cup was doing. Had he said anything? Hell no. Cup was going to pay him back for that. Worm scum was going to wish he had said something to get him out of that mess.

He gingerly lifted his glass to his swelling cheek. Ouch. Stars, he was a mess. Black eye, a crack on the side of his face. But thankfully not his eye this time. Bloody nose, a couple of cracks to his torso too. A rip in his straw. He’d recover. He looked worse than he was. It was his pride that was hurt the most. Those lowlives were going to get it. He had cleaned up in the restroom the best he could, but the bartender was still eyeing him like he was going to drop dead any minute. Nosy mook.

Cup took the glass and drank in a couple of gulps. “Hey ‘tender, a third,” Cup said, not looking up.

Cup scowled as the new beer was slid in front of him. Damnit. Damnit! Starfallen Damnit! Mugs and the house better be alright. He would check as soon as he pulled himself together enough. That cussing fox. He needed more than a starfallen talk to after the hell he had put Cup through. What the hell had he been thinking, publishing that load of moonrocks anyway?

“Well, well. Look who it is,” a deep feminine voice scoffed. Cup bristled and glanced to his side. To his surprise, it was the last person he thought to ever see in a place like this. Fanny slid into the barstool next to his. “What the hell happened to you? You’re that glass for brains idiot Cuphead, right?” She shifted the hat on her head and the scarf she wore around her neck. She was in a long sleeved dress with leggings and boots. Cup couldn’t help but stare. What was she doing in a place like this? Had he finally cracked, and she was just a figment of his imagination? He wouldn’t be surprised with a day like this.

“So, what happened? You are obviously not listening to me about being more cussing careful,” she muttered, not looking at him. She raised a hand to get the bartender’s attention. “A martini please, extra olives.”
“Shouldn’t I be asking you what you’re doing in a cussing bar like this?” Cup grumbled at her. Honestly though, in this starfallen dump, she was an angel. She stuck out like a sore thumb amongst the worn wood and shady lighting. Definitely his imagination. He just wanted to be looked after by a nurse. Yeah...His fried brain was making stardust up.

She snorted. “Not that it’s any of your business,” she said slowly and turned to look at him with her dark, piercing eyes. “But my husband works construction and has been stuck with asinine hours ever since the city was wrecked. I needed a break, so I came out regardless of the time.” She scowled at him. “But so much for a break. You’re a cussing mess. Another fight?”

Cup stared at her with wide eyes. Husband? Married? Married? Of cussing course she’s cussing married! Cup felt his heart rip in two. Oh...well...It was stupid anyway. He dropped his head onto the counter with a small thud. That’s it. He was in hell. This was divine punishment for fighting with Mugs. Everything always went to hell in a handbasket when he fought with Mugs. He should have known better by now. It’s been twenty years after all. A hand tugged on his shoulder.

“Hey! Idiot! Do that again, and you’ll make your eye worse! Sit up!” she ordered. He did and turned a deadpan gaze at her. That disappeared quickly when her hand rested on his cheek, and she leaned closer to him with intense eyes. Cup’s heart skipped a beat. Wh-what was she doing? She just said she had a husband! He could smell her perfume this close. It was something woody, mature, and a little spicy. It was intoxicating and distracting. Her palm was soft and warm on his aching face. She tilted her head, eyes tinged with concentration, and pulled back.

“It’s gone? How? That was deep! Well, either way. You have new wounds now, so it’s not like it cussing matters.” She dropped her hand and sighed in exasperation. “I don’t want to waste anymore good supplies on your stupid mug anymore.”

Cup snorted at the unexpected pun. Wow. Was it hot in here? No! Bad Cup! Married! He must have brain damage after that bashing. Yeah. Brain damage.


“Nothing important. Bunch of morons thought they could push me around,” Cup mumbled.

“Your martini, ma’am.” The tender placed the drink in front of her. She turned to it and took a sip.

“What? Trouble in paradise? Your brother isn’t in the ER again, is he?” Fanny frowned, her dark lips mocking Cup. He turned to his own glass and took a drink.

“Paradise? What cussing paradise? And no he’s fine.” Cup snorted. Or he better be.

Fanny raised her brows, a mild look of surprise entered her dark gaze. “Oh? But you and your brother were all over each other with joy that first time.” Her tone was mocking. “And you and all your friends looked so chipper that other time you all were admitted. I thought you were havin’ the times of your lives,” she stated smoothly. She crossed her legs and leaned an elbow delicately on the counter. “Sure, Nightmare Night was a bust. But it was for most people, and you only had feathers.” She frowned. “Was that crack gone back then too?” she mused.

Cup frowned. They had all been so thrilled when they got back with the cog. Cup hadn’t felt that victorious and proud in a long time. Then Nightmare Night and hell all over again. “Don’t talk about Mugs and I like that. Sounds wrong,” Cup muttered into his drink.

She laughed. “Then how am I supposed to describe that disgusting scene? Full of tears and hugs and
kisses.” She switched her tone to baby talk. “Oh Mugs! You’re real! You’re here! I’ll never leave ya again!”

Cup felt his face heat up. “Shut up! I thought he was dead.” He sunk into his seat.

She snorted again. “And now you’re moping in a bar alone. So, what changed?” She turned back to her drink, but her eyes stayed on him.

Cup shrugged. “I messed up. And to fix it, well, Mugs is gonna be angry with me.” It wasn’t like there was a damn way out of it. The contracts were in his starfallen pocket for cuss sake!

Fanny puckered her lips thoughtfully. “A secret?”

Cup furrowed his brows. “No, just a...situation change.”

She hummed and stirred her drink idly with the toothpick that held her three olives. “Is it because you’re a famous hero now?”

Cup frowned. “Shut up. That ain’t me.”

She laughed. “Yeah right! It’s one, if not both, of you! How many cup people do you think live in this city?”

“Try two, you idiot.” Fanny rolled her eyes. “Why are you so mad anyway? Is that why you’re a wreck? Some schmucks don’t like ya bein’ a hero, so they…” she trailed off, looking at him. Her humor fell away, and she frowned. Cup wasn’t sure what she saw in his expression, but it seemed to anger her. Oh no. “Cussing figures. This damned city! Everything is so cussing backwards.”

What was she thinking? He narrowed his eyes.

“Yeah, well. That’s life,” Cup admitted quietly. He took a gulp of his drink.

She smirked. “So you being a hero and you ‘fixing it’ is gonna make your brother mad?”

He didn’t like where this was going. “Maybe.” He leaned away from her with suspicious eyes.

She laughed. “I think you’re overreacting then.”

Cuphead stared at her baffled. “Excuse me?” he growled. “You don’t even know what this is all about!”

She sipped her drink. “Well, from the little I know of you, it’s something dumb. And from what you’ve said, it just sounds like you want to do something stupid like run away. You helped people. If someone has a problem with it, they can go jump off a cussing bridge.”

Cup’s jaw dropped. “Sh-should a nurse really be saying that?”

She turned fiery, taunting eyes on him. “I’m right, aren’t I? You want to run and not deal with whatever it is.”

“B-but it could get my brother killed!” Cup snapped. They had enough to deal with. They were walking on thin ice here!

Fanny chuckled again. “Stepping into the street or walking down the stairs could also get you
killed.” She shrugged and finished her glass. “Doesn’t stop you or him from walking out the door, does it?”

No, it didn’t. He glared at her. “What are you trying to say, Fanny?”

“Ooh.” She hummed. “He said my name! Does that mean he’s angry?” She chuckled. Cup frowned and turned to his beer. He should be. He would be, but not with her. She sighed, her shoulders dropped a little under the scarf. “What I’m trying to get through your thick head is this. You did a good thing. You and your brother should be cussing proud. If scum are giving you troubles, I know a couple of cops that could straighten them out. Can’t you just be happy?” Cup looked up at her in surprise. She was frowning now. “Because it’s pretty cussing sad if you drag him down like this all the time.”

Cup turned away. He had been happier lately than Cup had ever seen him, but the consequences of staying...He glanced at Fanny again. She had turned to the bartender to pay. Could he afford to let them stay? They were under orders, and Mugs loved it. Maybe Fanny had a point? But the end was still the cussing same. Them or us.

Damn it.

He took out a few bills and put it in front of the tender. Fanny stopped lifting her purse. She eyed him. “For the drinks,” Cup said and stood up. “Keep the change.”

“Hey.” Fanny scowled at him. “I didn’t say you could buy me a drink.”

Cup smirked at her now. “Too bad. It’s a thank you, and I won’t take your refusal.”

Fanny narrowed her eyes and also stood. “I don’t owe you anything,” she snipped, tossing her purse strap over her shoulder. “Don’t think this has me warming up to an idiot like you.”

Cup snorted. “Oh, of course not. I ain’t that dumb.” He stuffed his hands in his pockets and headed to the door.

She scoffed. “Now hold on a minute. As a nurse, I can’t just have you walking away from me looking like you got hit by a cussing bus.” Her eyes were challenging.

He shook his head. “You’re kiddin’, right? I ain’t going to the starfallen hospital over a cussing black eye. I’m fine.”

“Fine,” she snapped. “No hospital, but you are still coming with me, you moron.”

Cups shrugged, unbothered. “Where to?”

“My house. I have a few things there that can help.” Fanny crossed her arms and dared him to turn her down with her fiery dark eyes.

“An invite home? Aren’t we moving too fast here?” Cup teased nervously. Was he really gonna be forced to meet her cussing husband today? It would be the starfallen cherry on top of this moonrock day.

Fanny’s jaw dropped. Then she smirked. “You wish. I ain’t the kind that does cheap one night stands. I’m too expensive for you, boy.”

Cup snorted. “Yeah right. You are far too classy for any kind of stands.” He didn’t even realize he’d said it until it was too late. Cuss! What the hell was he doing! He didn’t know her! Not really! And
She was cussing married! Stupid brain damage!

She seemed just as surprised. “An actual compliment? Did you get knocked in the head or something?”

“Yes! It’s gotta be the brain damage,” Cup said quickly. She rolled her eyes and smiled. “You never heard it. I don’t do compliments.”

That got her to laugh. “No, I would suppose not. Okay, sure. We better go before your brain damage gets worse.” She smirked. Cup grinned. He didn’t mean to, but he already was before he realized. Her laugh was deep and smooth and chimed, not like other girls that always sounded like chirping birds. And her eyes lit up like stars with humor.

They walked side by side as they went out the door and into the night air. It was cold now. Winter had to be soon. Cup wondered when it was going to snow.

“So, you still running after this, hero?” Fanny asked after some silence. That nickname had almost become a foul curse to him. But coming from her, it was somehow sounded oddly sweet. Even with it being teasing.

Cup glanced at her. “Nah, guess I just needed someone to talk some sense into me.” He couldn’t leave anyway. He just wished he didn’t have to face the end of all this.

She turned to him in surprise. “Are you saying I was actually able to convince you that you did something right?”

Cup snorted and smiled. “What? I can hear fine.”

“I didn’t think anything could get through that thick head of yours after hearing you thought Mugman was dead,” Fanny said. “Thought you were a ‘see it to believe it’ kinda fella.” She waved her hands mockingly at him.

“Guess I’m full of surprises,” Cup muttered. She looked at him, her smile slipping down a bit.

“Hey, I’m not going to see you back at the hospital because I convinced you to stay, am I?” Fanny accused, her eyes narrowing.

Cup laughed in surprise. “No promises.” Her bright eyes hardened. “But I’ll do my best,” he promised. He could at least claim that! Those mooks weren’t going to get a second drop on him. No way in hell.

She sighed. “Guess that’s good enough.” What was with that look? She was just expecting him to always be in bandages, wasn’t she? “You put a lot on your shoulders, ya know?”

Cup gave her a confused look. “What makes you say that?”

She smirked and gave him a questioning look. “Because I can see it?” He stared at her. Her smirk grew. “You want to be the big scary bad guy, but I know what you really are. I can see straight through you.”

Cup shook off his surprise. “That’s glass. I’m ceramic, completely different. You can’t see through stardust!”

Her eyes widened, and she laughed. “That was terrible!”
He smirked at his horrible joke. “You laughed.”

“And I hate it!” She covered her mouth and tried to calm down. Cup liked her laugh.

They reached a street, and she turned down to follow a line of rather nice houses. “But honestly, you are a huge softy under all the attitude, hero.”

“What? Me? Are we sure I’m the one with brain damage?” Cup teased. Fanny raised a brow. Cup blinked.

“Alright, embrace your delusion, but you can’t fool me.” Fanny frowned. She walked up a walkway and to the door. The lawn was neat. The flowerbeds were empty but clean. It was two stories, but smaller than the huge place Oddswell had.

“Here we are,” Fanny said flatly. She unlocked to door and pushed it open. “Honey?” she called out. Cup tensed. Luckily, only silence answered her. Cup let out a silent sigh of relief.

“Your husband?” Cuphead asked.

“Must still be at work. Like I said, asinine hours,” Fanny stated. Did she seem to relax too?

“Would he really be okay with you dragging in a strange fella off the street at this time of night?” Cup asked, glancing beyond her into the dark home.

She shrugged, her face falling deadpan. “Would completely misunderstand and make it some sort of big deal? Yeah, that sums him up.”

Cup raised a brow. What kinda guy was he? Then again, if he had a babe like Fanny he could see himself getting a little overprotective too...Bad Cup. Bad brain damage. “You sure this is okay?”

Fanny frowned. “You’re already cussing here, moron! ‘Sides, you’re hurt. So come in and don’t bleed on anything.” She pointed at him with one finger, her other hand on her waist.

Cup chuckled. “Fine weirdo, but I ain’t bleedin’. It’s been a while. You work too much, ya know that?” She frowned at his comment and turned on her heels. She took off the hat and scarf and kicked off her shoes. That left her in her dress and leggings. Cup followed casually. The place was done up tastefully. Nice couches, a book here or there, a vase of flowers, a couple pictures hanging around. There was one of Fanny with that bird nurse, Dovil, in casual clothes. There was another with Fanny and a pair of older bunnies, her parents?

“Stop gawking and get in here!” Fanny ordered.

Cup turned to see her leaning out of a doorway. He followed her into a bedroom. She pointed to the queen sized bed while she disappeared into a closest. “Sit.”

He sat. This room was decorated similar to the living room. It was tasteful with a picture here or there, but besides that...not a lot of personal stuff to work with. Were they both huge neat freaks or something? She was back before Cup could think about it much. She had a first aid kit under her arm.

She sat down next to him. “Now, sit still and face me,” Fanny ordered in a slightly more gentle tone. Cup swallowed but hesitantly did what she said.

She opened her kit and pulled out a cotton ball and some disinfectant. This was going to sting. She prepared the cotton ball and turned to Cup. She lifted the cotton ball and used her other hand to
gently tilt Cup’s head to the side. Cup tried to distract himself from her gentle touch or her woody, spicy scent or just how close she was. Luckily, the painful sting of the cotton patting his crack quietly snapped him out of his haze. He winced and she tsked. “I said hold still!”

“It stings,” Cup muttered.

“Oh, poor baby,” Fanny said in a baby voice.

“Gee thanks,” Cup said, deadpan.

Fanny chuckled and continued her work. She paused for a moment. “What about...your straw?”

Cuphead blinked. “Oh that? It’ll be fine.”

She frowned. “I have something like a liquid stitch that can hold the ends together. It’ll fall off after a week or so. Would that work?”

“You don’t nee--”

“Okay then.” She promptly ignored him after that. Well fine.

She cleaned up his crack and put some cream on it before she stuck a bandage on it. Cup could already feel the small burning from the cussing cream doing its work. Damn cream. She gave him a cooling pack for his cheek and eye to hold while she worked on his straw.

To say it felt weird was the best way he could put it. He didn’t have nerves in the straw. It technically wasn’t a part of him, but it kinda was because it was attached to his magic. It was a necessary part of his magical system. Guess it was kinda like Alice’s halo, but she could live without it, and he really couldn’t. At least, not for as long as she had...Maybe it wasn’t a good comparison. Still, he didn’t feel inclined to sharing such a dangerous weakness. With anyone. The only people that knew were Elder Kettle, Mugs, himself, and Chalice. And they were all of the same race.

She was quick to patch the straw up. The cold pack was a nice relief to his aching cheek. “Okay,” she finally said. “Are you hurt anywhere else?”

Just the cracks on his chest and sid-- “Nope, you did great. Thanks for the help, but I should get going.” He went to stand, and Fanny grabbed his arm and yanked him back down.

Cup winced. “You really shouldn’t yank your patients around lady.”

She snorted a rather less than feminine laugh. “What patient? I’m not in uniform, and this isn’t an office.”

“They don’t yank people around, stars woman!” Cup retorted. Fanny chuckled.

“Don’t try to change topics.” Fanny pointed a finger in his face. “Where are your injuries?”

“You got them! I’m fine!” Cup argued and tried to stand again. This time she elbowed him, and he collapsed on the bed hissing in pain.

“Uh-huh, fine,” she snarked. “Take off your shirt.”

Oh stars above, why him! Why! He would never fight with Mugs again! Never! Just stop cussing torturing him, universe! What the ever living hell was this!

Fanny laughed. “Your face is so dark! Have you never been around a woman before? You look like
you’re about to pass out!”

He was burning up even more from her laughing at him. And he had thought her laugh was cute! “Would you calm down? I’m a nurse, glass head. I’ve seen it all. I’m just going to patch you up and send you on your damn way. Now, stop acting like a cussing shy school boy and take that coat and shirt off!” she ordered.

Cup grit his teeth. This bossy bunny! She smirked dangerously. “Or are you going to make me take them off?” She raised her brows teasingly.

“N-no! Back off!” Cup growled. She laughed again and gestured for him to go ahead.

He sat up slowly and pulled off his coat. He laid it beside him and hesitated with his turtleneck. Fanny raised an eyebrow. “Any day now.” Cuphead scowled. Maybe dying was the better option? “What? Shy of your belly fat?” Fanny chuckled. Cup snorted and pulled the shirt off.

“Just get this cussing over with, damnit,” Cup growled, not looking at her. There was a heartbeat of silence. She was staring at him. Then Fanny sighed, her blank expression didn’t change. What the hell did that mean!

“Cussing finally,” she muttered in annoyance. Cup didn’t look up but felt her scoot closer. “And look at this mess! It’s a miracle you aren’t bleeding everywhere! These are some deep cussing breaks, you moron!”

Well, that’s what a crowbar and a baseball bat did. “I’ve had worse.”

“That’s not some cussing pass, glass brain!” Fanny snapped. Suddenly, her warm gentle hands were pressing his sides and ribs. Cup jumped in surprise. “Don’t move!”

“W-what the hell are you doing!” Cup absolutely didn’t squeaked.

“Checking for breaks in your ribs. You have some bad bruising here.” Fanny frowned and continued to brush her firm hold over him. He winced when one of the cracks stung. “You are amazingly lucky. Is you skin stronger or weaker cracking like glass?”

Cup snorted. No, he wasn’t lucky. He had the worst luck on the cussing planet. He fought his way out. “Dunno. I’d say it’s about the same as yours. My skin is a bit...stiffer. But it just cracks instead of splits.” Cup shrugged. “I still cussing bleed, and it’s not like I don’t have muscle or whatever. I’m not cussing delicate, if that’s what you’re implying.” Cuphead looked way, annoyed that he had said so much.

Fanny rolled her eyes. “Your skin being smoother and stiffer--a good word for it--not rubbery, but...” She brushed her delicate hands over his skin with a curious glint in her eyes. Cup beat back a shiver. “Good to know you won’t shatter from a trip on the sidewalk. I could see an idiot like you doing that.” She pulled her hands back and got more of the starfallen cotton balls. “Now hold still. This is going to hurt with how deep those cracks are.”

“Joy,” Cup muttered. He dared a glance at the rabbit woman. Her eyes were fixed with concentration. Her long ears were down. She bit her bottom lip. Was that a blush on her cheeks? Cup looked away. No way. It was his imagination.

There was a web of cracks on his right side, just over his lower ribs, and two smaller injuries on his left side. One in the gut and the other a little above it. All in all, she was right. He was lucky it wasn’t worse.
He felt one of her hands ghost over his ribs, and he fought down a shiver and goosebumps. Why him? Why did it have to be starfallen Nurse Fanny? She dabbed at his wounds, and he grit his teeth to keep from hissing. The spen a few minutes of silence like this.

“Was all this really because you acted as a hero?” Fanny suddenly asked. She moved around him to his other side.

Cup glanced at her as she patted the cotton on his stomach. Damnit, that stung! “What’s it to you?”

“You should start running with a better crowd,” she commented, almost offhandedly. “This cussing dump needs a few heroes.”

Cup snorted this winced. Fanny looked up at him with a frown. “I said don’t move!”

“Sorry,” Cup muttered. They sat in silence again, this time Cup watched her. She had a little knot between her thin brows while she focused. It was cute.

Bad Cup! Brain damage. It had to be brain damage. What was that? Like five times now?

“So, do you bring in strays to patch up often?” Cup asked to distract himself.

“Hell no,” Fanny drawled. “You are now on a rare list of truly troubled individuals.” She smirked up at him, her dark eyes taunting him from under her thick lashes.

Cup felt his face heat and his throat go dry. Damn. “Troubled?” He managed to not choke on the word.

“Oh course. It’s rare that I come across a guy that literally can’t keep himself together for a starfallen month!” Fanny chuckled. “I can’t imagine anyone more hopeless.” She moved up to his final crack. The woman worked fast.

“Give me some credit. I’m still breathing.” Cup tried to smile.

“That’s hardly a prize.” Fanny shook the used cotton ball at him before tossing it and replacing it with another. Cup winced at the pain but didn’t move beyond that. He frowned. For him, it was a cussing prize, one it felt like he had to fight for nearly every day. “Still, you’ve been able to walk in most of the time, so you have that going for you,” she muttered.


“What? No! Are you kidding me? A string bean like you? Ha!” She lifted her chin. “I’ve seen much hotter fellas than you.” Her words were hurtful, but her tone was light and teasing.

“Oh really?” Cup smirked and raised a brow.

Fanny laughed. “Okay, you do have your own really weird charm. Is that what you want to hear?”

Cup laughed. Was that a blush? Nah. He had to be imagining it again.

Married. Remember that, damnit!

“It’s a forced compliment, but I’ll take it. Doesn’t seem to be your forte anyway.” Cup smiled. The teasing helped relax him and take his mind off the pain at least.

“Excuse you!” Fanny sat up and frowned at him. “I will have you know that my compliments are the
most honest compliments you’d ever get to hear. I only state the damn truth!”

“Oh really?” Cup tilted his head and grinned.

“Yes!” Fanny narrowed her eyes at him, seemingly angry that he would dare question her. That only made him want to mess with her more.

“Okay, prove it. One honest compliment from you to me,” Cup dared her with a cheeky grin.

She scowled and jabbed the cotton into his wound. “EE-OUCH!” Cup jumped back. “Damnit woman!”

“That’s for getting smart with me,” Fanny warned with a smirk of her own. She was evil! Pure evil! With death balls of pain! “But if I really had to think about it…” She pursed her lips and pulled the wary Cuphead closer so she could finish cleaning his wounds. “Hmm, that’s a hard one. I don’t really know you. You’re a pushover, an idiot, way too cussing lovey dovey with your brother.” Cup scowled. “Even if you thought he was dead.” She lifted a finger at him to keep him quiet but didn’t look up. “Again, idiot, you seem reckless and brash.” She frowned.

“Gee, quite the compliment,” Cuphead said deadpan.

“Shut it. I’m not done, and I still have this.” She waved the cotton ball around. He wisely shut it. “Now, where was I? Oh yes, brash. Well, you also are terrible at following instructions.” Cup rolled his eyes. “But you seem to stick to your convictions no matter what, even if it turns you into a mess. So, you are either stupidly brave or stubborn, maybe both. And it appears you have a good brother and friends.” She glanced up and frowned at him. “But they’re all morons like you.”

Cup smiled. “Did that hurt?”

“More than you know,” Fanny grumbled. “Okay, now we can add the cream and bandages.”

Cup groaned. “Do we have to use the cussing cream?”

Fanny smirked and grabbed the tube. “Yes, we have to use cussing cream.” Cup glanced at the door. The rabbit pointed at him. “Don’t even think about it!” Cup deflated. She took the cream and quickly spread it over his wounds. He grit his teeth and fought flinching. Cussing cream.

Fanny talked, but she was actually fast and careful. She was wrapping the bandages around him in no time. He ignored the brush of her hands or how close she was as she reached around him to pass the gauze hand to hand. He would have to find out what perfume she used. He really liked it. Brain damage!

She finally pulled back and looked over her work with a critical eye. “Change those bandages tomorrow.” She smiled. “And be sure to use the cream so you don’t scar.”

Cup grimaced. “You’re evil.”

She smiled sweetly and shrugged. “Here you go!” She handed him the damned tube. “Once a day.” Cup groaned miserably. “You are now clear to get dressed and head home.”

Cup snorted. “Kicking me out so soon?”

Fanny rolled her eyes. “Shut it! Or I will charge you for my services.”

“I thought you were out of the office,” Cup stated, pulling his turtleneck back on.
“Exactly, it’s my rules here.” Fanny lifted her nose and packed up her kit. She also reclaimed the cold pack from him. Cup glanced at the rest of contents. For not treating others, she was really low on bandages. Maybe her husband was accident prone.

Ah. Husband. Cussing--

“Now, it’s getting late, and I’m tired,” Fanny said. Cup snorted. It wasn’t late but whatever.

“Guess I’ll just have to make it up to you with a drink sometime.” Cup sighed like it was such a burden. She frowned and glanced at him from the corner of her eye.

“What was that?” Her tone was warning as she stood up and took a few steps to put the kit away in the closet.

“A drink sometime,” Cup said, standing up and shrugged on his coat. “To make up for your wasted night.”

She walked back in, the frown still on her face and a brow raised. “Are you asking me on a date?”

Cuphead nearly choked but was able to turn it into a snort last second. “No.” You’re married hung on his tongue, but he didn’t want to say it. “Just a thank you. And what? We can’t just be friends?”

She laughed. “Me? Friends with you?”

“Something wrong with that?” Cup asked, narrowing his good eye. He pocketed the cussing cream.

“Matters if you believe stupid is contagious.” Fanny smirked and led him to the door.

Cup frowned. “Oh c’mon. Who knows, maybe I’d finally figure out a compliment for you.”

Fanny’s jaw dropped, and she glared at him. Had he really offended her? He burst with laughter at her expression.

“Excuse you! I just took care of your cussing wounds for free!” Fanny said indignantly.

“Yeah, but it was rather painful, and I was pretty much forced here. I think kidnapping could stand in the courtroom,” Cup teased with a smirk.

Fanny narrowed her eyes. “Oh really,” she hissed sarcastically. “Fine! Drinks. Where can I reach you?”

“You have Dr. Oddswell’s number?” Cup asked and pocketed his hands. Fanny paused in opening the door. “Yes. It’s at the hospital’s contact lists.” She frowned. “You live there?”

Cuphead shrugged. “Yep.” Her frown deepened. She looked like she wanted to ask something. The nurse shook her head and opened the door.

“Alright, then go on. I’ll see you when I bother to remember you,” Fanny snarked.

Cup chuckled and walked out. “Later then, cottontail,” he said over his shoulder.

“We’re not friends!” she claimed and shut the door.

Cup burst with laughter as he walked away. What the hell sorta goodbye was that?

He kept his good mood until he spotted that damn newspaper again. He snatched it and headed to the
house. He’d been gone long enough to cool off. He hadn’t quite figured out what to do with Mugs and the parts yet, but he had time. He didn’t need to rush.

Still, that fox had crossed a line. He reached the door just in time to hear shouting.

“Don’t mess with me fox!” Mugs exclaimed.

“Mugs don’t!” Boris shouted. Oh cussing hell. Now what?

Cup slammed the door open. The house went quiet. He walked into the dining room to see pretty much everyone there. They all gawked at him like he had grown a second head.

“Cuphead!” Mugs stood up, his chair nearly falling over from his sudden movement.

“What the cuss happened to you?” Bendy said standing as well.

Cup tossed the newspaper in front of the fox. “I’ll give ya three guesses.”

Xedo looked down at the front page with wide eyes. He looked back up at Cuphead.

“I hope you feel proud, fox. This pile of stardust better be worth it for ya.” Cup shoved his hands in his pockets and turned on his heels to head upstairs before anyone else could move or speak. “I’m cussing tired. I’m going to bed.”

“W-wait Cuphead!” Mugs scrambled to follow.

“Leave it. I don’t wanna deal with no one tonight,” Cuphead said, already halfway up the stairs. Let them stew a little. He’d deal with them all in the morning. He didn’t hear anyone follow him as he reached his shared room and closed the door. He collapsed on the bed with a sigh. What a cussing day. It started as a nightmare and ended somewhere in a dream. Nurse Fanny. Damn.

Brain damage. Right. Whelp.

Brain damage: 1

Cuphead: 0

More like 7, but he’d only start counting now. She was married; a classy, educated, strong woman. She did not need to get involved with a guy like him. Even as a friend. He’d only drag her down. Why had he pushed for those drinks? He knew why but didn’t want to think it.

It was pathetic to pine after an untouchable woman like her after all.

Chapter End Notes

Okay guys! We've got a couple amazing arts this week to celebrate the 100th chapter of the Inky Mystery.

Before I say anything, I need to be straight with you guys. When Tap saw all this beautiful art, she literally cried. I hope you know how much you are loved by this ghost and mutant bird.

First off, here's art by Tap!
C'MON HENRY
BUT THE LOOP.
I KNOW
This beautiful art was drawn by fantastickingdomus!
And here are the questers themselves! The1trueanon drew this amazing art. Anon is also the one who has been posting a comic of the story on her tumblr. Check it out!

This art was drawn by a wonderful artist named Khana! WOW. She got all the
In her words, "We've got the Questers on the front, Cala on the left, and Alice and Holly on the right with Snowball! The Tiptail bros are behind them and the (literal) Warners tower are on the left. There's Oddswell and Red (Didn't manage to make her not look pissed™), Finley and Sammy in the background, and finally, the detectives on the right!"

Last of all, the adorable Bloookyberry sent this adorable art. It's...so accurate to how I feel about life sometimes...
I hope you enjoyed the extra-long chapter and the gorgeous art! See you next week!
Bendy stood stiffly, staring at the paper on the table. He looked from Mugs’ stricken face to Xedo’s paled shock.

“Someone cussing explain,” Bendy commanded. “Now.” There was a moment of tense silence as the demon looked between the two with a sharp glare.

Mugs turned to him. “We’re still part of the criminal world, Bendy.” Bendy frowned. “And when stardust like that,” Mugs jabbed a finger toward the paper, “happens, people notice. They figure that if we’re involved, then we probably cussing know something.”

“That’s why Cuphead is all beaten up?” Boris asked with wide eyes.

Xedo cleared his throat uncomfortably. “Information is valuable.”

“So what? A bunch of thugs cornered him and demanded he tell them what he knew?” Bendy frowned.

Mugs snorted. “And he beat the hell out of them insteada telling, of course. But I wouldn’t be surprised if every gang from here to Warnerburg wasn’t keepin’ an eye out for us now.” Mugs glared at Xedo.

“W-why’s that?” Sammy stuttered, wringing his tail.

Felix stood with a heavy sigh. “Because a power that could twist a city like that is extremely valuable and dangerous. Of course any crime boss would want it.”

“Does that mean they’re after Holly?” Alice asked. Her face was pale, but her eyes were determined. Holly looked up, eyes wide and worried.
“No,” Xedo answered. “Thanks to Mickey and the papers, we’ve been making it sound like there was some shadowy figure turning people into monsters and making others disappear. Like with what happened to Mickey. Several toons vanished and reappeared. Some changed temporarily.”

“But what about the library attack?” Finley asked. “That was before the Nightmare Night.” Holly frowned.

“Mickey had already disappeared. We painted her as just another victim,” Xedo said. He removed his glasses and rubbed the bridge of his nose.

“Mr. Tiptail,” Felix said sternly. “What convinced you to publish that article?”

“A number of things that I believe you are aware of.” Xedo sighed. “On top of it, Cuphead was seen as a hero by a number of people. This city needs a hero with the shape it’s in now. Knowing that citizens like Cuphead did everything they could to help boosts moral and inspires people to do what they can. He wasn’t the first. We’ve done a number of articles on the police, hospital staff, firefighters, and other common citizens too. It’ll still be a couple of days before vehicles are back on roads again, and people need to feel safe enough to leave their homes.”

Mugs marched up the table and slammed his hands down on it. “That’s a cussing load of—”

“That is part of the truth,” Xedo said. He turned a pointed look at Mugman. “The other part was I wanted to see what you and your brother would do.” There was a warning, an expectation in his voice.

“Well, you went about it wrong, Xedo.” Bendy cut into the tension between the two. The fox turned to him in surprise.

“We don’t know if we can trust them, Bendy! We don’t even know who they work for or why!” Xedo argued.

“They’ve saved our lives a number of times!” Bendy barked back. “They risked their own lives to save Holly! And it’s not like we all haven’t kept secrets! It’s not like every cussing person here hasn’t broken some law or another!” A number of people looked taken aback. Xedo was one of them. “But that there,” Bendy pointed his finger at the paper, “has put my friends in danger, Xedo. Cuphead is hurt because of what you wrote.”

“Bu—”

“No.” Bendy cut the fox off. “I don’t need convincing, Xedo. I don’t want excuses. You don’t trust them? Fine. But I do. And I don’t like seeing my friends in danger. And that’s exactly where you put them. If they tell anyone anything about the parts for the machine, then our chance for a cure is gone. I don’t know about you, but I don’t think I can take on several gangs, do you? And on top of trying to get these other parts and manage Hat’s deal? Are you really putting more on me?”

Xedo’s eyes widened. “Bendy, I didn’t mean for this to happen. I didn’t think the backlash to the Cup brothers would be so strong! This wasn’t meant to be your burden.”

“Of course you didn’t.” Boris frowned. “But it is our burden. Bendy and I have to get and protect the parts. Sure, we take all the help we can get. But it’ll be us that finds them, us that puts them together. Anything that threatens the ink machine is something we’ll have to deal with.” Boris stood up next to his brother. Xedo seemed lost for words.

There was a long stretch of silence.
“Boys.” Felix tried to speak up.

“I think you should go for now, Mr. Tiptail,” Bendy said. Xedo looked down at the article, ears down. He nodded and stood.

Wiston stood up, eyes wide and fearful. Fireball jumped on his shoulder with her weird cry. He hurried to his brother’s side. He looked between Xedo’s downcast expression and the group. “W-we’re coming back, though, right? This was just an accident! Bro never meant to really hurt anyone!” Wiston barked.

“Wiston please,” Xedo said.

“Bendy, isn’t this a little much?” Oddswell spoke up. “He has done us a great service before. I think this was a calculated risk, but an honest mistake on Mr. Tiptail’s part.”

Bendy shook his head, arms crossed as he watched the foxes slowly leave. “We’ll see. I want to hear Cup’s side first.”

“T- I am sorry,” Xedo said, gazing back from over his shoulder. “I hope someday you all can forgive me.” Then he and Wiston were gone.

Damnit!

Mugs dropped his head. “What a cussing mess.”

“You’re tellin’ me, pal,” Fin muttered, his huge ears pinned to his back. “I thought things were going to get easier, not worse.”

Mugs sighed. “Sorry.”


“If Cup and I weren’t so...If we could just...Ugh.” Mugs groaned and dropped his head in his hands. Boris patted his shoulder sadly. Bendy scowled. Couldn’t this stardust be over? Hadn’t everyone been through enough already? Xedo was one of the guys that helped take down cog possessed Holly. It felt wrong to send him away, but he couldn’t let him stay either.

“I’m sorry.” Holly shook her head, looking down.

Alice had an arm wrapped around her in an instant. Granny was on her other side. Cala leaned forward with large sad eyes. Alice spoke up. “No, Holly. None of this is your fault either.”

“She’s right dearie,” Granny told her. “This was Xedo’s doing. He needs to think about his actions. His writing can make or break a lot of people now. He can’t allow rash choices or opinions to cloud his work. He must consider everything before publishing. It’s a lot of pressure.” Bendy grimaced. Oh great. Now, everyone seemed to be climbing on the guilt train. Felix stepped up next to him with an unreadable frown. Xedo had said that Felix knew what the hell this all was about. Maybe he’d be able to clear some things up.

“You did the right thing,” Felix said gently.

Bendy blinked and looked up at the cat with wide eyes. “Uh?”

“I think everyone needs to take a step back and look at our situation now,” Felix said quietly enough for only Bendy to hear. “I think more things have changed than we originally thought. Not just our
views on the parts or this quest, but also on each other and ourselves. Still, not everyone’s situation is the same here.”

Bendy furrowed his brows. “Yeah?”

Felix gave Bendy a little smirk. “I think a lot of us need time to adjust, and some time apart is what we need now. Hopefully, when we come back together, it’s with level heads and determined hearts.” He put a hand on Bendy’s head and messed up his goggles. Bendy didn’t care. Felix praised him!

Then his eyes went over the sorry state of some of his friends. Red was coming back with cocoa and tea. Fin and Sammy had moved to help Boris with Mugs. Depressed, beaten. Hell, half of them were still in bandages. They were in a sorry state.

He noticed Holly get up and sneak into the hallway. She encouraged Snowball up the stairs before coming back in the room. Bendy sighed. Despite everyone’s best efforts, the mood stayed mostly sober for the rest of the evening. Everyone filtered off to bedrooms or got ready to head home one by one. Bendy was exhausted himself.

When it had quieted down a bit, Holly approached him with Alice. She seemed like she had been thinking deeply about something. “Bendy, I was wondering,” she started, “if you’re not too tired could we talk about what happened...when you went inside my head,” she finished, sounding like she felt awkward.

Boris’ ears perked, and he glanced at Bendy curiously. Bendy sighed. He knew this had been coming eventually. “Sure.” He turned to his brother. “Ya mind heading up first?”

“No, it’s alright Bendy. I’ll see you in the room later.” Boris stood up. He smiled at the women kindly. “Night.” He waved and headed toward their room.

The three of them sat back down on the couches. “So,” Holly started slowly. “I’m still not entirely clear on what happened.”

Bendy and Alice shared a look. How to explain that insanity trip? Bendy waved for Alice to go. Her frown showed her less than excited feelings. “Well, it started with these halls…” she went on and explained everything. Bendy tossing in a comment here or there.

Holly blinked when Bendy talked about Fear. “But, I’m not afraid of you…” she murmured.

Bendy opened his mouth, but nothing came out. He didn’t know how to explain that one. Why had Fear...Well, obviously because Bendy had wanted to eat him. Anyone would be afraid of that. He glanced at Alice. He wasn’t sure what to say.

Alice spoke first. “It’s more of a natural thing. Instincts. Demons invoke fear. And Fear didn’t know what else to be besides afraid.” She shrugged.

Bendy sighed. “You had also read a book that claimed demons devour fear, and he didn’t want to test the theory,” he added. Alice eyed him but didn’t say anything.

Holly blinked. “I did? You can? When...Oh...The library.” The look that crossed her face was filled with disappointment. “I read an entire library and forgot about it. How’s that for irony,” she said softly, shaking her head. Bendy snorted.

Alice continued to explain. When she mentioned the memory orbs, Holly seemed fascinated. “That makes perfect sense. It would explain why I can recall memories perfectly on command,” she said. “If somehow I can tap into what’s inside my head and access it...but how? How’s it different than
anyone else’s head?”

“It’s probably Connie,” Alice commented.

“Connie?” Holly blinked and stared. “As in Connie Conscience?”

“Yeah.” Bendy leaned back in the chair and sunk into it a little. “She seemed to be in charge, but she was weak when we left. She’s probably recovering, and that’s why you can’t remember.” Or Bendy had messed something up in there. Or that tower wrecked it. Ugh. So many ways things could have gone wrong.

“Maybe that’s why my talent isn’t working as well,” Holly mused. “Is that why I don’t remember Felix?” Holly frowned.

Bendy sat up. “You what?”

Holly nodded slowly. “While you and Alice were at Hats casino, Cup mentioned Felix. I asked him when Felix showed up and...well, I didn’t realize I was supposed to know who he was.” She smiled suddenly. “If it’s just a problem with my talent, maybe I’ll remember.”

“Oh stars, do you think it’s because of what happened?” Bendy looked to Alice despairingly. Holly frowned at him in confusion. They hadn’t saved Felix in the tower. He had been fighting that thing when he--

“We met an...imaginary Felix in your head. He helped save us but...We lost him,” Alice admitted sadly.

Holly stared at them uncertainly. “...I see.” Her frown deepened. “He must have been a pretty big part of my imagination to be running around so freely like that...But then just what was that tower?” she whispered.

Alice and Bendy shared a grimace. “We’ll get there. Let’s go back to where we were before first,” Alice said quickly. Bendy shivered. It wasn’t like they had a good explanation for it anyway. It was something the cog had been doing.

Alice went back and mentioned ‘the Shipyard.’ Holly let out a sharp laugh, before covering her mouth with embarrassment. Bendy raised a curious brow, but Alice continued before he could ask. The angel was smirking. What? What was he missing? What was funny?

When Wilson came up, Bendy shivered again. That bird was going to haunt him.

Holly grew more and more somber as they talked about the emotions. When they mentioned Distaste, her eyes widened, and she frowned at Bendy. “I’m so sorry. Especially after everything else...” She looked devastated.

“Actually, I think you went too far Bendy,” Alice told him, her lips turned down in a disappointed frown.

Bendy scoffed. “I was just tired of her smart mouth.”

“Scaring someone isn’t a way to show reason,” Alice argued.

“No, but it got her to shut it for a bit.” Bendy crossed his arms.

Alice shook her head. “And then what? Anger? Hatred? Fear? People attack things like that Bendy.”
He snorted. Like that little annoying emotion would have stood a chance against him.

There was a breath of silence. Then, Alice looked at the floor. “I was afraid of what you were going to do for a moment there.” Bendy looked up. She looked down almost guilty. That twisted like a knife in his gut.

More silence followed.

Holly seemed to consider what had been said. “Bendy, there’s actually something I’ve been wanting to ask you. Because of all these...emotions...all the things that happened...They must be a part of something. And I’ve come to realize a large part of it must have come from the fact that then and still, even now, I have concerns about the cup brothers.” She looked up at him. “And I know they helped me. But I’ve been struggling with doubts just like Xedo...I want to trust them, especially after all they’ve done.” She sighed. “What I’m trying to say is why is your faith in them so strong? Maybe if I can see what you see, I can understand too and put these emotions to rest.”

Bendy cringed. “Oh stars above.” He took a deep breath. What was he supposed to do? He looked between Holly’s pleading face to Alice’s curious one. Could he get out of it? This wasn’t going to go away if he just kept denying it. This would also help clear the air for the Cupbros. Those two had it the hardest in the house. “Fine. I’ll talk, but Cup is going to kill me.” He groaned and rubbed his forehead. Hopefully this wouldn’t get back to the ceramic man. Bendy looked up at the two women. “Brace yourselves. It’s not a happy tale.”

Alice and Holly nodded.

“So, you know they had been after us. There was this time he had me. He fired, and Mugs got in the way and took the shot.” Bendy licked his lips nervously. Holly blinked. “He thought he had killed him. Hell, we did too. We ran, and Cup swore revenge.” Bendy shrugged weakly. “He caught up to us sometime after that. Shot up Pete’s restaurant and chased us into the street.” He leaned forward and laced his hands together. “We had taken a bad turn. Practically cornered ourselves. All he had to do was take a few steps forward.” Bendy sighed as he remembered the fear and frustration. The painful waiting for the unhinged gunman to spot them and put a hole through them. “H-he didn’t. He just gave up. He broke down.”

Holly frowned. “Cuphead?”

Bendy nodded, not looking up. “He started talking to Mugs like he was there. I thought he had lost it. We...could hear him sobbing. Boris wanted to check on him. I wouldn’t let him.” Bendy took a deep breath. Bendy hadn’t given two flying leaps about the schmuck, but Boris and his bleeding heart. “So I did.” He’d never forget it. It was etched into his head right next to Wilson’s death. It was one of those memories that would never fade. He took a moment to pull his thoughts back together. “He was on his knees and ready to just...He was going to end himself.” He lifted a hand to mirror what Cuphead had done. Alice covered her mouth with her hands. Holly paled, her lips pressed in a tight line. “I moved before I thought. I couldn’t just watch,” he hissed. “So, I stopped him. I don’t even remember what I yelled at him.”

Bendy shook his head. “He said it was his fault. He didn’t have anything without his brother. That everything was just...hopeless.”

Silence fell once again.

Bendy cleared his throat. “He passed out after that. Boris and I took him to the hospital and left him there. There wasn’t anything else I could think to do. Boris wasn’t okay with it, but we couldn’t look out for the guy. We had a quest.” Bendy choked on his guilt. “So, I was shocked when Cup showed
up again and saved me. That Mugs was alive and saved Boris from a mugger. I decided to hear them out when they wanted to talk.” Bendy looked up now, straight at Holly. “I decided to listen because when Cup was a mess and had given up...I saw myself in him. If that had been Boris.” Bendy shook his head. “I knew exactly how he felt. I respected him for it. So, I gave them a chance.”

Bendy sat up now and rubbed his temple with a finger. “And he has saved my bacon time and again. He’s a pain, but...he’s not a bad person. He cares. He is just cussing bad at showing it.”

A mix of emotions crossed Holly’s face as she nodded. Sadness, relief, thoughtfulness. “I never realized how much you had gone through already,” she said quietly. “How much all of you went through.” She looked up at him. “Thank you for being willing to tell us.”

“Yes,” Alice said her voice shook. “All of you have already been through so much. Please. If there’s anything I can ever do to help you, help them, please come to me.” The angel put a gentle hand on his shoulder. Bendy nodded and smiled as her warmth spread from her hand comfortingly.

“I will. You’ve both already helped a lot,” Bendy told them. “Just don’t tell Cuphead. Like I said, he’d kill me if he knew I said anything.”

“Is there anything you think we could do to help them?” Holly asked.

“Fix this hell Xedo started,” Bendy said, deadpan.

“That’s going to take time, no matter what happens,” Holly said with a sigh. “Hopefully, the map will light up soon, and maybe all this can cool down while you look for the next part.”

“Hoping, hoping,” Bendy rolled his eyes to the ceiling. “Here’s to hoping.” He yawned.

“It’s getting late. We better head home. I think Cala fell asleep on the couch.” Alice smiled and pulled back.

Holly nodded. She turned back to Bendy. “I know things have been really hard, but I just want to say that I’m grateful that you and Boris are the ones who started this quest. I’m grateful you’re my friends.” She smiled at him.

Bendy raised a brow. “Even after all this?”

She gave a little laugh. “Especially after all this.”

Bendy let out a sigh as a weight he hadn’t noticed dropped away. “Oh, okay. That’s...good.”

She smiled, nodded, and touched his shoulder. “Good night.”

But in the house of the questers nothing could go the way they expected, because then the door slammed open.

“Alright! WHERE IS HE!” A very angry quack echoed through the house. Bendy was up and ready for a fight. Holly jumped, her head snapping towards the door. There were a few thuds upstairs, probably people falling out of bed, as Bendy raced to the front hall, Alice and Holly a few steps behind him.

It was Donald, Oswald, and Goofy. They looked ready for a fight. “What the hell are you people doing here?” Bendy demanded. Cala was sitting up, looking confused and frightened. Mugs was standing up, tense and ready. Foot falls echoed down the stairs.
“You people knew something about Mickey disappearing before, so speak up!” Donald pointed accusingly at Bendy. Holly’s head snapped towards Donald, and her forehead furrowed.

“Yeah, we done ignored it before because Mick had said you were all good, but now we ain’t sittin’ by,” Goofy claimed. “Where’d he go this time?”

“This time?” Bendy tilted his head.

“Yes, this time.” Oswald glared at him. “Where’s my brother?”

“Mickey is missing again?” Holly asked.

“What?” Cala gasped.

“You have got to be kidding me,” Cup grumbled from the stairs.

Snowball popped out from his hair. “Meep?”

“What the hell happened to you?” Oswald asked suspiciously.

“What the hell happened to you brother?” Cup snipped back. Oswald took a step forward with a fist clenched. Oh boy.

“How about you come in, and we talk over some hot drinks?” Granny suddenly waddled in front of everyone, a cup in her hands. She was in a nightgown, shawl, and a sleeping cap. She handed it to the perplexed rabbit and gestured for them to follow her to the dining room. Bendy let out a sigh of relief. Saved by the old lady. Thank the stars! He was too tired to fight.

So, instead of calling it a night like he and everyone but Oddswell wanted to, they stayed up and listened to the circus folk.

Mickey Mouse was gone again. And this time there was a gaping hole in the wall. A weird hole. A hole with no rubble and cut with smooth edges. There had also not been a single noise made. It was fair to think they were involved. It was bizarre after all, and strange was practically their welcome sign by now.

It also took a lot of convincing on their part for the circus crew to believe they hadn’t taken the mouse.

“We can’t do anything this late. But in the morning we’ll come over and look, see if we can find anything,” Bendy promised. Boris nodded quickly. He was vibrating with nerves.

“You think you can find something the cops can’t?” Donald narrowed his eyes suspiciously.

Bendy shared a look with Boris. “Won’t know until we look.”

So finally, finally, after all that, they were able to go to bed. Bendy was asleep before he hit the pillow. The sweet embrace of sleep was way too short. Way too short. Bendy felt like he only had a few minutes when Boris was telling him wake up.

“Would you wake up already! C’mon!” Wait a second. That wasn’t Boris’ voice. Bendy shot up with a gasp.

“Stars!” Angelo exclaimed and jumped back.

“You!” Bendy exclaimed.
“SSssh!” Angelo put a finger to his mouth and hissed at Bendy. “Do you want to wake your brother!”

“I don’t see you being quiet,” Bendy growled.

“I’m a ghost! He can’t hear me,” Angelo snapped back and took a step toward his bed side again.

Bendy blinked at the inky angel. “What the hell does that have to do with him not hearing you?”

The ink dripping man rolled his black eyes. Man, he looked creepy as hell in the dark! All dripping and shadowed. His halo didn’t even cast any light on him or the room. “I’m a ghost that only those sick with ink illness can see and hear.” He sighed with frustration.

Bendy frowned. “Oh really? That’s pretty cussing specific, isn’t it?” he whispered.

“There is that disbelief again! What? You don’t believe in ghosts?” Angelo scowled and crossed his arms.

“You just seem a bit odd for a ghost is all! Ink illness? Really? And a fallen angel? How the hell am I supposed to believe you?” Bendy hissed quietly.

“Hey! I was right about the gear, wasn’t I?” Angelo pointed to his own chest with his thumb.

Bendy buzzed his lips. Sadly yes, Bendy couldn’t deny that. Still! “For all I know you’re a figment of my imagination! And I was warning myself subconsciously!”

“You really think you’re creative enough to come up with me?” Angelo raised his brows. A line of ink ran down the side of his face. Bendy swallowed. He’d come up with worse in his nightmares.

“I haven’t heard about you before, and this house is full of people sick with ink illness,” Bendy pointed out and crossed his arms.

“Oh yeah, because having me pop up out of nowhere is such a good idea for the sick!” Angelo barked. “I could give someone an attack! Look at me!” He held out his arms. Ink dripped off his skin and disappeared into the darkness.

“Then, why show yourself to me!” Bendy hissed and stood on his bed. He wouldn’t be intimidated by the ink and glare. He had seen so much worse.

“Because it was an emergency! I couldn’t just stand to the side anymore!” Angelo rolled his eyes and dropped his arms.

“Then why are you talking to me now?” Bendy looked around the room for danger. “We took care of the cog!”

“Shush! I know! But you kept looking around for me and tensing up! That’s not good for your health, you idiot!” Angelo frowned at him. Um...what? Bendy lost his fire.

“Uh?” he muttered.

Angelo groaned and ran his fingers back through his slick hair. “This is why I gave up getting involved. The living are just so—Okay, look kid. I’m on your side here. I want you to get the cure, okay? And there’s nothing to be scared of. I can’t do a thing to you.”

Bendy hopped off his bed and stood before the fallen angel. Man this guy was tall. “Really?”
“Really.” He offered his hand. Bendy stared at it before trying to take it. His hand went right through. “See? Can’t touch a thing.”

“But aren’t ghosts supposed to haunt and scare? Don’t you guys want to mess with the living?” Bendy furrowed his brows.

Angelo snorted and shrugged. “Meh. That isn’t me, kid. I’ve been around the block for years. Things get rather dull and repetitive after awhile. Nah, I accepted just watching mostly now. Maybe show myself and have a conversation with someone I think can handle it every few decades.” He frowned and sighed. “Maybe be a comfort before they go.” Oh man, that was depressing as hell.

“How old are you?” Bendy asked.

He frowned. “Oh, I don’t know. I think I fell three hundred and forty-seven years ago or so. I guess I’m around three sixty, three seventy?” He shrugged.

Bendy just stared at him. First Hat, now this guy. Geez. He looked like he was in his mid to late twenties. The suit, minus a jacket, hinted at him being a real ritzy fella, if not a little dated. And that was a weird way to answer his question! He knew when he fell but not how old he was?

“Let me guess the next one. ‘How did you die,’ right?” Angelo grinned, showing off those fangs again.

“Actually, I was wondering why you’d show up just to tell me to relax,” Bendy stated flatly.

“For your health! Being stressed and tense all the time is bad for people with ink illness. And I knew I was causing some of it, so I came to tell you to just relax.” He swept his hands out with a flourish. Oh yeah, if only it was that cussing easy.

“Because you’re on my side?” Bendy finished.

“Yep! I don’t want to see you die. You and your brother are the first big break-throughs on ink illness I’ve seen. And trust me, I’ve seen a lot.” Angelo wiggled his brows. “You two are really brave, you know that? You both are bang up young men.”

D-did this dead guy just compliment him? Okay. It was getting too weird for Bendy! He was done.

“Okay, so are you just talking to me or does anyone else in the house know about you?” Bendy muttered.

“Well, I was talking with the Blue Fairy. She had lived a very long time. She knew about me back when I was living, so it had been nice to have her here.” He grimaced. “But otherwise, no. Not really.”

“Does Oddswell know you’re in his house?” Bendy asked.

Angelo puckered his lips. “Not...necessarily.” Huh. Bendy didn’t trust this guy.

“So, how am I sure you’re not my imaginary friend or something?” Bendy muttered.

“What? I’m supposed to prove myself? How?” Angelo frowned. “Honestly. I’m supposed to wave a hand in front of your brother? He won’t see it. Do cartwheels on the dining room table? Startle that beautiful actress or her dwarf friend? Scare that sweet Mrs. Gopher and that fox? Maybe give him an attack?”
Bendy frowned. “Finley’s in better condition than I am.”

“He’s gotten worse since the catastrophe,” Angelo said simply. “But he is a very private fella when it comes to his suffering, so he hasn’t wanted to worry anyone.”

“What?” Bendy’s eyes widened.

Angelo shook his head. “It’s his health. You don’t really wear a badge on how you’re doing either, bucko.”

Bendy scowled. “So, you spy on all of us and enjoy watching as we all slowly die,” he hissed. The fallen angel scowled.

“Hey! I died from ink illness too! I know what it’s like! I hang around, because you people are the only ones that can see me! I’ve tried helping over the years, but I’m no healer, no doctor, and no scientist! There is only so much I can do like this!” Angelo snapped.

Bendy stared at the--Okay he admitted it. He was a bit scary--inky angel. “But if there is a cure, what happens to you? There won’t be any people left to see you.”

Angelo’s face fell. “Maybe then, I’ll get to rest.”

That was really heavy. What was he supposed to say to that? Angelo saved him from coming up with something. “Well, I’m keeping you up now, which is also not good for your health. So, you best get back to bed. Just...rest well okay?” Angelo smiled. Bendy was sure he meant it to be encouraging. With the fangs and ink...it wasn’t.

“Sure,” Bendy said deadpan. Before he even got the word out, Angelo was gone. Bendy flinched. “Cussin’ little--!” He clenched a fist and shut his eyes. That wasn’t funny. He sighed. So a ghost. Great. A fallen angel ghost. Sounded ridiculous to him.

He hopped back into the bed and pulled up the covers. “Cussin’ inky fang face.”

“You really should curse less.” Bendy jumped and looked around. An echoing laugh filled the room. “Night, little demon.”

“I’m not cussing small!” Bendy roared.

“Bendy! W-what’s wrong?” Boris sat up groggily, one ear up, the other limp and eyes blurry.

“Nothing, Boris. Sorry, go back to sleep.” Bendy sighed.

“You sure?” He yawned.


“Night bro,” Boris muttered and fell back asleep in under five minutes. Bendy only hoped he could too.

“Bendy! Bendy! Wake up! Come on!” Boris was shaking his shoulders. Ugh. It couldn't have more than a few minutes since he went to sleep. Bendy put a foot against Boris’ chest and gently puuuuuumshed him off the bed. He pulled his pillow over his head and turned away.

“Beeeeendyyyyyyyy!” Boris whined from the floor. The wolf jumped on the bed again and hovered over Bendy, trying to pull the pillow away. “It’s morning! This is important!”
“My sleep is important,” Bendy groaned into his pillow, his arm easily pinning it down. Point to
demon strength. Still. Morning? Already? Did it have to be? What was with everyone taking away
his sleep?

“This could be about saving Mickey!” Boris claimed and strained against the pillow before losing his
grip and falling back.

“What about saving me and my bed?” Bendy mumbled only half awake. Cussing ink angel ghost
thing keeping him up.

Boris smacked his side. “I’m serious! Up! I got a letter!”

“A letter?” Bendy muttered, still not awake. He sat up like the raising dead.

“A hostage letter.” Boris frowned and hopped on the bed.

That helped wake him up. “Uh?”

“A hostage letter for you,” Boris stated.

Bendy scowled. Cuphead was laughing uproariously. He had been for five minutes now. Bendy was
fighting the urge to dump his cup of coffee on Cup. He needed it. It was going to keep him awake
for the next day. He would have been relieved any other day. The Cup brothers has come down to
breakfast more tense and quiet than he had ever seen them. They had hardly given each other eye
contact. Cup laughing annoying was a good break from the tension, but not for Bendy. He was
giving the demon a headache and jumping rope on his last nerve.

“Th-these idiots are threatening you, and y-y-y-you aren’t ev-eve--
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH” Cuphead wheezed. “Who are these losers!”

Bendy got a glass and filled it from the milk pitcher. He stood on his chair, leaned over the table, and
promptly dumped it on the cupman. The table went silent.

“What the hell!” Cuphead roared and glared at his with his good eye. Milk dripped off his head and
hair and onto his long sleeved shirt.

“You were giving me a headache,” Bendy said simply. Well, him and the ghost. But like hell Bendy
was going to say anything about that guy.

Mugs burst with laughter.

“Mugs!” Cup sounded offended.

“Your face!” Mugs pointed at him. Cup scowled, and suddenly Mugs was covered with syrup. He
gasped.

“Guess, we’re both in a messy situation,” Cup snarked with a grin.

“Oh, you are asking for it!” Mugs stood up. And that is how Granny’s house had its first ever full on
food fight. Honey, syrup, pancakes, milk, orange juice, muffins, eggs, and so on went everywhere.
Bendy thought that Red or Granny would be angry, but they were into the mess as much as
everyone else. Finley was laughing like mad, a pancake on his head. Sammy was smiling, whip
cream on his ear. Snow was flushed and grinning. It was like all the tension was chased away.

And then Oddswell walked in. “What in the world are you people doing to my house?”
“Oh, loosen up!” Red said and tossed a jam covered roll at him. It hit him square on the snout.

“M-miss Hood!” Dr. Oddswell exclaimed. They all laughed but knew the game was over. They were a mess, and so was the dining room. Boris had butter on of his snout. Mugs had a glob of jam on his round nose, and Cuphead’s hair was a mess of biscuits and add-ons. Snowball was happily eating away on top of his head.

Granny was suddenly there with Sneezy and a camera set up. “Smile!” She grinned.

“No Granny! Don’t!” Red gasped, too late. The light flashed. The group burst with new laughter, and there were a couple of other silly pictures before they were able to escape to clean up, change, and head out. Felix showed up just as the last of the food spatter was getting washed off the walls.


“You missed the best food fight!” Mugs grinned as he put the dirty rag into the basket Granny had laid out for the laundry.

“A food fight? Wish I could have seen that,” Felix chuckled and tipped his hat up.

“Once I get these pictures developed you will,” Granny chuckled as she waddled away with the basket.

“You’re burning those Granny, right?” Red called from upstairs. Bendy snickered.

“Oh, I will have to see.” Felix grinned. “What’s with the rush? Did the map show you something?”

Bendy blinked. Boris tilted his head. “Oh! That’s right! You had already left last night!” Boris dropped his fist into his hand.

Felix’ grin slipped. “Did something happen?”

“The mouse is missing from the house,” Cup chipped in. Felix raised a brow.

“Mr. Mickey is gone. We’re going over there to see, and this came in the mail this morning.” Boris pulled out the letter that was already starting to show wear. Felix’ eyes widened.

Cup snickered. Bendy pointed a warning finger at him. “Don’t you start.”

Felix took the letter curiously, a hand already going to his chin. Boris stood next to him. “It’s a hostage letter. From some group called the ‘Butcher Gang’? They said they have Bendy and that we have to bring the witch and her magic flying disk to this town in a week or something bad will happen to Bendy.”

Felix’ eyes narrowed. He frowned. “But Bendy’s right here?”

Cup burst again. “We know! They cussing messed it up!”

“So, you think they took Mickey by mistake?” Felix lowered the letter. “Why?”

“The time fits,” Mugs said.

“And it’s a short guy with a weirdly shaped head. Of course they’d mistake him,” Cup cackled.

“What did you say dish face!” Bendy raged and lifted a fist.
“Oops! Gotta run! The shrimp is mad!” Cup laughed and ran for the door, Bendy on his coat tail until Felix lifted an arm to stop him from passing.

“I will break you, milk-for-brains!” Bendy shouted after the fleeing, laughing cupman.

“Now Bendy, if this is true, we better head over there quickly and see what we can do. We also need to inform the police,” Felix said.

“We can’t.” Bendy grimaced. Felix frowned and crossed his arms. He didn’t need to say anything to have Bendy continue. “It’s about the parts and Holly. Even you agreed we can’t let the parts get out to the public.”

“Yes, but now Mickey is gone. This is serious,” Felix said.

“And when it gets out, anyone in the house could be next!” Bendy argued.

The adventurer frowned but didn’t argue. Boris tilted his muzzle down and used those pup eyes. “Have you ever had to do stuff like this?”

Felix glanced at him. If those eyes did anything to him, he didn’t show it. “Keep secrets to protect artifacts? Of course. There is even this tribe in the Dragon Mountains. I haven’t written or said anything so that people will leave them alone.” He gave them both a sharp look. “And they stay a secret.”


Felix smiled. “I know I can trust you boys.” He glanced at Mugman. “And you too Mugs.”


“We better get going though. This is serious.” Felix changed subjects. The group quickly pulled their stuff together and headed out on the street. Cup eventually rejoined them, thinking Bendy had forgiven him. Little did he know that Bendy planned revenge, and he was a patient toon.

“So, what are we to do with this letter?” Felix asked as they walked. “I know we are planning to save Mickey, but what about the request for Holly and the cog? We can’t bring them.”

“I think we’ll have to bring Holly,” Cup said.

“Why’s that?” Bendy frowned. That would put her in danger. The girl was still confused and recovering too.

“We have to assume that they will have eyes on us that we won’t know about. Hell, maybe even here. If we don’t have her with us, they might not show at all, and we lose the mouse for good,” Cup explained leisurely. Boris’ ears dropped. Bendy frowned. Did he have to say that so bluntly in front of the wolf?

“I don’t think we can take out the part though. That thing is a menace,” Bendy stated. Everyone agreed with him.

“Well, if we bring Holly and with all the magic hoey we do, I bet they’d believe we have it hidden on us ’r somethin’,” Mugs suggested with a shrug.

“That’s a good point, Mugs.” Boris smiled. Mugs grinned.
“So then, wh--”

“Look! See! I told you!”

Bendy and rest glanced behind them. There was a pair of kids behind them. A boy and girl around ten or twelve. The boy was pointing with a big grin on his face. The girl was looking at them uncertainly.

“I don’t know,” she told him.

“Well then, we ask,” the boy said and walked up to them.


“You two!” The boy focused on Cup and Mugs. “One of you is the hero cupman, right?”

Oh boy. Talk about stepping on a landmine. Bendy got ready to jump in and save the kid from the wrath of the grumpy glass guy.

Felix acted first. He tossed a hand on Cuphead’s shoulder. “Yep! That’s right! This is him! He ran all over town taking out those monsters.” Felix winked. From Cup’d and Mugs’ shocked and confused expression, they had no idea what was going on.

“Bully!” the young man said excitedly. “Granny said she saw you take out this huge bear thing with multiple legs all by yourself! You’re so berries!” the kid gushed. “Are you all beat up because of all the saving?”

Cup blinked. Taken aback. “Um, sure kid. It wasn’t a problem,” he muttered uncertainly.

“Can I get your autograph?” the boy asked. Cup seemed even more stunned. Bendy had to hold in his snickering.

“Sure, you can!” Felix grinned and pulled a pen out of his bag. The kid had yesterday’s newspaper of all things. Cup seemed in a daze as he signed it.

The girl looked at the rest of them. Her jaw dropped. “Hold the door! Those are the Bbros!” She tugged on the boy’s coat sleeve. Now, Bendy was surprised.

The boy looked up. “Oh yeah!” His face lit up. “Dad says you guys are the ones that are working on that cure machine, right?”

“Uh-uh-uh,” Bendy stammered. Was he supposed to tell the truth? How much did the public know again? He hadn’t been reading whatever the cuss Xedo had been putting out lately thanks to Hat and his damn contract! Hell! When was the last time he’d picked up a paper on his own accord?

“That’s right!” Cup suddenly had an arm around him. “This here is the world’s best at machines!”

Bendy could see stars in their eyes. Oh man. “Is it almost done? Is it here! Can we see it?” the boy asked excitedly.

Boris jumped in. “Well, it’s not here.”

“And we still have a lot of work to do. But we’ll finish it,” Bendy added.

“That’s amazing! Can you guys sign too?” The kid pushed the pen at Bendy. Cup snickered as he pulled away. The schmuck was getting even. Bendy signed under Cup’s and passed it to Boris.
“Are you someone famous?” the girl asked Felix curiously. Felix smiled modestly.

“I’m Felix the Cat,” he introduced himself. “I’m just helping them out.”

“Oh wait! Mom loves your books! Can you sign too? She won’t believe me if I just tell her I met you on the street.” The girl smiled.

Felix grinned. “Sure thing!”

“And you! We can’t leave you out just cause you aren’t in the news yet!” The boy pointed to Mugs. Mugs’ eyes widened, and he pointed to himself. “Yep! You’ll be famous too. I’m sure of it!” Mugs flushed at the kid’s excitement.

“Why are you all together, anyway? Aren’t you some famous adventurer or something?” the girl asked Felix.

Felix’ smile became uncertain. “Oh well–”

“It’s a quest,” Cup said. Everyone gave him a warning look. Cup ignored them all and winked at the kids. “A secret one. We need stuff for the machine, but there are bad guys out to get it too.”

The kids eyes widened. “That’s so berries!” the boy gasped.

“Yep! But you have to keep that a secret!” Cup put a finger to his lips. “Don’t tell anyone until the machine is done. Okay? We’re trusting you.”

The two were practically glowing now. “Yes sir, Mr. Cuphead, sir!” They got the paper from Mugs and scampered off with waves and shouted goodbyes.

“Are you sure that was a good idea, Cups? Telling kids?” Bendy muttered. Cup shrugged.

“Exactly. Who’s gonna believe kids?” he stated and put his hands in his pockets with a smile.

“You liked that,” Felix said with a gleam in his dark eyes.

Cup frowned. “What?”


Cup blushed. “Wh-what? No way. That thing is a pain!”

“And you just signed it. It’ll probably be framed.” Felix gave him a cheeky grin.

“Oh cussing stars.” Cup sighed, exasperated.

“Welcome to being a hero. There’s no going back now.” Felix lifted a finger knowingly. “It’s only going to happen more often.” He looked around. “Probably for all of us. Especially when the machine is finished, and it doesn’t need to be a secret anymore.”

“Are you planning something, cat?” Cup asked suspiciously.

Felix laughed good naturedly. “Oh of course! This will be the next book!”

“What!” They all exclaimed on varying degrees of enthusiasm. Bendy? Him? In one of Felix the Cat’s novels! He let out a less than masculine squeal. Boris laughed but also looked excited.
Mugs chuckled. Cup seemed a little disturbed. Felix grinned. “That’s right. With something like this, it’ll be a bestseller, hands down. Maybe even my best book ever! We’ll see after we get the rest of the parts.”

“I’ll be in one of Felix’ books! Holy cuss! I can’t believe it! Pinch me, I’m dreaming!” Bendy gushed. A sharp pain shot up his arm. He jumped. “Ouch!”

“Nope. You’re awake.” Cup smirked and pulled back his hand. The rest of the walk was Cup running from Bendy, laughing like an idiot as the demon yelled obscenities to him. The group hurried to catch up to the two as they reached the city of tents.

“Dad, are the police gonna be here soon?” Ace asked. Oswald sighed. They’d been asking that every hour since he had disappeared. He didn’t know what to tell them anymore. It’d only been less than a day, but the house was tense and quiet...Okay, quiet for a house full of four hundred and twenty kids under the age of eight.

The kids weren’t as stressed as before since the was the second cussing time Mickey had disappeared in a starfallen week. But he and the adults were more worried this time. Mickey had come back to them changed. It wasn’t that he seemed scarred or tortured or what, but just...quiet.

The rabbit knew when his little brother was lying. He would get this smile on his face, look away more often, and then change subjects. He said he’d run into the mysterious figure that caused Nightmare Night, but he couldn’t give the police many details. He claimed he didn’t remember much.

Oswald remembered plenty from that cussing cave. So, he understood not wanting to talk about it, but it was weird. That lizard doctor and those that lived with him were in on it. They knew something. If Mickey was gone again, and it was their fault, he was gonna see them put behind bars!

But first, he was going to find his brother and figure out what the hell happened! They had been too forgiving when they dropped by that other day. They and Mickey had talked in some kinda code with looks and such. He knew he was missing something. Something happened. Those schmucks were involved. Was Nightmare Night their fault? Why was Mickey lying for them? Where was his brother?

The rabbit’s brain went around and around with this questions.

“Papa?”

He blinked and looked down. Ace was staring at him with worried eyes. “Sorry. I don’t know when the police are coming back, kiddo. I’m sure they’re doing their best.” Ace sighed and nodded.

Tammy hopped up on the couch on his other side. “Felix should save him!”

Oh stars, this again. Ever since Felix had told them about some of his adventures, they had been sure he’d be able to fix any crisis. He had to admit after reading one of Felix’ books as a bedtime story, he was colored impressed. He wondered how much was true and how much was embellished. It was hard to imagine the soft spoken man as this grand adventurer.

There was a knock at the door. Oswald raised his ears to hear better.

“Golly! That’s the hole?”

“No Mugs, that’s their sun room.”
“Oh.”

“He’s messing with you, Mugs.”

“Hey!” Then, there was a chorus of laughter. It couldn’t be. Oswald got up and opened the door. There was the very group he was thinking about on standing on the other side. Several of the smiles fell at the sight of him. He didn’t let that bug him.

“Mr. Oswald, hi.” The wolf kid waved with an uncertain smile. Oswald crossed his arms. He was still getting used to talking again and didn’t really enjoy it, but he couldn’t stay quiet anymore either. It would devastate Mick and the kids if he went silent again. That didn’t mean he had to be courteous to these people, though.

“We came by to look at the hole and see if we could do anything to help.” Felix stepped up. “We may have an idea of where Mickey’s at too.”

Oswald raised a brow but pushed the door open. Of course, the moment he did that his children saw who was at the door and decided to stampede not only Felix but the whole group. The wave of excited noise and questions was almost overwhelming.

Oswald was able to catch a couple of sentences in the chaos.

“You’re the hero guy right?”

“Felix! Save Uncle Mickey!”

“Bendy! Show me how to unscrew a bolt! Uncle Goofy won’t show me!”

Oh stars.

“Kids,” Oswald called. All his children hushed and turned to look at him. “I invited them in.”

“Oh okay!” The kids jumped and hopped off them, returning to the apartment and dragging the group with them. Oswald swallowed the smile at how adorable his kids were and the shocked expressions of their guests. The kids were quick to set the visitors on the chairs and couch.

“Do you want water?”

“Are you here to save Uncle Mickey?”

“Can I have a picture of you?”

“Can I have your goggles?”

“Kids. Let us talk,” Oswald told his children as he took a seat in a chair. His children whined but most backed off and quieted. Oswald looked over the visitors. He could tell they were still recovering from Nightmare Night. They weren’t as bad as the time they had gone over to visit, but it was still obvious. The little guy had bandages on his arms. Felix seemed a bit pale. The cup fella was a new mess though. A fresh black eye and a bandage on his cheek. He hadn’t had those when they had visited with Mickey. It was suspicious. “So?”

“We have a lead!” the wolf kid yipped.

“We think we may have a lead,” Felix corrected. The wolf pulled out a wrinkled letter.

“We got this letter this morning. It’s a hostage note for Bendy,” the kid explained. Oswald blinked
and glanced at the little guy.

“Obviously they don’t have me,” Bendy stated deadpan.

“But they may have nabbed another little guy with a weirdly shaped head.” The cup guy lifted a finger and grinned. The demon growled. Oswald’s eyes widened.

“How?” Oswald whispered.

Boris ducked down. “Well...there was that evening I spent here with all of you.”

“Well, what do they want? Did ya call the police?” Oswald was on his feet and reaching for the letter. Boris leaned back and held the paper away. Oswald stopped and glared down at him. “Give it! If they’re threatening my brother, I need to do something!”

“This is bigger than just your brother,” the cup guy snapped.

“What the hell does that mean!” Oswald glared at him. Bigger than Mickey?

“These guys want something we can’t give them, and we can’t let other people know about,” the cup with the scarf said. “But we’re still going to go get him back.”

“No way! Explain yourselves! What the hell has happened to my brother?” Oswald demanded with clenched fists.

“They took him instead of me,” Bendy said calmly. “They want to trade him for the thing that caused Nightmare Night. We aren’t handing it over.”

“You people caused that?” Oswald’s jaw dropped. So it had been them! “Not handing it over!” the kids gasped.

“It was an accident!” the scarf guy said.

“That’s one hell of an accident!” Oswald snapped.

“Papa?” Lace grabbed Oswald’s pant leg.

“Kids, go find your Uncle Donald,” Oswald ordered without looking away from the villains. A wave of noisy protests came from the children.

“Now!” Oswald snapped. Several whimpered as they left the room. “So, the city’s a wreck because of you people? And why the hell can’t anybody know? Afraid the police will arrest you lot for all the damage!”

“Oswald.” Felix stood up. “It’s not like that. What caused that mess is now safely contained. We made sure of it.”

“A lot of horrible people would want to nab it too. That’s why these schmucks sunk to kidnapping. Though, stars know how they found out about it,” the cup guy muttered. “We have to protect it from people like that.”

“And that’s supposed to be some comfort to me?” Oswald scowled. “Why haven’t you called the police!”

“Yes?” the scarf guy said uncertainly. “We can’t trust them to keep this thing secret.”
“Look Mr. Rabbit, we get that you’re worried and all.” The little guy stood. “But this is bigger than any of us. We can’t reveal that item to anyone else. It’s too dangerous.”

“But we won’t let these guys keep Mr. Mickey. We’ll get him back, promise!” the wolf kid promised and joined the little guy.

“Why? What is this thing?” Oswald demanded. Like he’d trust any of their promises!

The room went quiet. Oswald scowled. “What? It’s so secret you can’t tell me?”

“It’s a way to help the sick, Oswald,” Felix said, his face was serious and business-like, but his eyes were sad with understanding. Oswald stiffed. “And we will get Mickey back.”

“Yeah, ’cause I’m coming!” Oswald crossed his arms. By the falling star with this thing they’re talking about! He was getting his brother.


“They’ll be fine without me for a bit. Goofy and Donald can handle things here,” Oswald said resolutely.

“It’ll be dangerous,” the scarf guy said.

Oswald snorted. “Not my first time facing a lion. Hell, I was in a cave full of giant spiders recently.” Sure, none of them were man-eating monsters and were more scared of him than he was of them, but it took him a while to figure that out...and they didn’t to know that either. “I’ll get a bag.”

“What now!” the other cup guy said.

“Shouldn’t you think about this?” the little fella asked with a frown. Oswald headed to the hall.

“He’s my brother. I’m going with you,” Oswald said with finality.

The cup guy shook his head. “Bu--”

“Let him come,” the demon said.

“But Bendy, he’s just gonna--”

“Cup, what if it was Mugs?” Bendy asked. The room went quiet as Oswald entered his bedroom. He pulled out the emergency travel pack.

“Mr. Oswald,” Felix called from outside his door. “W-we aren’t leaving immediately. If you want to come, we can discuss it. But there are somethings that have be taken care of in town first.”

He threw the door open to see the cat author jump in surprise. “What’s so important that my brother has to wait!”

“We-well, you see, one of the hostage requests is a girl. We still haven’t talked to her yet, and she isn’t in the best health to travel either.” Felix shrugged helplessly. “We have to plan carefully if we want to save Mickey.” That...was true. He had a bad habit of jumping in without a plan.

Oswald took a deep breath. A girl? “What do these creeps want with a girl?”

“They think she was part of the whole Nightmare Night fiasco.” Felix waved a hand shily.
“Is she?”

“Well...Yes, but she wasn’t in her right mind doing those things. It was the item’s influence,” Felix explained and dropped his head enough to hide his eyes with his hat.

“That thing is really dangerous?” Oswald asked with a raised ear.

“Yes, your brother helped us get it back and stop the monsters,” Felix explained. So, Mickey’s story was hogwash. Oswald knew that, but it still stung a little to hear it.

Oswald swallowed and nodded. “Fine. But I am coming. You leave me behind, and I will call the police and report all of you.”

Felix’ ears dropped and a strange sorrow entered his eyes. “Of course.” Oswald ignored the pang of guilt he felt for threatening the cat. They had all lied to him. He had nothing to feel bad about, but Felix had been a wonderful visitor and a friend. The kids adored him.

“I’m trusting you Felix,” Oswald found himself saying. He watched the cat’s ears perk and eyes light up.

“Yes! You can count on us, Mr. Oswald! I’ll call you when all the preparations are done,” Felix promised. Oswald sighed. More waiting? He felt like he and everyone else had done lately is wait! He was losing his mind here! “One more thing before we go.”

Oswald raised an ear. “What?”

“Can we see the hole in the wall?” Felix asked. Oh. Yeah. That.

“Sure.” Oswald dropped the bag on the other side of the door and went to Mickey’s door. “Get your friends.” Felix quickly left and returned with the others. Oswald opened the door to reveal Mickey’s room. The far wall where the window used to be was now a gaping hole.

An unfamiliar face stared through the hole from outside the house and blinked when he opened the door. She made a noise and took a step back. “Oh. Hello,” she muttered. He opened the door more fully and frowned.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Oswald asked.

She stared at him and then looked at the hole. “I was...just trying...to figure out how it happened.”

Oswald narrowed his eyes. More like looking for something to stea--

“Holly! What are you doing here?” Felix asked as he entered the room.

“Holly’s here?” Boris asked as he followed, his ears perked curiously. Oswald frowned and looked between them. They knew each other? Then again, she did look familiar.

She smiled a little as she saw Boris. “I just wanted to see if there had been any updates on what happened to Mickey. But then, I saw the hole and I forgot to knock on the door,” she said to Felix. She made a motion with her hand. Her eyes flicked towards Oswald. “I apologize.”

Oswald shrugged. She was an overeager kid.

“Well, we got a letter for your update,” Bendy told her.

“They want you and the thing, Holly,” the scarf guy popped in.
“The cussing morons wanna trade ‘Bendy’ for you, tree princess.” The other cup guy smirked and stepped up beside the first. Bendy elbowed him, and he grunted. Tree princess?

Surprise, then guilt, then confusion crossed her face in rapid succession. “Huh?” She blinked. “Bendy?” She looked at him. A second later realization flashed across her face. “It’s because you’re both--”

“Don’t cussing say it!” the demon snapped.

“Short,” the cup added. Bendy growled and lifted a fist threateningly.

“I was going to say you both have big heads.” A small smile flicked across her face.

“What is with people picking on me today!” Bendy threw his hands up into the air. Several of them covered snickers. The cup guy didn’t bother. He laughed out loud.

“I don’t see what’s so funny,” Oswald stated. The seemed to sober them quickly.

“Sorry, Mr. Oswald,” Felix apologized. The demon and wolf walked over to the wall. They looked it over.

Holly nodded. She touched the edge. “It’s strange. It’s not a straight edge. It’s...a big messy circle. And the inside is smooth. Also, I would expect something that could go through a wall to be loud and noticeable.” She looked around. “Especially with all the other performers nearby.”

“And there’s nothing of the missing wall either,” Bendy said. “No puddle of melted matter, no rubble, no cracks.” The demon pointed at the wall.

“So, it wasn’t an impact,” the wolf figured. “Or some kinda acid.”

“It’s like they just took it with them.” Holly frowned deeply.

“So what? They cookie cut the wall out and walked off with it?” the cup guy asked, leaning over the demon. Bendy scowled up at him.

“Don’t be ridiculous.” Bendy shoved him away.

“Then, where did it go?” The scarf guy tapped his chin thoughtfully.

“It’s like it just disappeared into thin air like magic,” the girl murmured. Her eyes searched the wall, and she crouched down, scanning the ground. Oswald waited as they all hummed and haaed over the hole.

“I’ve never seen anything like this before,” Felix said. They took their time. While they were doing that, Oswald watched the girl. She was the one the kidnappers wanted? She didn’t seem like much. Then again, neither did the demon, and Oswald had had a sample of that fella’s dark powers at that dinner. He could be scary if he wanted to be.

Then, her eyes flicked up towards him. Excusing herself from the group, she approached. “Um, Oswald right? I was wondering, does Mr. Mickey have anything really personal, something that means a lot to him or that he uses regularly that I could see?”

Oswald frowned. “Why?”

She took a deep breath. “I know how to use runes.” Her eyes flicked down for a second. “And there’s a spell that I know of that could help us find Mickey. It’s a tricky one, so I’m not entirely sure
it will work, but I need something personal of his to use it. The more personal, the better chance of the spell working.”

Oswald eyed her. Runes? So, she was dangerous. He went to the desk. Oswald looked at the box of chocolates and now dead roses. Mickey! You never gave her the flowers! What the hell, man! He and Donald had set it up perfectly! Ugh! Minnie was never going to date him at this rate! That poor shy mook.

He shook off the thoughts and reached into a drawer. It took some searching, but eventually he was able to find what he was looking for. He pulled out the picture and offered it to the girl. “Don’t destroy it,” Oswald told her. Boris and Bendy leaned over to look.

The wolf gasped, and his eyes widened. “Is that you and Mickey as little kids! And who are those!”

“That’s our sister and our parents.” Oswald sighed.

“Parents?” Bendy muttered.

“You have a sister?” Boris asked.

“I’m not here to play twenty questions.” Oswald crossed his arms. They both backed off, looking sheepish.

Holly gently handed the picture back to Oswald. “The spell requires I burn the item I’m using,” she said quietly. “Is there anything else?”

Oswald pursed his lips. Something to burn? He hissed. “I...don’t know. Mickey doesn’t really get attached to things.” He looked around the room. He had his sword, but Oswald knew he’d throw that away without a thought if need be.

“It could be something like hair,” she offered.

Oswald lifted his ears. She could have said that in the first place! Then again, Mickey was ready to even give up his heart and soul for his family. He hoped this would work. He was able to find Mickey’s brush and tossed it to her.

She caught it, took a look, and nodded before slipping it into her bag.

“So, is that it? When are we leaving?” Oswald asked.

They all shared looks. The demon spoke up. “A day or two. It depends on how long the spell takes and the preparations.”

“The spell needs to be done when we’re close,” Holly said firmly. “It will only last about a day at most.”

“Then, we can’t do it until after we leave the city,” the cup guy said.

“I’ll be sure to call you, Mr. Oswald. We will be leaving by train for the Far West,” Felix explained. Oswald sighed and nodded. It wasn’t long after that they left. Oswald got busy packing and preparing to leave.

Donald, Goofy, and the kids came back. Things were a cascade of questions before he could calm them all down. He had to explain over and over why he was leaving for a while and why they couldn’t come.
He was just starting to get everyone to calm down when true chaos fell upon them. None of them could have been prepared for the knock at the door, nor the ones standing on the other side.

Goofy opened it. “Huey, Dewie, Louie! Well grosh, what are you three doing here?”

“There here to stay with their uncle!” Scrooge pushed his way in.

“Wha!” Donald quacked. “Whadda ya mean they’re staying here!”

“I have to go, and I can’t leave them at the house! They’re your nephews, Donald! Step up to take some responsibility!” Scrooge pointed a gold tipped cane at the other duck.

“Hello, Uncle Donald,” the boys chimed.

Oh stars. Where was Mickey when he needed him?
Mic tugged at his collar uncomfortably. He glanced at the side stage nervously. "Oh dear." he tapped the microphone in his hand. "Um, h-hello ladies and gentlemen. Welcome again to Inky Mystery! Th-there is quite a bit that happens here." His voice cracked. Sweat ran down the side of his head. "I myself am going to go find a rock to hide under! Good luck!" Mic quickly scurried away off stage. "Tap! Tap! I'm leaving before--"

"TURN THE MICROPHONE OFF BEFORE YOU SPOIL ANYTHING!"

"O-oh, sorry."

Cup sighed as they headed back. Half the day was already gone thanks to this mess. Cup needed to go report, and now he had to not only slip away from the group, but also watch out for ‘fans.’ Ugh. Curse that fox! The boy and girl came back to his mind, grinning at him like excited idiots.

Okay, it wasn’t that bad--But still! It was inconvenient!

Felix stopped at a street corner. “I have to go drop by Sheba’s bookstore. Let her know I’m leaving and all.”

“Let me come along. I need to find something to read if we’re going on the train for a long period of time,” Bendy said.

“What? Don’t want to enjoy my company?” Cup smirked. Bendy scowled at him.

“Jump a cliff, dish,” he hissed.
“Only if you’re jumping with me, shrimp,” Cup stated.

“I will shatter you!” Bendy lunged, but Boris had his arms wrapped around his raised fist. They all knew that Bendy could easily shake the pup off, but he didn’t.

“Bendy, don’t. Stop letting Cup mess with you. Let’s just go get your book,” Boris whined. He pretty much dragged Bendy along with the cat.

“Meet you guys back at the house,” Cup said with a finger salute.


“Don’t do something stupid!” Bendy called after them.

Cup frowned and turned on his heel. “C’mon Mugs we need to--” He stopped. Tree princess. He had almost forgotten that she was there.

She looked up at him. “Going to prepare things as well?” she asked.

“Yep,” Mugs agreed and smiled at her.

She nodded, turning back. Then, she looked at Cup. “How are you feeling?” She motioned to his bandages.

“It’s nothin’, just a few cracks here and there.” He shrugged. “What about you? How’s the shoulder?” Cup shot back. He still wondered if it was his doing. How bad was it? Would he recognize his own blasts...Probably.

She blinked in surprise. “It still hurts. But it’s healing. The sling kept me from moving it, so it won’t scar too much,” she replied. Cup bit his cheek. How did he even ask? Could he?

“Do you remember what did it?” Mugs asked suddenly. He was staring at her arm curiously.

She hummed, and her eyes flicked towards Cup. “I do. Vaguely. But considering the circumstances, it hardly matters to me.”

Oh stars! What the hell did that mean! Mugs gave him a questioning look.

“I’m just glad everyone’s alright,” Holly finished. Cup twitched. He did do it. Cuss. Cuss! First Mugs and now this girl? Cuss!

“Alright!” he snapped. “Who the hell is alright!”

“Cup?” Mugs muttered.

She flinched, and her face hardened. “Alive then. I’m glad everyone’s alive.”

“Oh joy! So, that’s the bar now!” Cup waved his hands frustratedly. “Meanwhile, you and Bendy nearly have mental breakdowns. Alice and Cala are quieter than ever. Felix now has stitches. The house is wrapped up in some drama or another. And Mugs and I are quickly climbing to be the city’s number one punching bags, all thanks to that damn fox!”

Mugs grabbed his arm. “Hey! Cup! Calm down!” Cup glared at him. He felt heat build in his palm before he quickly smothered it. “Your eyes, bro.” Damnit!

Holly gave him a long stare. “Are you upset that you shot me?”
Cup came up short and froze. Mugs did too. His eyes widened. They both looked at her with dumbfounded expressions, mouths partly hanging open and eyes unblinking. She’d said it so bluntly. Was that how he was to everyone else? This is how that felt?

For half a second, she just stared back at them. Then she started to laugh. It was a loud, full sound. Snowball, who had jumped back to her shoulder at some point, meeped in surprise.

“Cup!” Mugs groaned. “When the hell did you do that? I thought you were stuck in the air the whole time!” Mugs threw his arms back, making Cup stumble back a step.

“I-It was before that,” Cup barely uttered. “B-but! Then! You aren’t upset? Why wouldn’t you be! Isn’t that a big deal for girls or whatever? Aren’t you supposed to hate scars?”

Holly managed to get control of herself and wiped away a couple tears. “I might, but I actually see it as a comfort. A lot of things went wrong that night. But at least you had your act together.”

“Act together!” he and Mugs exclaimed at the same time.

Holly smirked at them. “And now that things are starting to come back, remembering all those roses in your head makes me smile every time.”

Cup scowled. “B-You--No! Forget that! What the hell do you mean I had my act together? What does that even mean?”

She sighed. “It means that if you hadn’t been there, who knows what would have happened to Cala and Boris,” she said, finally serious. “Who knows what would have happened if you hadn’t fought seriously. I’d rather have died than let what I was planning for them happen. So, getting a bit of a scar is something that doesn’t matter at all.”

Cup blinked. That had been the first time anyone had been grateful...No, the second. Cala had thanked them. This was too weird. Way too weird. He wasn’t used to stuff like this. He didn’t know how to be…

A hero.

“Good going Cup. Now, if we could just work on your anger issues,” Mugs clapped him on the back.

“I don’t have anger issues!” Cup snapped. Mugs frowned at him. Cup felt his face heat. They both knew what his deal was, but neither of them really knew what the hell to do about it. All these new situations were also aggravating him and making his fuse shorter than normal. Things were good, but it couldn’t last.

He sighed and shrugged away from Mugs. “We have to get going. We have stuff to do.”

Holly nodded, a little smile back. “Then, I will see you tomorrow.”

“Ohay, bye Holly.” Mugs waved. “See ya later!”


Cup tossed a hand over his shoulder. “Later tree princess.” He heard her snort behind him.

He and Mugs walked for a while. They stayed in silence, but he could feel Mugs’ eyes on him. “If you have something to say, just cussing say it.”
He glanced at Mugs from the corner of his eye. His little brother was smiling. “Have you been worried about her this whole time?”

“Shut up. No, I wasn’t!” Cup snapped.

“Oh c’mon, Cuppy! You like them!” Mugs whined.

“That doesn’t change anything, Mugs!” Cup glowered at him. Mugs pouted.

“Yes, it does,” Mugs muttered. “If it didn’t, you wouldn’t have bothered to save them. You would have just left while she was attacking Cala or Boris.” Mugs puffed out his cheeks.

“No. Cala was about to give away dangerous secrets! I couldn’t just leave!” Cup argued.

“Whatever. You know I’m right.” Mugs lifted his fat nose. Cup growled and jammed his hands into his pockets before he did something stupid.

“Well Mr. Right, now we have to fess up to this mess,” Cup snapped. “Hopefully, we get out of this alive, and we can go on this cussing rescue mission.” The sobered Mugs and he fell quiet as they walked.

Cup didn’t want to ruin his brother’s good mood, but he needed him to be on guard. This meeting could be dicey. Ha. Dicey. Good one.

They headed to their favorite bar. Sadly, he couldn’t stop for a drink. They headed straight down to the basement. At the wall, he hesitated.

“Cup. Do you really think this could be the last straw?” Mugs asked.

Cup snorted. “That was terrible, and I have no clue, bro. It’s been a long time since we messed up this bad.” Cup forced a smile and shrugged. “All we can do is report and hope for the best.”

“But what is everyone going to do if we don’t show up?” Mugs muttered. “We should have left a letter.” Cup frowned. He was worried about them right now! What the cuss!

Cup turned and scowled at the bricks. What the hell were those priorities! He wrote out the damn summons and waited as the symbols burned red and the hole opened in the ground. He thought he was ready. He couldn’t be further from the truth.

A claw rocketed out of the hole and smashed Cup into the wall. Cup grunted, and then it was pressing against his throat, making it hard to breathe.

“Cuphead!” Mugs reached for him, and a flash in front of Mugs’ nose made him freeze. They glanced over to see a playing card sticking half out of a crate.

“Just what do you idiots think you’re doing here?” their boss growled. He stepped out with King Dice right behind him grinning maliciously. Cup choked, trying to open his mouth. He pulled at the boss’ claw that pinned him up against the wall.

Mugs stood half crouched, hand raised warily as he looked between the demon and the casino manager. “Our j-jobs?” Mugs answered weakly.

The claw tightened, and Cup struggled, kicking and pulling and twisting as his lungs started to burn with the lack of air. The demon laughed. “Your jobs! What part of your jobs was this!” Dice tossed an annoyingly starfallen familiar newspaper on the floor. “A night of chaos? A hero! Are either of
you taking this seriously at all?” Cup began to panic, trying anything to breathe, to loosen the grip. His vision was going grey.

“Yes! Yes! Please! Let him go! We can explain! Please!” Mugs begged. There was a heartbeat of silence.

The demon chuckled. “Kneel.” No Mugs! They’ll attack! Mugs looked at him. Cup could see the stupid determination in his eyes as he slowly knelt. His limbs were going numb, strength slipping.

Cup lifted a finger and fired. The boss leaned back and dodged it easily.

“You little scumbag!” Dice growled. He lifted a card threateningly. The Devil laughed and caused his subordinate to pause.

The Devil dropped Cup. He landed in a heap, gasped for breath, and coughed. “Cuphead!” Mugs scrambled to him.

The Devil lifted a hand to his forehead and threw his head back as he laughed. The dim basement light gleamed off his sharp fangs and horns as his voice reverberated around the room. “Even after all these years, you two still struggle against me. It’s so entertaining.” He grinned. “Still haven’t broken you. Don’t worry, all in good time. So, what pathetic excuses do you have for me? You put me in a good mood. I’m willing to listen.”

“But boss. They just shot at you!” Dice argued.

“Exactly. It’s nice to have something unpredictable from time to time.” The Devil chuckled. “At least not when it interferes with work.” Dice scowled and crossed his arms. “So, go on. Talk. I’m not patient.”

“It was the cog! The item! It reacted to a girl and went crazy. That was what caused the Nightmare Night!” Mugs stated quickly.

Cup coughed again and sat up. “We were able to stop her and secure the part,” he croaked.

The Devil narrowed his eyes. “The cog?” His smile fell. “Did you see anyone around the part at the time of acquiring it?” Mugs sucked in a breath. Cala.

“No,” Mugs said. “Just a bu-bunch of spiders.”

The Devil took a step toward them and studied both for a long moment. His sneered. “And what’s this I hear about a fledgling running around up here?”

“He’s Hat’s new charge!” Cup said quickly. He ignored the burning in his throat and moved to get up. The Devil slammed a foot down onto his shoulders and shoved him into the ground.

“Don’t you lie to me!” the Devil growled. Oh cuss! Mugs lifted a hand, but Dice had his hand up and ready. Neither moved. “I know there isn’t an registered fledgling, and Hat wouldn’t dare sneak this by me with how thin the ice is for him!”

“He hasn’t agreed yet, but he will today. The kid’s gonna be his before the sun goes down.” Cup clenched his fists on the floor.

“And he’s on the Surface why?” The Devil leaned over him, pushing his weight down on Cup’s cracks. Cup groaned in pain.
“We don’t know! We don’t know! He says he was never in hell! Okay? He’s always been up here! Hat’s doing the paperwork to make it legal before angels come!” Mugs said in a panicked rush. He was rattling with nerves and fear. “That’s all we know! I swear!”

The boss eased off Cup. He placed a claw on his chin thoughtfully. Cup stayed where he was and just breathed through the throbbing pain. Starfallen cracks!

“How...interesting,” the Devil mused. He looked down at them. Mugs on his knees and Cup still down flat. “You two have caused quite a mess here.” He turned and took a step to the side. “So, you will both be punished.” His tail lashed out and knocked Mugs down with Cup. Cup tensed but didn’t retaliate. He knew better. “What do you think, Dice?”

“If they weren’t undercover, I’d say a nice vacation to hell is just their ticket.” Dice smirked and crossed his arms.

The Devil hummed. “True, but that would get in the way of their work. We can’t have that. For the same reason I can’t cut off a hand or pluck an eye. Their new ‘little friends’ would ask questions.”

Cup gulped. The Devil tapped his chin again as he thought. His golden eyes landed on the paper. “Oh, I have an idea.” He grinned. Cup shared a dread-filled look with Mugs.

“If you two are so okay with being in the news, then I don’t see a point in leaving the concealing spell on you.” The Devil turned to face them fully again.

“Y-you can’t! There are a lot of people looking for us!” Mugs gasped. The Devil laughed.

“Then, you’ll learn to keep your cussing heads down!” the demon snapped. Mugs ducked. Cup shivered.

“Now then.” The boss straightened up. “With that out of the way, there are a few things we need to discuss. First, if that fledgling goes rogue and starts a war with the angels, you two will be punished along with Black Hat.”

“What!” Cup pulled his head up and glared. “Why the hell would you punish us!” he demanded.

“Because you are around him enough to stop him,” the boss said. Dice chuckled.

“A cussing rogue demon!”

“Kill him if he gets out of hand.” The Devil shrugged.

Cup saw Mugs pale next to him. “W-we can’t! He’s one of the few that can find the cussing parts!”

The demon frowned. “How many are there?”

Cup bit his lip. Damn it. “Only two.”

“Then, if he does, kill the one and keep the other,” the Devil stated as if they were stupid. Like Boris would keep going if something happened to Bendy. Cussing stars. “Don’t be idiots. I don’t have time for a war right now. Keep things under cussing control or you’ll pay. I’m too busy to deal with those damn featherheads.”

“Yes sir,” Cup muttered.

“Is there anything else I should know about?” the demon asked.

Cup took a deep breath. “We’re leaving the city. There’s a group that wants one of the parts. They
seem to know it’s powerful.”

“Who are they?”

“The Butcher Gang?” Mugs choked out.

“Never heard of them.” The boss now seemed bored. “If they appear to know anything, kill them. The fewer people that know about the parts, the better. It’s already a disappointment that the machine has become common knowledge.” The Devil frowned. Funny, the people at the house thought the same thing about the parts...not the killing part though. Cuss, the boss was bloodthirsty today.

“Maybe we should look into this newspaper that’s causing so many problems,” the demon mused.

“Sir?” Dice asked. “If we need the reporters handled, I have a few ideas on replacements.”

The demon waved a claw. “Later, we have too much on our plates as is.” He turned back to the brothers. “Screw up again, and I don’t mind either blinding you or taking one of your hands.”

“A weekend trip to hell is easily explained away too,” Dice suggested. Cussing scum.


Mugs pulled himself on his knee. “I ain’t cussing killing anyone! Especially not my friends!” he shouted at the empty room. Tears were in his glaring eyes. Like he could burn a hole into where their boss and the right hand man had disappeared.

Cup sighed and pulled himself up into a sitting position. His chest throbbed and his throat hurt. He was probably bruised and the cracks most likely spread. Good thing he wasn’t seeing the nurse anytime soon. She’d be so cussing angry.

“Are you okay, Cuphead?” Mugs asked.

Cup groaned. “I’ll live, if that’s what you’re asking.”

“What do we do? We can’t hurt Bendy! Boris would never forgive us! He’d never work with us if we did anything! And I don’t want to hurt him!” Mugs exclaimed.

“Calm down. That’s only if he loses it. We just gotta make sure he doesn’t go nuts and, if he does, that it doesn’t become a big deal.” Cup sighed. Mugs stood up and offered Cup a hand. He took it and let his brother help him up.

“And what about the spell!” Mugs asked. “What if we end up in the news and the gangs see or the islanders?” Mugs gasped. “Or Elder Kettle! We can’t let anyone get involved, Cup!”

“You don’t think I know that!” Cup snapped. “We just have to stay out of the news! If the fox tries anything, I’ll break his cussing arm! Now shut it, Mugs! I’m tryin’ to think!” He was getting a headache from all the yelling. They couldn’t afford for their old islander friends to come for them. It would be the worst case scenario. The idea of Elder Kettle showing up at the house had his chest grow tight with fear.

They made their way out of the bar and back to the house. Mugs stayed quiet and pale. Cup wasn’t much better. What the hell was going on that the boss wanted so much killing? He usually was a
little more subtle. Something was going on, and it was enough to make the most powerful demon in hell edgy. That had been the first time Cup had seen the boss and manager together since his ‘incident’ with Hat himself. Stars what a cussing mess. One more screw up, and either he or Mugs were going to be disfigured one way or another.

They entered the house. Alice, Cala, and Holly were there. Mugs just walked up to Cala and hugged her. Idiot.

“Mugman? What’s wrong Mugman?” Cala asked, a bit startled and blushing. If the boss found out they lied, it was going to be worse then he had thought. How did they end up on such thin ice so quickly? What the hell were the parts to the boss?

He missed whatever excuse Mugs came up with for him to cling to her for comfort. He made eye contact with Alice. She furrowed her brows. He raised his. “Cuphead?”

“Nothing. I just messed up. Made a few things worse.” Cup gestured to himself.

“Should I call Miss Hood?” Alice stood up, worry in her face.

“No, it’ll be okay. We’ll be fine. We need to get ready for the trip. Let us know when Bendy and the rest get back,” Cup said. He pulled Mugs by the scarf toward the stairs. This was going to be one hell of a trip.

Bendy looked down at the contract and frowned. He had brought it with him to the circus because he wasn’t sure what was going to happen with the mouse’s family. Now that he knew they were leaving town with the rabbit, he needed to get this over with before they left. Starfallen damnit.

Felix had gone over this document with a fine-toothed comb with him. They hadn’t found anything that had seemed like a trap. Actually, the contract was very liberal for him, more warnings and benefits then anything. His restraints were things he already did, like no killing and no contracts, don’t mess with people’s souls, so on, and so on. From where he stood, Felix told him that this contract was almost a steal. It made both of them more suspicious.

He wanted to show it to Cup or Alice. But Hat didn’t want Alice to see and Cup had been so in and out the past few days. He was out of time. Bendy sat at Felix’ desk as the cat adventurer packed a few things from the room into his fantastic bag. Boris was sitting on the bed, watching him with big worried eyes. Felix tried to act relaxed and nonchalant, but Bendy could feel him glance his way every few seconds.

Bendy lifted the pen and tapped it against his chin. Their watching was making this harder, like he was on a stage or something.

“You know you don’t have to if you don’t want to,” Felix stated.

Bendy sighed. “None of us know how this fledgling thing is going to go. From the sound of it, this is going to be a crazy trip. It’s something adult demons don’t have a guarantee of getting through and they probably have an idea of what will happen. I don’t really. I can’t do this alone and be sure everyone will be safe around me.” Bendy huffed. “And I’ve already started to notice changes.”

“And it’s not like Hat is going to take you away from us or anything,” Boris said with an unsure smile.

“We’ll give him hell if he tries,” Felix muttered under his breath. He was sure he wasn’t meant to hear that. Still, it warmed Bendy’s heart...and face. He ducked and turned back to the contract.
“Might as well get this over with.” Bendy sighed and lowered the pen. He wrote out his name and put the pen down. “There. Now we just have to gi--” A dark cloud bloomed from the contract and wrapped around Bendy. He gasped as an icy chill raised over his skin and caused his fur to stand on end.

“Bendy!” Boris and Felix called out and then he couldn’t see or hear anything. He tried to call out, to thrash, but that didn’t seem to work. He didn’t really have time to panic though. The cloud disappeared and Bendy found himself standing in a familiar, neat office. The thick rug under his boots and dark wood desk in front of him were proof enough that this was real.

“It’s about time,” Hat said from his fancy leather chair on the other side of the desk. He was looking over the contract that was now in his hand. “I was starting to think you weren’t going to sign and I’d have to make a call.”

“What the hell was that!” Bendy barked, hunching his shoulders and looking around. “How the hell did I get here!”

“I told you we’d start as soon as you signed, young fledgling. Pay more attention.” Hat shook his head and rolled up the contract.

“You can’t just kidnap people! Mr. Felix and my brother are going to be losing their minds!” Bendy threw his hands on his head. Oh man. Two minutes and he was already regretting this.

Hat scoffed. “I hardly care for your followers’ opinions. They change to your wims, not the other way around.” Bendy scowled. “Now, I have your schedule here. We will start with history and culture. You will do physical and magical training three times a week.”

“Woah, woah, wait!” Bendy put his hands on the desk and leaned forward. “I can’t do the magic stuff. We went over that. And I am leaving town tomorrow. I don’t have time for lessons. We already talked about this, Hat,” Bendy said with exasperation. And he told Bendy to pay more attention.

Hat rolled his visible eye. “Training your magic and using it are too different things. You’ll be using my magic as you learn basic control and technique. And if you are leaving, then you can take the books and assignments with you and report back when you have returned. And as for the physical part…” Hat pursed his lips thoughtfully. Take them with him? How much free time did this schmuck think he had? He smirked. Bendy didn’t like that smirk.

“Why...the Cup brothers are traveling with you correct?” Hat asked his tone light, truly pleasant even. It unnerved Bendy all the more.

“Yeah?” Bendy muttered and straightened up. He pulled his hands uncertainly.

“Then, they can take over your physical training. A strong body strengthens the mind, after all, and learning how to fight and defend yourself is important when you are a demon.” Hat nodded to himself proudly.

“I did pretty good against those damn horses,” Bendy said flatly.

“You had to be saved by a literal rat of light!” Hat growled.

“So, did you, Hat! And Snowball is a swell...little...uh, creature of light.” Bendy faltered.

Hat groaned and leaned back rubbing his eye. “That never leaves this room. And it’s Master Hat now.”
“Oh, hell no. You want me to call you anything like ‘master,’ you have to earn my respect first.” Bendy crossed his arms. Though, he could agree to never mention the glittering parade ever again. “I’m more likely to call Snowball master.”

Hat grit his fangs and frowned. Bendy smirked. “Master Snowball, the savior of demons.”

Hat laced his hands on his desk, took a deep breath, and relaxed. “Luckily for you, I have practice with rebellious charges. Try that attitude with other demons though and you’ll quickly find yourself in a fight.” Bendy deflated. Okay, so harassing his new teach wasn’t the best idea, but he just had a way of needling Bendy and making comebacks so easy. No wonder Cuphead always had a comeback for everything.

“Now then, from what little I saw of that night, I need to reevaluate the boys fighting skills and training.” Hat opened a drawer and placed the contract inside. He pulled out a clipboard. “Cuphead took far too long dealing with that griffin and Mugman shouldn’t have gotten any injuries from the hound. They both wasted time and energy in several instances, and Cup even lost a chance to take down their foe before the city was twisted as it was.” Hat pulled out a pen and started to write.

“Hey! That ‘foe’ was a friend, and he was protecting others! He didn’t want to hurt her,” Bendy argued.

Hat glanced up at him with a bored look in his slitted pupils. “And because of that, countless people that weren’t involved were injured, there was millions in property damage, not to mention, your injuries and those of your friends.” He stated it in cold hard facts. Bendy deflated further. He didn’t have an answer for that. And like he cared! He hadn’t done a thing to help with Holly!

“So what? He should have killed her?” Bendy snapped.

“Considering what came after? Yes.” Hat stood. “They made a number of mistakes that makes me ashamed to claim that I trained them. If you’re leaving tomorrow, we’ll have to do the evaluation now. That’s fine. This way I can also see what you can do.”

“You can what?” Bendy asked. Hat moved around the desk, not looking up from the clipboard.

“See where you are with your skills. Strength, dexterity, reflexes, instincts, and so on. It’ll be pretty straight forward,” Hat explained in a half-distracted tone. He hummed and wrote something else down. He stopped right next to Bendy. “Right! Ready to go?”

“Well, actually I wanted to as--”

“Good,” Hat cut him off and suddenly a green fire shot up from the ground. Bendy squeaked in surprise. He expected burning and pain, but he got chills and goosebumps instead. Again, before he could panic, it was over.

“We really need to set some boundaries on you cussing kidnapping and dragging me places!” Bendy barked the moment he could see the older demon. He looked around to see they were standing in the yard of Oddswell’s house.

“What? You wanted to walk and waste time instead? You’re the one wanting to pack up and leave so suddenly. You should consider other’s schedules before making demands.” Hat smirked.

Bendy scowled. “But I really needed to ask. How do you think you’re going to grade me? I mean, look at me! I’m still recovering from the Nightmare Night.”

“Why didn’t you regenerate your…” Hat frowned. Bendy mirrored. “No magic. Right.” He rolled
his eye. Bendy felt like the schmuck was going to be doing that a lot around him. “Let’s go.” Hat walked up the steps and opened the door without knocking.

“Hey wait! You can’t just--” There was a scream inside, and Bendy saw Holly, Alice, and Cala jump up in surprise. Red had been startled and dropped a bowl. “It’s okay!” Bendy jumped in and lifted his hands in surrender.

“Bendy?” Alice lowered her hands and blinked. She looked between Bendy and Hat searchingly. “Wha--”

“Hat, what the hell are you doing!” Cuphead marched down the stairs; Mugs, Oddswell, Finley, and Sammy behind him.

“Ah, perfect. Cuphead, Mugman, we have business.” Hat grinned.

That seemed to throw Cup off. “Business? With you?”

“What do you want?” Mugs demanded. He and Cup stopped in front of them.

Hat’s smile went from pleasant to knowing. “It’s time for an evaluation.”

Both of the cups froze. Their faces fell in shock. They paled, and the next thing he knew, Cup and Mugs were running for the back door. Bendy stared at them, dumbfounded. They were...running away? What the hell?

“Like cuss I’m gonna let you take me!” Cup shouted as he threw the door open, Mugs on his coat tail.

“We didn’t do anything! We’re done with your training! Stay away!” Mugs added as they ran for the fence. Hat sighed and disappeared. Cup grabbed the top of the fence. He was just about to swing himself over the top when a shadow appeared on the fence. Two claws shot out of the fence and slammed both cups on the grassy ground. Bendy watched from the back porch with everyone else.

“Tsk, tsk, you too have slipped. Cuphead, what happened to you? Those injuries, they didn’t come from lowly thugs did they?” Hat stepped out of the shadow, his smile mocking.

“And Mugman, why didn’t you use your dodge move? Did you forget?” Hat asked. He shook his head. “Boys, you’ve gotten soft. I’m so disappointed. Gone for a little over a year, and this is what you come back as?”

“Go to hell!” Cup growled as he thrashed and kicked. Both their arms were pinned to their sides by Hat’s giant shadowy claws. This was only getting worse. He jumped down and joined them.

“Hat, give them a break!” Bendy told him.

Hat grinned when he saw Bendy approach. He was learning to really dislike that shark-tooth smile. “Why Cuphead, that’s exactly where we’re going!”

Bendy stumbled, his heart dropped to his feet. They were going where! And now it was the green fire again. He was starting to see a pattern here, and he wasn’t thrilled for it. Instead of panicking, Bendy felt annoyance. This was not how all this training junk was going to go. No way, he was going to put his foot down and--

The fire receded and the great chasm of darkness and discordance of sounds that reached Bendy had him completely forget his train of thought. Shadows danced about the cave walls and cliffs. Darkness
devoured corners, tunnels, and the gaping hole that was only two feet from Bendy’s right. The sounds of screams, laughing, crying, screeching, inhuman roars echoed up from that unfathomable darkness. All of it sounded twisted and blended together in a cacophony of madness that Bendy didn’t think he would ever forget. He stumbled back and tripped over Mugs. The brothers seemed just as shaken as Bendy felt.

“Oops,” Hat said nonchalantly. “Got closer to the edge than I meant to. Been a while since I’ve had to carry three down here.”

“W-what the hell did you do, Hat! What is this!” Bendy demanded.

Hat chuckled. “Why, it’s your evaluation, fledgling. We have to do it in hell so all those pesky laws and angels don’t get in the way.”

“Bendy! Why’d you drag us here with you!” Mugs scrambled up as Hat retracted his shadowy claws.

“Yeah man! I thought we were cussing friends! What the hell! What did we cussing do to you!” Cup grabbed his shirt and almost lifted him off his feet. Bendy grabbed his wrists out of reflex. Cup glared down at Bendy with burning anger.

“I don’t know what’s going on! I didn’t suggest he kidnap you too!” Bendy pushed him away. Bendy stumbled, and he could just tell that there was nothing behind him. Horror flashed in Cup's eyes as Bendy teetered. Mugs snatched his wrist and pulled him back.

“Woah! Okay, we’re mad. but let’s not push each other further down into hell,” Mugs said in a shaken voice.

Bendy gulped and nodded. Cup let out a sigh of relief. “Yeah, sure.”

Bendy took a breath and looked up and around again. “So, this is really hell.” It was a huge dome-shaped room. There was only one side where Bendy could see the floor meet the wall. Over the chasm, there were pillars that seemed to have caves and walking paths that twirled around the giant stone pillars up into the ceiling and down into the darkness. It smelled earthy, damp, a bit coppery, and smokey.

“Yeah, this is one of Hat’s territories,” Mugs explained.

“I have a few here. This one is open enough that I don’t have to worry about any idiots destroying resources.” Hat smirked and glanced over the brothers. They scowled at the demon. “That and I have plenty of underlings that are ready for a fight.”

“Now wait a minute, Hat! I still have questions!” Bendy said.

“Oh? Like what?” Hat put his hands behind his back.

“I thought you said this place was crowded. Seems pretty damn empty to me.” Bendy crossed his arms.

Hat chuckled. “That because it’s claimed territory. My territory. I have underlings guarding the borders of it. Only those I allow live, travel, and work here. If we went to some of the shared public spaces where there isn’t a claim, you’d see more of the problem.” The demon shrugged.

“Why not open something like this up to them then?” Bendy asked.
“They can swear allegiance and work for me if they please. That’s up to them.” Hat frowned. “I am one of the more lenient high demons. But at the same time, my resources aren’t unlimited. I can’t care for every imp and budling that scuttles my way. This isn’t a charity, fledgling. It’s kill or be killed down here,” Hat stated grimly.

“Then, why take me on? You said it’s just to save yourself from trouble, but you could have just reported me and been done with all of this,” Bendy argued. “Instead, you’ve taken time come up with a schedule, you’re planning time to teach and train me. That contract was way too lenient. What the hell do you want from me, Hat?”

Hat didn’t answer. He looked over Bendy and then glanced at the Cup brothers. He sighed. It sounded wary. “Because I see true potential in you. A chance at change.”

Bendy blinked. Change?

“What the hell does that mean?” Cup growled.

Hat’s shoulder drooped as if a weight had been added to him. He suddenly seemed to carry all the years his pictures in the office hinted at. “It means there needs to be a change. We demons have been fighting for millennia to escape this prison. Now, we are more desperate than ever.” Hat turned and stepped up to the canyon’s edge.

“And you actually care?” Cup frowned. He didn’t seem impressed. “You? About other people?”

Hat hissed at him. “My people. And we have been on the decline for decades.”

“A decline?” Mugs asked.

Hat sighed. “The success rate of a fledgling becoming a full-fledged demon is only thirty-five percent. All the others become beastly demons. Most, if not all, high demons are full-fledged demons.”

Bendy blinked. “What are you saying, Hat?”

“Our strength, the high demons that keep order and bring hope, we aren’t immortal fledging. Only the king is. As time passes, there are less and less of us. We have taken fledglings under us in hopes to better our odds, but that only raises the chances to a fifty-fifty chance and promises that, if the fledgling loses themselves, we’ll end them.”

“Well, what about budlings managing themselves? You said that a lot of them are adults, right?” Bendy asked.

“Without true order from stronger demons, they end up ripping each other apart. Not to mention how difficult beastly demons are to take down. I doubt they’d last more than two generations without us. And they’d lose all hope to ever seeing the sun for longer than a few days without a legion of angels coming after them,” Hat stated. “Many believe that our last hope to get to the Surface is now, while there still are higher demons around. But the Devil refuses to make a move. No one knows what he’s up to.” Hat turned a glare on the Cup brothers. Neither of them seemed to react to that. What was that about? Were they involved somehow?

“So what? I’m supposed to change that somehow?” Bendy furrowed his brows. Didn’t he have enough on his plate as it was?

“Fl--Bendy, there hasn’t been a demon born on the Surface since before the war. You lived up there. No, you’ve thrived up there. You are proof that we can live on the Surface and coexist with those
above us. The exact thing those damned angels are questioning. It means change. And a lot of
demons don’t want to change without certainty that we can survive and still be ourselves.” Hat
looked at him. Again, it seemed years of memories were reflected in his eye. “If you can become a
high demon, I know they will listen to you. You can show us what we have to do to save our
people.”

cup burst into laughter. “Y-y-you want this guy to save the demon race! Him!” He doubled over.

Bendy scowled but didn’t object. Cup was right. That was insane. Hat chuckled. “Well no. Just for
him to be an example. It will take a lot work from a lot of people. Both demons and non-demons. I
just want to use him as a symbol of hope.”

“Aaawww, you’re going to be a poster boy.” Cup poked his cheek. Bendy growled and moved to
grab him. He pulled away and dodged him. Cussing moron.

“Shut it, dishware,” Bendy grumbled. He turned back to Hat. “So, what do you want from me?”

“Just for you to survive. That’s it.” Hat waved a hand like it was simple.

“That could be harder said than done.” Cup smirked.

“Then, it’s a good thing you and Mugman will be training him on your travels,” Hat stated.

“We what?” Cup’s smirk dropped.

“Well, that’s the point of bringing you down here. I have to be sure you two are good teachers for
my new fledgling. From what I’ve seen, you both are slipping, so this is a refresher.” Hat grinned.

That seemed to sober them up. “And we are doing this for you because?” Cup asked.

“Because I will rip your tongues out and leave you down here regardless of your positions,” Hat
stated pleasantly.

“Oh stars.” Bendy groaned. “Hat, we need to talk boundaries. You can’t go threatening my friends...
and you can’t just kidnap us all willy-nilly either!”

“Ah, yes, we will get to that. But for now, let’s get this test over with, shall we?” Black Hat grinned
and lifted two fingers to his mouth. A sharp whistle echoed around the cavern.

A roar shook the cavern so much that Bendy stumbled. “Woah!” He and the cups hurried away from
the ledge. “So, uh, how likely is this going to be bad?” Bendy asked.

A giant claw crashed into the ground. The three of them lost their footing as the enormous creature
pulled itself up over the lip of the cliff. Bendy’s jaw dropped. One of its claws was big enough to
 crush all three of them easily. Its skin was rough and stone-like except for the edges of the blades. Its
claws gleamed and reflected Bendy’s panicked expression back at him. The creature's head was a
double-sided ax. What should have been a snout was another blade, along with the back of its head
as well. A single spike protruded from the top. It stood up and slammed its tail into the nearest wall.
Its cussing tail matching its head! What the hell was with the axe-blade thing!

“This is Axesourous. He’s a pet of Flug’s that I’ve kept down here to grow and train. He is turning
into a fine guard for my land,” Hat said and patted the monster’s foot. “Your blasts won’t kill him,
probably won’t even pierce his skin, so good luck.” He stepped back with a chuckle. The monster
growled, showing that his fangs were just as sharp as his claws.
“Ah cuss.” Cup groaned. The monster lifted a claw and brought it down a lot faster than Bendy thought something that big should.

“Look out!” Mugs shouted as they all jumped away. The claws cut deep into the ground, leaving huge rivets as it pulled back with a hiss.

“The tail!” Cup called out. Bendy looked to see it swinging around from behind them. “Cuss!” Cup rolled and the blade sailed right over him. Bendy leapt and watched his reflection pass under him in a flash.

“Bendy move!” Mugs ordered. Bendy didn’t look. The moment his feet touched the ground, he leapt backwards. A claw slammed the ground where he was a second later. And then another and again.

“Why the hell is it targeting me!” Bendy cried out.

“Who cares! Just keep running, idiot!” Cup shouted. He and Mugs were shooting a barge of blasts at the monster. It didn’t seem to even faze the creature. Duck the tail, jump the claw, roll away from the foot. The brothers changed their bullets again and again, but nothing seemed to work.

“C’mon!” Bendy panted.

“Cup!” Mugs shouted.

“Everything has a weakness we just have to find it!” Cup snapped.

“How the cuss do we do t--Wha!” Bendy tripped and rolled end over end.

“Bendy!” the Cup brothers shouted. He looked up in time to see the razor sharp blades come down.

“Eep!” Bendy squeezed his eyes shut. The ground shook, and Bendy’s ears rang with the loud sound. He waited for the pain, the cuts, the bleeding...which didn’t come. Bendy opened one of his eyes and looked around.

The claws were spread around him, barely missing him. He...was alive? Bendy stared with wide eyes. He barely fit in the gap between the claws. “I-It’s a good thing I’m so...” Bendy’s jaw dropped, and he threw his hands onto his head. “And now you’re making me feel grateful for my damn size! THIS REALLY IS HELL!” Bendy raged. Cup burst into laughter, his voice echoed in the cavern.

“Great, but don’t stop moving Bendy!” Mugs shouted. Bendy growled and scrambled out of the closing claws. Oh, oh! This thing thought it could make him feel small and get away with it? Ha! Bendy would show him! He jumped on the back of the monster’s hand and started climbing up its arm on all fours.

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“Bendy! What the hell are you doing!” Cup called up. The monster pulled back its claw and Bendy had to hang on as it swung it around to hit Mugs. He poofed away.

Bendy scrambled further up. Holy cuss, he actually was doing this! He swung around again and was nearly knocked off with the sudden impact. He was able to pull himself further, reaching the monster’s shoulder. He glanced down to see the brothers dodging but not shooting. They probably didn’t want to accidentally hit him. He scowled and continued the climb. Weakness, weakness, where would a weakness be? Somewhere on the head hopefully. He was lucky. It seemed the monster didn’t realize he had a passenger. Bendy scurried around its head, doing his best to stay out of sight of the thing.
It suddenly moved, and Bendy slipped. He dug his hands in and stopped...right at its mouth. He looked up to make eye contact with one of its huge, slitted pupils. Bendy smiled sheepishly. The monster threw its head back and roared. Bendy hung on to its top lip for dear life. When the rush of air and the ringing noise stopped, Bendy nearly fell into its gaping maw. He was able to save himself by hopping on a tooth and jumping up. He flew past its face and scrambled to catch anything to save him from his fall. His flailing arms clung to the spike on the top of the creature's head.

“Bendy, what the hell are you doing!” Cup shouted. The monster swung its tail, and he was forced to dive away. Bendy really wished he knew. The monster swung its head around. Bendy wrapped his arms, legs, and even his tail around the spike to hang on.

This was insane.

Chapter End Notes

Hello friends! Mercowe here! So, with all the amazing art we've been getting lately we haven't been sure how much to post. So, what we decided is that we would pick a few that hadn't been posted before and post them. If you really want your art posted in a certain chapter, let us know and we can put it in! Otherwise, we'll probably choose two or three and feature them here. :D

Here is art by Metasactreon. This is an amazing and fierce rendition of Snowball as she defended Bendy during Nightmare Night! She looks so dashing!
SNOWBALL

MEEP!

Savior of Demons
"Welcome ladies and gentlemen! Boys and girls to another chapter of Inky Mystery!"
Mic announced. "The crew needs to go save Mickey, but will Hat allow them that chance, find out!"

Mickey tried to shift again. His hand was numb from the ropes tied tightly around his wrists. He bumped into a corner again as he moved. His eyes were covered, so he couldn’t see anything. He was in some sort of chest or crate. He had no idea how long he had been here. He just woke up here after something hit him. He could only remember staring in amazement as his wall seemed to just melt and disappear into nothing.

Now, here he was. Mickey sighed through his nose since his mouth was gagged. He was obviously kidnapped, but by who? For what?

Couldn’t he get a break?

He couldn’t help but wonder if this was about the Nightmare Night and the Bbrothers again. Or had he upset someone again? He shifted, twisted his wrists this way and that trying to find a way to loosen the bonds. Either way, he was considering a bodyguard from now on. Would Xedo be interested? He could write about the people that seemed to always be after Mickey. Or maybe Felix. The circus did world traveling, so he could look at some new sights and cultures. He would have plenty for his book. Or those cup brothers. Those finger guns came in pretty handy, and since they were work...they worked for a demon! What if this was about that!

Just then, there was a shift in the ropes, and Mickey jumped in surprised and banged his head on the top of it. Ouch.

“Hey! What do you think you’re doing?” There was a bang on the side. It was a gruff male voice, no one he recognized. He sounded older. Mickey wanted to respond ‘stretching’ but the gag. It was like being mute again but less comfortable. Actually, all of it was less comfortable. Maybe he should have thanked the evil version of that girl for being so considerate.
He needed to focus. What was around him? What could he discern from his surroundings?

There was motion, not the swells of a boat. And it wasn’t a car trunk. Maybe a truck? But the guy that checked on him walked with a lot of ease for being on the road. Was there clunking? Mickey strained his ears. *Cli-a-dy-clunk-cli-a-dy-cluck!* He knew that sound. They had to be on a train. But a train to where? There was another thud on the side of his wooden prison and then the sound of retreating steps. Mickey grunted and went back to his wrists. They were sore and swollen at this point, but now it seemed the one around his left wrist had loosened. He started turning and twisting it, trying his best to not let it tighten up again.

Boy, Oswald would be losing his mind right about now. Hopefully he wasn’t blaming Bendy and Boris for this. He had done his best to keep the truth buried, but Donald and Ozzy had been suspicious. With him disappearing, they probably charged into the house themselves. Stars, he hoped not with the throwing knives or pistol. He could just see it now. Their biggest mess in the news since Goofy toppled that ancient palace back in India by leaning on one of the major support pillars.

He might have a lot of apologizing ahead of him if he got out of this. He wiggled more forcefully. His wrists stung, but it was easily ignored. Once he freed his hands, he’d have to find a way out of this chest. It took a few more minutes, but finally, the rope gave, and Mickey was able to pull his hands free. He quickly took off the blindfold and gag. He swallowed his mouth parched. It’d been a while since he had a drink, and the gag had dried his mouth out.

He could barely make out the inside of the chest. He put his sore hands against the lid and pushed. It didn’t give. Of course, it wouldn’t be that easy. He was probably locked in or there was something heavy stacked on top. Maybe both.

He kicked and knocked and tried to find any weak point in the wood. He was just on the verge of giving up and taking a break when the wood bent a little in the far bottom corner. Mickey almost laughed in relief. He didn’t have time for that, though. If they caught him free like this, he would go right back to the ropes and gag. He kicked at the weak wood. He didn’t have a lot of room to pull his feet back, but he worked with what he could.

There was a bend and then a crack. Success! He shifted around and light filtered through the splintered wood. He pushed the splinters aside and peeked out. From the floor, he couldn’t see much. There were a couple of crates to the left and a very fancy, nice chest across from him. It was obviously luggage. Great, but he wasn’t going to fit through a fist-sized hole.

He turned around and started kicking again and again. The wood splintered more. Mickey hissed when his foot slipped through and hit a jagged edge. He yanked it back and looked at it. Cuts and splinters greeted him. Ouch, ouch, ouch, ouch! He pulled a few of the biggest ones out and then checked the hole. One of the boards was snapped in half, but it was still too narrow. Mickey grit his teeth and went back to kicking the boards next to the broken one. Heave oh, heave oh, off to wonderland we go, he sang in his head and tried to ignore the burning pain. He didn’t know how long it took, and his leg went numb with pain, but finally, another board gave. Oh thank the stars! He sighed in relief and crawled out. He looked around. Yep, a luggage car. He pulled himself up on the crates. Oh stars, his leg! He winced and looked down. Okay, he might have overdone it a little with the chest. But he would be able to walk in a minute, find some help or hide and sneak off the train, get back to the family and stop Ozzy from whatever hare-brained scheme he’d gotten himself into trying to find and save Mickey. He stretched and then tiptoed to the door. Now to see what the next car looked li--

Three people stood on the other side of the door. All three glared at him. Oops. He hadn’t heard anything. How had they gotten themselves there so quietly!
“You were right, Edgar. He was getting out. Good job,” the monkey said to a rather large spider. The spider smiled. His two sharp fangs glinted in the light, and he let out a rather...adorable squeak that didn’t fit with his large multi-limbed self. Neither did the button up shirt and shorts. Was the spider a kid or something? The rather floppy fiddler cap he had on suggested it was possible.

“Yes, yes.” The monkey nodded to him. He sighed. It sounded long suffering. The fella was in a vest, tie, and coat. He was the tallest out of the three, but that wasn’t really saying much. He was only a couple inches taller than Mickey. He had a stern face, a black triangular nose, and a frown that seemed etched on. He looked like a stereotypical butler to Mickey. “Thanks to your mistakes, we will have to change plans. Hopefully, we can still accomplish some of our goals.”

“Well, the barnacle is famous. We can make a name fer ourselves still.” The sailor smirked.

The monkey rolled his eyes. “Hardly. And what of our other goals? I’m certain the ma’am will be thrilled to hear that you at least will get a temporary measure of infamy.” He drawled slowly.

The sailor grimaced. “We just tell ‘er the tides’ll change.”

“Oh yes.” The monkey rolled his eyes. “Lying to her. Of course! That will surely work.” The sarcasm was biting, and yet he sounded tired and bored.

The sailor somehow seemed to miss it, though. “Won’t it?” He smirked. The monkey pinched the bridge of his nose and groaned.

Mickey wondered if he could talk himself out of this or maybe sneak away while they argued. He shifted and spider narrowed his eyes. Okay, sneaking was out. Talking it was then.

“Now fellas, I’m not quite sure why you’re doing this, but I think we might be able to work something out. If there has been a mix up, I don’t mind ya droppin’ me off at the next stop.” Mickey smiled, but he didn’t know how convincing it was.

The monkey and sailor turned to him. The monkey straightened out his cuffs. “Do forgive me, Mr. Mouse, but since you have ties to the ones we do want, we can’t simply let you go.” Mickey gulped. He was afraid it wasn’t going to be that easy. It rarely was. “And regardless how inept my companion is, he is correct on at least one account.”

“Oh really?” Mickey shuffled a step back.

“Why yes. It’s that you can still be useful.” The monkey smirked. Oh butterballs! “Now, if you don’t mind, Barley.”

The sailor stepped forward. He had an eye patch, a sailors hat, and a short white beard. ‘Gruff sailor’ was how Mickey took this scowling fella, but that wasn’t what he focused on at the moment. It was the shovel he had in his hand.

Mickey turned to run, but tripped. He looked back to see the spider had caught his foot in some spider silk. “Wait a minute, fellas!” The shovel came down and everything went black.

Felix was panting for air as they slammed through the front door.

“Felix! Boris! My word! What’s wrong?” Granny asked. She hurried to them from the hallway.

“B-B-Be--” Boris put his hands on his knees, gasping for air.
“Hat took Bendy,” Felix managed. Right in front of him. He was such a barmy moron! He should have known something like this would have happened!

“We know,” Red said, coming in from the back of the house.

“You know?” Boris barked in surprise.

Red nodded, her face pale. “They were just here. Hat had Bendy. He took him and those two brothers with him. It was fast.” Red shook her head with a faraway stare. “Just--poof! Gone!”

Finley and Sammy came in next. “Does anyone know what the shadow show was all about!” the fox demanded, hands raised in an irritated shake, like he could grab the kidnapping demon. Sammy’s eyes were the size of saucers, and he was trembling terribly.

Felix dropped his head back and groaned. So much for back up. He was hoping they’d be here to help him get Bendy back! He brushed sweat off from under his hat. Now what? His mind raced with plans and possibilities. What did Black Hat want with the Cup brothers? They had a history. Was he the demon they worked for? Was it for a job? Bendy? What options did he have? Alice? Would that start a war? Would there be anything in the contract or the peace treaty that would prevent her or endanger her position further? He would have to ask.

“Is Alice here?” Felix asked.

“The backyard dear,” Granny said. Thank the ancients.

Felix raced down the hall. Cala was leaning against the wall, looking pale and wide eyed. He wished he could stop and check on her, but now wasn’t the time. He went out the door to see that most of the occupants of the house were in the backyard, looking at the ground and fence.

“Alice!” He still sounded winded. Boris was behind him, still gasping for air. He looked pale and shaken, much younger then Felix had seen in a long time. The cliffs probably, when Bendy had first changed. Uncertainty and anxiety hung off him like cobwebs. Felix put a hand on his shoulder and gave it a reassuring squeeze.

Alice’s head snapped up. “Mr. Felix! You’re here! And Boris!” She hurried over to them on the back porch. “Do you know what’s going on?”

“Hat!” Boris gasped.

“Bendy signed the contract,” Felix said quickly. “Do you have a way to find them?” Alice’s eyes widened before she grimaced.

“Didn’t Hat say they were...going to hell?” Holly asked Alice uncertainly, stepping away from the fence.

“Stardust! That’s what I heard,” Finley said planting his fists on his hips.

“O-o-o-oh no. What are we going to do?” Sammy bemoaned. Boris looked like he was ready to keel over. He was too pale.

Holly fanned a hand in front of his face. “Don’t pass out!” He swallowed and nodded with a jerk of his head.

Granny appeared with two glasses of water. Boris accepted it with a shaking hand. Felix gave her a nod and took the one she gave him.
“We’ll get him back,” Fin promised the wolf. “All of ‘em.” Sammy nodded, even though his brows were furrowed in the worried way that seemed almost normal for the other cat.

A quest to hell. Felix had done some daring things, but that could very top them all.

Holly frowned and turned to Finley. “Didn’t Hat say something else too?”

“What’s that?” Finley folded his ears down. “I was a little caught up in the ‘demon-walked-in-and-stole-the-fellas-in-green-and-black-fire’ thing.”

The edge of her lips twitched. “Something about a review when he grabbed the Cup brothers? I can’t quite remember.”

A review? Felix furrowed his brow. The Cups and Hat had a history. That was certain, so what would need reviewing? Hat had Bendy with him, so he might have been involved. The evidence that Hat was the demon the brothers worked for was adding up.

“Does that mean they’re coming back?” Boris asked quietly. Felix gave him a worried glanced.

“It could pal.” Finley said hopefully. Holly nodded in agreement.

“Or it c-c-c-could mean their time up here is up, a-a-a-and their lives are up for his review!” Sammy stuttered. “I mean, the Cu-Cup brothers ran! I’ve never seen them run from someone before! And they looked panicked! The Cupbros! That can’t b--ooof!” Sammy bowed as Finley elbowed his side. Hard.


“S-s-s-sorry.” Sammy wrapped his arms around his middle.

Felix put his hand on the wolf’s head and petted his ears. Boris turned wide worried eyes to him. Felix felt his heart twist. He had done this. He had told Bendy it was okay to sign. He had to fix this.

Felix turned to Alice. “Alice, is there anything you can do?”

Alice was biting her lip and tugging a lock of hair. “I...I don’t think so.”

“What? Why no!” Finley demanded. “That schmuck just rolled through here and nabbed our hotheads...and Mugs! Don’t angels handle these demon problems?”

“Well yes, but!” Alice clenched her fists. “But if Bendy signed, then Hat is in all his rights since Bendy is his apprentice now. I don’t know what the Cup brothers situation is either. Hat isn’t the type to just kidnap recklessly. He has gotten a few strikes. But I’d have to call and get Hat and the Cups investigated before we could take action to get them back.”

“So, you can’t just jump down there and snatch them back?” Finley asked.

Alice shook her head. “I wouldn’t know where to go, first of all, and even if I did, I might be the one breaking the treaty doing that.” So, they couldn’t rely on Alice. That was too bad. She was powerful and might even be able to match Hat in strength. Without her, it would be all the more difficult to save them.

“Then, I go get Bendy back.” Boris went back inside. Felix blinked, shocked at Boris’ sudden move, before he shook off the surprise and went after him.

“Wait, Boris!” Felix caught the pup in the front room. He had that pipe he had been practicing with.
“I’m coming. I can’t just let you go off on your own.”

“Hey kid!” Finley ran in behind him. “You’re not goin’ to hell with me, are ya?”

“You’re what!” Sammy puffed up.

Finley grinned. “It’ll be the adventure of a lifetime!” Sammy groaned and dropped his head back.

Finley turned back to Felix. “So, where we goin’? How do you go to hell?”

“I’m sure we’ll find a way in the casino,” Felix claimed. “But this is going to be dangerous. We have to be careful.”

“Right!” they agreed.

They turned to rush out of the door when there was an odd tearing sound from the front room. Felix dashed out of the hall just in time to see a shadowy portal open in the wall of the front room. The Cup brothers tumbled out. Cup landed on the floor, Mugs on top of him, Bendy next. All three groaned. Their clothes had holes and slashes in them. There were cuts and bruises all over them, and they were covered in sweat and dust.

“Bendy!” Boris gasped.

Hat stepped out next. A clipboard in hand, his suit was as pristine as ever.

“Hat!” Felix scowled.

The demon glanced at them before dismissing them. He tsked. “Most disappointing, but it’s at least its a start.” He tapped the board.

Bendy sat up, his eyes blood red, and fangs showing in a sneer. “Disappointing! You nearly killed us!”

“Oh, don’t be so dramatic. You would have had only a slight maiming, if anything. I can’t have you die on me, after all.” Hat rolled his eye.

“Maiming!” Finley and Sammy exclaimed together.

“Bendy are you okay?” Felix asked as he approached the younger demon. Boris threw an arm around him.

“I’m ticked, but I’m fine,” Bendy answered, still glaring at Hat.

“Oh Mugman, you’re okay!” Cala came around the corner and dropped her knees next to him. “I was so worried!” Mugman blushed, but he didn’t get to enjoy the mermaid’s attention for long.

“Mugman.” Hat cut through the moment with one word. “Your aim is off again. You are leaning to the left. You also rely too much on that dodge! Remember to use your body,” Hat tsked. “Cuphead-”

“Can you guys get off me?” Cup groaned beneath his brother and Bendy. Felix noticed Alice slip into the room and cross her arms as she watched. Her expression was stormy.

“Sorry.” The other two rolled off him. He didn’t move from being face down on the rug. He did turn his head to give the demon standing above him a dirty look. He looked the worst, but it was because now new injuries were on top of the old ones.
Hat raised a brow. “Your reaction time has slowed by a second and a half. If it had been me, you would have been dead. And you aren’t watching your blind spot again.” Cup half groaned, half growled at that.

“Are you okay?” Holly asked him.

“Define ‘okay’,” he grumbled, not looking away from Hat.

“He’s still breathing, so he’s fine,” Bendy told Holly.

“To hell with you, Bendy,” Cup grumbled to the floor.

“Been there. Done that. Wasn’t the vacation spot I was promised,” Bendy joked dryly. “The view was terrible.”

“My bruises have bruises,” Cuphead told the floor.

“And Bendy.” Hat let out an exasperated sigh and dropped his clipboard to his side. “No form or technique, a hundred openings, no use of your powers. You had at least three chances to kill it—”

“I try not to kill things, thanks,” Bendy snarked. Hat ignored it like he hadn’t said anything.

“You were all sloppy. Bad habits, you two. Work on them.” He pointed to the Cup brothers. Mugs pulled himself up into a sitting position with a deadpan expression. Cala was clinging to his arm.

“And you.” He pointed at Bendy. “We’ll have to start from the basics.” Bendy scowled. Boris did too.

“Excuse me, what the hell is going on?” Finley cut in. “Didn’t you just kidnap these guys not ten minutes ago?”

Bendy blanched. “Ten minutes!” He looked at them. Felix gave him a concerned look. “That was only ten cussing minutes!”

Hat smiled and shrugged. “Demons work fast, fledgling. And as for taking them, I needed to know where Bendy stood, so I knew what to work on for his training.” Felix felt a rock drop into his gut. That was why?

“Now, your strength and dexterity are good. When you do have a plan, you are quick to go about it. You just waste a lot of energy. Cuphead, Mugman, start with the self defense and then offense. Make sure he can at least take down... ooooh, I don’t know, a rabid lion before your next evaluations.” Alice’s eyes narrowed angrily.

“How the hell are we supposed to measure him with that, Hat?” Cup groaned and pushed himself up on his knees.

“What? They won’t have lions where you’re going?” Hat asked. The deadpan stares of room answered him.

“The Far West?” Boris muttered confused.

Hat frowned and tapped his lip with his pen. He hummed. “A charging bull then.”

“Boris!” Bendy hissed.

Boris eyes widened. “What! Wait! What! No! I’m sorry! I didn’t me—”
“He’s not facing a bull,” Felix promised. Hat turned a slitted pupil on him. Felix returned the glare. “You can’t just force him to do what you want, Black Hat. He’s a kid.”

Hat sneered, his lip twitching over his jagged fangs. “He’s a fledgling, and quite honestly, far behind others of his age. He signed the papers. This is how he’ll improve.”

“By kidnapping him and risking his life?” Felix stepped up to glare at the demon.

“We do need to talk about those ‘boundaries,’” Hat. No more putting it off.” Bendy stood up and dusted off his pants. Red frowned at the dirt that puffed off him and fell to the floor.

Hat scowled and crossed his arms. “Fine. What are they?”

“First, don’t just snatch me from Boris. That’s not okay.” Bendy put a hand on the wolf pup’s shoulder. “Second, I told you I didn’t want to go to hell, and you took me anyway. I get a choice in that.” Hat’s frown grew. “Third--”

“No portals and snatching in the house!” Granny cut in. She waddled forward on her cane.

“Granny--” Felix said in surprised worry.

Hat looked down on her. “Excuse me? I travel by--” The cane lashed out and snapped against the demon’s shins. Hat let out a bark of pain and jumped back in surprise. He nearly hit the shelf behind him. Everyone watched in stunned shock.

“It’s rude! And I won’t allow it in my home! You use the doors like everyone else.” Granny waved the cane at him in a no-nonsense manner.

Hat stared at her dumbfounded. “Y-yes ma’am.”

Granny nodded and turned to Bendy. “That goes for you too, Bendy.”

“Granny, I have no clue how to do that. But when and if I can, I will remember that.” Bendy grinned. The gopher nodded and waddled toward the kitchen. What an amazing woman. She had just chastised a high demon, and he complied. Mrs. Gopher was something else.

“Now, if anyone is thirsty, I have some lemonade in the refrigerator,” Granny said and waddled out of room and back to the kitchen.

“Wow,” Mugs muttered.

“Granny is the bees-knees.” Finley smirked. Cala nodded, wide-eyed.

Hat cleared his throat uncomfortably. “Right, was that all?” he asked, trying to reclaim his composure.

“No. Next time, a warning, and I decide if I’m going to do...whatever.” Bendy waved a hand.

“But you said you’re leaving tomorrow. You didn’t give me any time at all!” Hat threw his hands out.

Bendy sighed and pinched the bridge between his eyes. “You’re...right. Sorry. I'll do better. If I want a warning, best I give you one too.”

Hat smacked Bendy on the back of the head lightly. Felix tensed. How dare he! Boris looked like he wanted to snap at the older demon’s hand.
Ouch!” Bendy rubbed his head.

Hat shook a finger at Bendy. “Demons don’t apologize. It’s weakness.” Bendy scowled at the older.

“This one does,” Felix growled and put himself between the two. “And admitting you’re wrong isn’t weak.”

Hat glared at him. “Don’t get in--”

“Can ya just go already?” Cup cut him off from the floor. He looked up, annoyed. “We got the gist of it, aren’t you done?”

Hat straightened up and tugged on his coat lapels. He turned to look at Bendy over Felix’ shoulder. He waved a hand and, with a burst of flame, a pile of four textbooks, two journals, a couple folders, and a couple pens appeared. “These are your assignments. Have them finished by the time you are back. History, culture, demon etiquette--”

“Do demons even have etiq--Ouch!” Mugs hissed when Hat’s shoe hit his knee.

“And work on memorizing the laws, both of the peace treaty and the demon laws for hell,” Hat finished.

“I will be working on your papers for your Surface pass. It should be ready for processing by the time you return. If there is ever a time I will ‘snatch’ you,” he used air quotes mockingly, “it will be for the interview with a representative from the Upper. They can’t know you’ve been up here, so you can’t be ‘busy’ when I summon you. That time you will come when I say come or the angels will get suspicious. Alright?” Hat sneered in Alice’s direction. She glared right back.


“Hat!” Alice marched up to the demon. Her halo appeared and glowed brightly. Hat flinched with a disturbed look on his face. “What right do you think you are acting on!”

“My job! What are you doing!” Hat barked and took a step back.

“Your job!” Alice threw her hands out. “I thought the treaty was pretty specific about not kidnapping people into your territory.”

“He’s a demon!” Hat argued. “And he agreed to the papers! You know this!”

“He’s a person! And what about Cuphead and Mugman!” Alice demanded. Felix moved to stand between the angel and demon. He wasn’t sure the house would be able to handle a fight between them. Worse case, he’d toss both into his bag and dump them in the street. He wasn’t supposed to put living things in his bag, but a few minutes never hurt anything.

“What about them! They were my charges! I can take them whenever I please!” Hat growled.

“Legal adults!” Cuphead lifted a finger. “No. You. Cussing. Can’t!” He seemed proud of that fact. Felix raised a brow. Hat scowled and flashed his fangs at the cupman on the floor. Something was there, but…

Alice blocked Hat’s view of Cuphead. This room was getting a bit cramped. “Regardless! This is in clear violation of--”
Hat scoffed, cutting her off. “Oh please, as if you aren’t breaking your laws right now wi--”

Alice cut him off next. “I am protecting a friend!”

“I’m sure your little Council will be so happy to hear it,” Hat said snidely. “As for me, I am teaching! This is a matter between a higher demon and his fledgling! So, don’t interfere angel.”

Alice’s cheeks darkened. The room buzzed with her and Hat’s powers. Felix’ whiskers stood on end. Sammy puffed up, Finley watched nervously. Snowball started to float, round as a pom-pom. Oh man, it was going to be a fight! She opened her mouth and--

“Lemonade!” Granny came in with a pitcher and glasses. “I’m sure you boys are tired. Here you go.”

“Uuuh, thanks Granny.” Cup took a glass sheepishly and eyed the two beings in the room.

“Thanks!” Mugs took another, as did Bendy.

“Now, you two should stop all this fighting. The fact is they are safe and returned. You’ve learned some boundaries, Mr. Hat?” Granny asked sweetly.

“Yes ma’am.” Hat nodded warily.

“Good.” Granny smiled.

“B-but Granny!”

“Let it go, Alice.” Granny patted her on the hand. “All is well again. Or almost. We still need Mickey back.”

Alice deflated and took a step back. Her halo dimmed. Holly patted her on the shoulder. Bendy put his drink down and clapped his hands. “Okay then. We’re done! You can go. I will let you know when we get back. Thanks for the nightmares and the books!”

Hat sighed and nodded. He lifted his hand, then stopped and glanced at the grinning gopher. He sighed, dropped his hand, and went to the front door. “Oh! And one last thing.” He turned on his heel and looked at Bendy. The smaller demon raised a brow. Shadows with bands of neon green weaving through them suddenly shot from Hat to Bendy so quickly Felix didn’t even get to blink. Bendy gasped and dropped to his knees.

“Bendy!”

Alice and Felix jumped in front of him, ready for a fight. “What did you do!” the angel demanded.

Hat snickered and ignored them. “That’s the loan I promised. Work on your magic. I’m sure one of your little friends can help. We’ll do more of that when you return, but I’m not letting you go without some kind of power.” Hat rolled his eye. “We have to stop this whole ‘normal’ thing,” he seemed to say to himself more than anyone else.

“Hat!” Alice clenched her fists.

“Ta!” He flashed her a grin and opened the door before stepping out to disappear in black and green flames. Felix turned around to see Bendy pulling himself onto his feet again with Boris’ help.

“Bendy, are you alright?” Felix asked.
“I...think so? It’s like I just drank three cups of coffee honestly.” Bendy frowned and flexed his hands.

“Well, lucky you!” Cup snarked. “I need about three hours of sleep. I am cussing exhausted.” He dropped his head on his knee. Snowball landed on his shoulder and gave a sympathetic meep.

“At least fall asleep in a chair, man! Don’t be an animal.” Finley poked him with a toe.

“Bendy, what happened?” Boris asked.

Felix found himself sitting in the circle listening as Bendy and the cups explained their quick adventures in hell. A giant axe monster? How fascinating! It didn’t sound like a creature Felix had ever encountered before. Crowds of demons appearing in the distance to watch? Unsettling for sure, but interesting. He wondered what it was like to have so many in one place, since there was only ever one or two on the Surface to meet at a time.

“But is this how it’s always going to be like with Hat? Danger and threats?” Felix asked.

The cups groaned. “Pretty much. But to give him credit, he never did kill us with this kinda training. More terrifying really,” Cup said grimly. “And it sounds like he’s willing to work within Bendy’s rules too.”

“Which is weird. He doesn’t listen to anyone except the laws,” Mugs muttered. That was a red flag for the cat. Why was Hat so willing to listen to the demands of a ‘fledgling’ when his culture clearly put them on a lower tier than his own? Demons were known to be prideful and never yield. There was more to this. He looked between Cuphead and Mugman. Much more, but for now, he wouldn’t pry. For now he was just happy they were together.

Oswald hefted the bag on his shoulders. He felt it shift and rolled his eyes. He took it off and opened it. “Out,” he said. Several of his kids hopped out of the bag, pouting. “I said no mini-rescuers this time.”

“Awww, but papa,” Sally whined.

“No, my foot is down on this one.” Oswald shook his head. He closed the bag again and turned to the door. “I’ll be home soon with your uncle and a whole bunch of stories. How about that? I might even get Felix to come by. How about that?”

“Okay,” the kids pouted. It tugged on his heart. They were really upset if the promise of one of their favorite people visiting didn’t lift their spirits. Poor things.

“I love you,” Oswald said.

“And we love you, papa!” they answered. Lucy and Tom hopped up and hugged his legs. He patted their heads and went out the door. And as usual when leaving his family, he felt his heart give that worried tug. What if something happened while he was away?

He kept walking, focusing on Mickey and what this group had said. He didn’t trust them. He couldn’t. There seemed to be more up with those fellas. He felt a bit guilty since he had to admit he didn’t completely trust Felix, and the cat had been nothing but kind and understanding. The children adored him and his patient manner. Oswald could almost compare him to--

Best **not** think about *that!* He chastised himself. He didn’t have time for a panic attack. He couldn’t fall apart with his brother in trouble. He had to press on to save his family. He **had to.**
Oswald reached the train just as the dawnlight broke over the city. He went in and got his ticket without seeing any familiar faces. There was one good turn about retiring from the spotlight. No one seemed to recognize him. If he had been walking with his brother or the kids, they would have been stopped by the early transmuters for questions and autographs for sure. So was the life of stars. But like this, no one seemed to pay him any mind. It was nice...and a bit weird.

He went to the platform the ticket fella indicated.

“Well, lookie here.” Oswald looked up. It was the taller cup guy with the bubble hair. “Thought you were gonna miss the train.” He glanced behind the tall fella to see the short one was with him. They both had bandages on, but bubble head’s black eye was looking better.

“Where’s everyone else?” Oswald asked.

“At the platform, c’mon,” the guy said and turned. Oswald followed them to the benches. There was the line of familiar faces on the seat among the half-awake office workers heading to their square cubicles. The wolf was looking around. He waved when he spotted them. Felix was next to him, but he was leaning over to the little demon. They both were looking at a book in the kid’s hands with an intensity that made Oswald curious.

On the demon’s other side was the little lady. She was also looking at the book from over the kid’s arms.

“Book nerds.” The cup guy smirked. The demon looked up in annoyance.

“See if you ever learn something useful without reading,” he grumbled. “It’s a miracle you do basic math.”

“I’m a doer not a reader.” The cup guy sat down across from them.

“Mr. Oswald.” Felix stood up and smiled. “We’re glad you made it.” The kid shut the book and put it away.

Oswald nodded. “I’ll be glad when we have my brother.”

“Then, it’ll be a four day trip of grumpiness for you, man,” Cuphead said and leaned back.

Oswald felt his lip twitch. Any other time, he would have felt the need to mess with that guy.

“It’s doesn’t have to be Mr. Oswald,” the wolf kid said from his seat.

“Boris is right.” Felix smiled at Oswald gently. “Mickey is a very capable person. I’m sure we will be able to get him back right as rain.”

Oswald tried his best to smile for the kind cat. “Thanks.”

Felix’ cheeks darkened. “N-no problem...uh, w-why don’t you have a seat?” he stammered and gestured to the benches. Oswald glanced at his options. The wolf kid, the girl, or across from them with the cup guys. He decided to sit with the wolf kid. The pup smiled, and Felix took back his seat on the kid’s other side.

“So, how long we gotta wait?” Oswald asked with crossed arms.

“Not long. Should be here any minute,” Boris said. He was another one that Oswald felt a little bad not completely trusting. The kid was a hard worker, well mannered, and as sharp as a tack. Oswald
knew from the evening the kid had practically been his brother’s shadow. The day that apparently framed his brother to be the demon somehow. If that was what happened.

Oswald stayed mostly quiet as they waited. Any question he was asked was given a short, curt answer. He watched the others instead. It was quick to see the dynamic here. The cup in the coat was antagonistic, but he wouldn’t say much until one of the others stated something that could be seen as negative. Bendy had a short temper and seemed rather tense. He would snap back. It was like watching a tennis match. Felix or the pup were the ones that reined in the other two in most of the time. The girl seemed quiet until someone either asked her a question or teased her. She had a spark of her own.

At first, Boris and the other cup seemed to get along for the ride. But after watching how they acted toward their siblings and Bendy and the cup guy’s reactions, Oswald was able to tell they were ringleaders. They held the collars and leashes to the fiery lions. Boris was open about it, reminding Bendy they were in public twice. Mugman was more subtle. A nudge here, a shared glance there. Cuphead didn’t even seem to notice he’d back off a little after those. Interesting. So, it was like him with Mickey. What was with little brothers being the sensible ones, anyway?

Bendy was the one that Oswald couldn’t quite figure out. All the others he had met similar people in his life, at least personality wise. But the kid? He was distant, but loud. Nervous, but confident. A demon, but a thoughtful guy? There were too many contradictions, and it seemed he was dealing with some things that Oswald didn’t know about. He was also the...sick one...wasn’t he?

The memory was fuzzy. Oswald thought the incident had triggered a panic attack or something. Either way, he did remember ink and screaming. A familiar chill wormed in his bones with the memory. He looked at the kid from the corner of his eye. He was young, small, with a brother. Oswald turned away. No wonder Mickey had been skittish. Getting involved with this kid was a tragedy waiting to happen...but Oswald had to save Mickey. And it wasn’t like this guy had asked for his lot in life. Being a demon was probably hard enough.

The train pulled in, and they all stowed their things in their rooms. He was sharing with Felix. That seemed to really fluster the cat for some reason. Oswald opted for the bottom bunk. He had a hard time sleeping, and normally being surrounded by the kids was enough to get him through the night. But he wouldn’t have that luxury here. Hopefully, being on the bottom bed wouldn’t disturb the cat at the early hours of the morning.

“S-s-so, we’ll be on the train for four days before we get off,” Felix explained as he pulled a few things from his pouch. A toothbrush, toothpaste, brush, and few other personal things.

“They serve three meals here in a dining car. There are also private coaster rooms, so we can all meet and talk without being interrupted,” he said. Oswald nodded along, but otherwise remained quiet. It was just...easier that way. Felix kept up a running commentary anyway, so there was little silence in their room. Eventually, they met up with the others again to eat breakfast.

The demon was leaning over a book again. The cup guy tried to talk to him, but the girl stopped him. It was pretty calm compared to his morning with the kids and the guys. Then again, was anything calm with Donald around? His nephews were a new level of energy that was spreading to his kids like a virus. He had to always worry about five or six of them that liked trouble but now it was twenty. They had even tried to sneak into his bag!

Oswald shook his head and focused again.

“So, what are we doing when we get there?” Cuphead asked.
“We’ll need to get the information at their meeting site. But at some point, we’ll have to turn things around on them,” Felix said.

“Since we didn’t bring the part, we’ll have to.” Boris shrugged. “I just hope we find Mr. Mickey there.”

“We will, and then Mugs and I will get him.” Cuphead smirked. That sounded...dangerous. Oswald lifted a brow.

“We will have to be careful. We can’t let him get hurt.” Felix frowned at Cuphead.

“What’s with the look?” Cuphead frowned. “What? You think I’m reckless ‘r somethin’?”


That led to the predictable argument and teasing. Felix chuckled and glanced at Oswald. “It’s not serious. We’ll do everything we can to get Mickey back safely.”

Oswald glanced at the cat. “So these parts. What are they for?”

“Well.” Felix’ ears fell, and he scratched the back of his head.

“They are for a cure to ink illness.” Oswald looked over to Bendy. The demon gazed back at him steadily. A cure? And just like that, everything clicked into place.

“Mickey helped with these parts when he was gone, didn’t he? He was with you people on that Nightmare Night, wasn’t he?” Oswald suddenly asked.

That seemed to shock everyone.

“What makes you say that?” Cuphead asked with a suspicious glance. Because Mickey was a bleeding heart, and he’d get all wrapped up in this kind of mess.

“It just makes sense,” Oswald said. The cup fella scowled at him. Guess he didn’t like that answer. “No wonder Mickey has been so worried about you people.” Oswald rolled his eyes. Did they really think some magic ho-ha was going to make it go away? Stars above.

“Mr. Mickey was worried?” Boris’ ears perked up.

Oswald frowned. “Yeah, and he is terrible at lying to me.” The rabbit rolled his eyes. “Oh brother, what a mess.”

The wolf’s ears dropped again. “Sorry Mr. Oswald.”

“Hey, it was a mess he seemed to be interested in! He was sticking his nose where it didn’t belong,” again, “and wanted to help,” Oswald said. Mickey and his charity cases! He both loved and hated it. His brother was too good, and yet it always caused trouble like this!

...Not that Oswald didn’t cause trouble.

“He didn’t get involved on purpose though,” the girl commented, looking up from where she was seated next to the demon and his book.

“Oh yes, he did.” Oswald crossed his arms and leaned back in his chair. “He always does.”

Bendy gave the girl a sheepish glance. “Well...maybe a little less this time.”
She returned the sheepish look. “But I guess, if he is used to trouble, hopefully he can keep himself safe until we there,” she said.

Oswald snorted.

“So question.” The cup guy leaned an elbow on the table and pointed a fork at him. “Are you gonna be a stick in the mud the whole trip or just for this bit?”

Oswald scowled.

“Cuphead!” Felix protested.

“What? If I have to spend four days on this train, I want to be prepared for what’s ahead.” Cuphead shrugged.

“Oh sorry! How should I be acting?” Oswald challenged. “Would you be so calm if it was your brother?”

The two cups shared a look, and then Cuphead snorted. He took a mouth full of eggs and then dangled the fork from his fingers loosely. “If it was Mugs, we wouldn’t be on the this train,” he said and swallowed. “He wouldn’t need rescuing. He’d already be on his way back here.” The other brother ducked into his scarf and glanced away.

Oswald frowned. Bendy sighed. “That’s some real humility you got there, Cup,” he stated drily. No kidding.

Cupface shrugged. “I’m only stating the truth.”

Oswald opened his mouth to tell the cup where he could put his humility, but Felix beat him to it. “Anyway, I know emotions are a bit tense right now, but let’s all try and get along? There really isn’t much room on this train for fighting.”

“You’d be surprised,” Mugs muttered. He sounded resigned for some reason.

“So, what other things has Mickey done?” Boris suddenly asked.

“Uh?” Oswald turned to him. The kid’s tail was wagging, and he gave a hesitant smile.

“Well, you said he does things like getting involved. Involved in what?” The kid leaned forward.

A story? He really was a kid. He frowned and was going to push it off, but the kid’s eyes widened unexpectedly huge. What the hell? He didn’t even have to say ‘please’ to imply it. “Fine,” Oswald said reluctantly. Bendy smirked before returning to his book. The mug guy chuckled. What was funny? “So, there was this one time Donald owed his stingy uncle a favor and Mickey--”

That was how a good chunk of the morning was spent. Oswald told story after story about him and Mickey doing crazy thing after crazy thing. The diamond heist they stopped in France, the herd robbing in the Great Plains, the ghosts of the Great Wall in China, the vampire cove in Australia. By the time Oswald freed himself from questions, his throat was dry and hurt. That was more talking he had done in a long time.

He wasn’t sure he liked it. Felix was able to stop Boris and drag him away with the demon for ‘ancient writing work’ or whatever. That left the rabbit with the two cups and the girl.

“So, you and your bro started a circus, and he’s the ringleader. What were you?” Mugman asked.
More questions? He thought he was free. Cuss.

“Used to be a magician. I’m retired now,” Oswald stated flatly. He hoped the guy would get the hint and leave him alone.

“A magician!” Stars burst in his wide round eyes, and his hands went up to his chin in excitement. “Berries! Do you still do tricks?”

“No, that’s what ‘retired’ means.” Oswald frowned, annoyed.

“Awww, that’s too bad.” Mugman dropped his head and frowned. “Can you still show me a trick?” The guy looked up hopefully. Cuphead snorted a chuckle and looked out the window to his other side.

Was this really happening? “No.”

Mugman frowned and huffed. What was he? A kid?

The girl reached out, seemed to hesitate, and then finally patted him on the shoulder consolingly. He smiled at her and shrugged. What was with the weird vibe between these three? There was some tension or something.

“Leave the grump alone Mugs,” Cuphead muttered. “We can play cards instead.”

The other cup sighed but agreed. Cuphead pulled a deck from his pocket and started to shuffle.

“Mind if I play too?” She leaned over and pointed at Cuphead’s deck.

“Sure.” He dealt her in. “What about you, cottontail? You wanna play?”

Oswald flinched at the name. Fanny. She hadn’t crossed his mind in forever. “Don’t call me that,” he muttered. “And fine.”

Cuphead raised a brow but passed him the cards. Oswald looked at it. It was a poor hand, only a pair.

“Okay, magic man. You don’t cheat, right?” Cuphead leaned back and crossed his arms.

Oswald snorted. “Only if I think you deserve it.” He smirked at that. They played a round in silence. The Mug guy won with a straight. The next round wasn’t so nice.

“So, if you and your brother are so used to adventuring, why are you such a grump now?” Cuphead asked. “You should be used to this stuff, right?”

Oswald sighed through his nose. Because this was another chase, and they were supposed to be done with these. Because he lied about it! Because it was stupid! What was the point! She was gone! Because-- “There’s a lot of reasons.” Oswald clenched his fist under the table.

The guy stared at Oswald for a moment before shrugging and continuing with the game. Oswald folded after another turn and headed to his room. He didn’t want to see people anymore. He just needed sleep, some time alone. Yeah.

He went in and rolled onto the bed. Ortensia. Why was Mickey doing this again? Why get involved with these people? Hadn’t they all gone through enough? He was sure the demon kid was as interesting as the wolf kid, but Mick knew better. What the hell had happened in the days Mickey was gone? What had they done? Mickey might be a bleeding heart, but Oswald knew better. They’d
have to work hard to change his mind. And he was determined to not have it changed. He couldn’t go through it again. He couldn’t.

He just.

Couldn’t.

Chapter End Notes

We have more art!!!

This week we have three amazing, talented artists to share. Two of them drew art for the 100th chapter. They were posted on tumblr a little late, so we didn't get them on that chapter, but I think the wait was worth it, because they are so cool!

The first is by Trashboatprince. They drew the questers in their original style with their questing getup. They look so cute!

The next is by Notweirdjustrandom. I love their background. You should look at it carefully. You might find certain chaotic felines hiding in the demon midst. Or angelic
And last of all we have some art by OneRogueFalcon! They saw a quote on incorrect-inkymystery (Which is hilarious. You should look at it.) and decided to make it into a short comic!
hey, how y'all-
GET YOUR CUSSING FAIRY HORSE!!
Also OneRogueFalcon created this cool portrait of Bendy and Boris together.
Hope you enjoyed the chapter and art!! Have a good week. :D
Train Talk

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

“Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls welcome to a new chapter of Inky Mystery!” Mic introduced. “A long train ride to the Far West. Is it the peace before the storm?”

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello!
Man. Longest week of my life! I am exhausted. But at least I had some fun! Now to get back to school come Monday. Oh joy.
I wanna thank everyone for their art and comments. It’s so fun to talk to you all. ^^ I also wanna apologize for taking so long to get back with some of you. It’s been nuts. XD And thank you everyone who has sent in a poem so far! They are amazing it’s going to be hell trying to pick one. XD That’s my problem though. The contest is still open for anyone that wants to send one and hasn’t yet.

Enjoy!

Cuphead tapped his cards on the table. He glanced up to see Mugs giving him a deadpan look.
“What?” Cuphead waved a hand.

“I think you upset Oswald,” Mugs said plainly.

“What? I was just curious. You and Boris asked questions,” Cup said defensively and lowered his cards.

“Yeah, but Mickey lied to him, and they seem to have a bit of a history they aren’t really talking about so…” Mugs waved his hands out expectantly, nearly showing his hand.

“So what? How was I supposed to know his tail was in a twist?” Cup grumbled.

“His wife died. I’m pretty sure that’s why he retired,” tree princess said. She laid a card.
Mugs gave him a pointed look. Cup returned it. “You had to bring up those thoughts.”

“So what? How was I supposed to know his tail was in a twist?” Cup grumbled.

“His wife died. I’m pretty sure that’s why he retired,” tree princess said. She laid a card.

Mugs gave him a pointed look. Cup returned it. “You had to bring up those thoughts.”

“Me! You’re the one that brought up his career!” Cup threw back.

“Neither of you knew. Stop blaming each other.” She continued to examine her cards without looking up.

They both fell quiet even as they eyed each other accusingly. Mugs was the first to look away. Ha! He looked to Holly. “So, what happened? An accident?”
“Probably sickness,” Cup muttered into his cards. No wonder he was so tense when they talked about the cure.

“I think so. She might have been one of the very first cases of Ink Illness.” Holly let out a heavy sigh. A silence fell between the three. Oh cuss. And now he felt like cussing garbage. Fan-cussing-tastic. How was he supposed to know this schmuck’s baggage! It wasn’t his fault the guy didn’t talk much! And he’d barely had any direct conversations with the mouse! And he hadn’t said anything! Cuss!

“Cuphead...I can see your cards,” Holly said apologetically.

“Great.” He sighed and dropped the hand.

“Cup, don’t. Holly said neither of us knew.” Mugs sighed. Oh, and now he was being oh so cussing obvious! “Cup no! Don’t let it get to you,” Mugs almost whined. He wasn’t!

...Okay he was. He took a deep breath. He was just getting tired of constantly screwing up! “I’m fine,” he muttered. Mugs stared at him, unconvinced. “Really. You’re right. I won’t let it get to me. The guy is a schmuck anyway.”

The girl choked and started to cough.

“Cuphead!” Mug leaned over and patted her back gently.

“What! So, he lost his wife! It’s stardust, sure, but everyone here has lost something.” Cup frowned. “And you don’t see us going after each other for it, especially if we don’t know about it.”

“Well no, but you almost killed, Holly!” Mugs said. Her shoulders were shaking suspiciously. “And you hold people to grudges they don’t know about.”

“And I get over it!” Cup snapped. “Don’t compare me to that moping pretty boy.” Cup turned to look out the window at the passing fields. “I enjoy our adventures.”

“Oh yeah, that’s why you complain half the time.” Mugs rolled his eyes.

“Everyone does.” Cup smirked.

“I’m curious. Have your conversations always resembled a tennis match?” Holly asked after she stopped coughing.

“Only when he wants to argue.” Cuphead leaned back in his seat.

She gave Mugman a sympathetic look. The deadpan look of miserable acceptance was hint enough on how those arguments went. Mugs would lose and pout for an hour and then they’d move on. No need for pity. It was dumb to argue with him.

“Anyway, we really should be figuring how we are going to save that mouse.” Cup went to change subject. “They’ll be after you.” He pointed at Holly. “So, they’ll be watching you carefully from the moment they spot us.”

She nodded in agreement. “So, I’ll be bait. The question is if they know what I look like and how they’ll try and do the exchange.”

“Well, we’ll have to assume they will,” Cup stated. “But we also have a wrench in the plan too.” He smirked. “Though, if we play our cards right, he could be the ace we need.”

She frowned. “Who?”
“Bendy,” Cup purred. “If they still think they have him, then they won’t expect him to be there on our side.”

She clicked her tongue.

“So, you think he’ll be able to sneak up on them?” Mugs asked with that excited gleam in his eyes.

Cup nodded. “If Bendy can nab Mick before we switch Holly, then we will be golden and out of there before those mooks know what happened.”

“What if they challenge us about the cog?” Holly pointed out, frowning. “I suppose we could use a fake cog.”

She could do that? “If you can, I’d say go for it.”

“But what about whatever they did to that wall? They have to have something up their sleeve,” Mugs reminded him. Cup frowned thoughtfully. That was true. They were idiots but not helpless. They had something with them. A power, an item, something that did that to a wall.

“That...could be a problem,” Cup admitted.

Holly hummed, pulling out a watch and tracing the design with her fingers. “What if we forced them to use it? Set up the exchange in a place where they would need to break down a few walls?”

“It’ll be hard to negotiate. We don’t know the environment we are going to and they need to think they are in control. If they get skittish who knows what could happen.” Mugs said.

“Idiots do cussing dumb moonrocks when they’re scared.” Cup nodded along with him.

Holly nodded. “We’re going to the Far West, though. It has lots of deserts, lots of canyons. Plenty of places with obstacles.”

“Unless they pick the open desert. We won’t have any cover then,” Mugs pointed out.

Holly sighed and nodded. “And they also could have noticed that Mickey isn’t Bendy by now. All of it is up in the air.”

“If they figured that out then, we are in real trouble,” Cup muttered grimly. Felix came back then. He just finished wiping his hands on a stained handkerchief. The cat looked down. “What’s up?”

Felix sighed and plopped into the chair next to Holly. “Bendy had an attack, so lessons are done for the day. He’s resting in their room with Boris watching over him.”

Well cuss.

“Is he okay?” Mugs asked with wide eyes.

Felix rubbed his temple. “As okay as someone with ink illness can be. The pills and rune helped, but they aren’t a cure.”

“How bad was it this time?” Holly asked with a sad expression.

The cat sighed. “I’m worried. I haven’t seen a lot of attacks though. Bendy,” Felix grit his teeth, “doesn’t like an audience. But Boris assured me that it’s still not as bad as some of them have been.” Strong pup. He always was. Cup wondered how much of it was an act for the demon.
“Boris.” Mugs’ brows furrowed. “Does he need help with anything?”

Felix shook his head sadly. “There isn’t much to do now.” Well, that was depressing. “We have to get those parts.”

“But that map hasn’t show them anything for weeks now!” Mugs grumbled.

“We’re all frustrated by that thing,” Cup said and looked out the window again. Was it busted? Did the cog mess with it? Snowball meeped from Holly’s shoulder. She glanced at the animal in confusion.

“Hey Puff. What are you doing?” Cup greeted the small animal. Snowball gave that starry eyed little grin. She hopped to the window and meeped again. “What? You saying you can find them or something?” Cup chuckled. As soon as the words left his mouth the thought really struck him. He looked around the table.

Holly raised her brow, looking at him. “You think?”

“She reacts to them, doesn’t she?” Cuphead asked.

“But that’s in near proximity,” Felix pointed out. “Still, there’s something.” Snowball meeped again, this time sounding exasperated.

“Sorry Puff. I don’t speak meep,” Cup said with a smile. He rubbed a finger on her head. The little critter gave a sigh that indicated her great patience.

A thump-thump-thump indicated that someone was running toward them. Cup turned and readied for a fight. Boris appeared and nearly crashed into the table. Mugs was able to catch him and save him from banging his chin on the table top.

“It showed up!” Boris barked.

“What?” Mugs asked.

“What?” Felix asked.

“Is everything okay?” Felix asked.

Boris slammed an old paper on the table. His tail going a mile a minute. “The next part! The next part showed up! Right there!” He pointed like the rest of them could see.

“Well, speak of the devil,” Felix muttered. They leaned in.

“The best part is that we’re heading toward it right now! It must be in the Far West!” Boris traced the blank paper with his finger. He hadn’t been this excited since his evening with the mouse.

“But what about Mickey?” Mugs asked. And like that, the excitement broke.

“Oh yeah,” Boris muttered.

“Where in the Far West is it?” Holly asked.

Boris stared at it. “It’s Northwest of that town we’re going to.”

Her lips pressed together tightly. “How very convenient...” she muttered. Her eyes flicked up as they widened. She looked at Cup. “The mysterious hole...What if it was made by a part?”

“What!” everyone at the table exclaimed.
She continued on as if they hadn’t said anything. Her eyes getting excited. “And if... if it is, then that would mean we have a way to track where they are.”

“Holy cow! That’s amazing!” Boris’ tail was back to wagging a hundred miles an hour.

“That’s a big ‘if’ though.” Cup frowned.

She smirked at him. “That’s the thing. We have a big enough group that I could play bait while the others look into its location. Or maybe it’ll even just move to where we’re supposed to meet them, and we’ll know for sure.”

“This could work.” Felix smiled, stars in his eyes. “If the part is with them, we know where Mickey is right now.”

“If they have the part that means they are probably using it,” Mugs said.

“And we have no clue what it can do,” Cup added. “Except make walls disappear.”

“Well...it can’t be as bad as the cog, and the doll wasn’t...that...bad.” Boris winced.

“Yeah, no. It was bad,” Cup disagreed.

“Well yeah, for you. You were a teacup for most of it,” Boris pointed out. Cup glared at him, but didn’t argue with the pup. He and Bendy had helped save his sorry hide after all.

“Anyway, we should prepare. Every time we’ve dealt with these things, we’ve gotten away with nerve and sheer dumb luck. That ain’t gonna hold for long,” Cup said trying to get things moving again.

Felix nodded grimly. “It’s true. We’ve been lucky so far.”

Holly looked at Felix. “Do you think you would be able to use the same runes Alice put on the cog and doll?”

“Well, everything but the angel runes,” Felix said. “There will still be holes until we get back to Toon Town.”

“Great,” Mugs said flatly. Cup couldn’t agree more.

“If only we’d realized sooner,” Holly murmured, looking down. “Alice could have come.”

Cup took a deep breath. He wasn’t so sure about that. If the angel had come, that would bring more attention. That was the last thing Bendy needed. Cup was already surprised there weren’t a dozen angels at Oddswell’s asking about him. “Well, no point in crying over spilt milk.”

Mugs snorted. “We did alright with the cog on the way back.”

“The doll was less successful on the trip back.” Boris’ ears dropped. Cup looked over at him. The wolf shrugged. “It just wasn’t fun for my bro.”

“Well, the runes I do have will have to be enough then,” Felix stated.

“Swell, what else?” Cup asked. Mugman and Boris shared a look. Felix frowned and looked away thoughtfully.

“What if they try to make a move before the exchange?” Holly asked.
“We blast them,” Cup stated. He wouldn’t put it past the idiots to try something like that. “As long as we get the mouse and the part, we’re good.”

“Oh, you make it sound so simple brother,” Mugs stated flatly.

“Well, that’s about as much information as we have right now so...” Cup sighed and leaned back. “Now we just hang out and have down time.” He laced his fingers behind his head. Holly pulled Felix aside, bringing up her idea to create a fake cog. The others tried to come up with other ideas, but eventually Cup was right. Nice, calm, boring, nothing. For a blissful hour. And then Bendy walked in. Cup didn’t think that would change anything. Boy, he was getting tired of being wrong.

Bendy sat down at their table and got a drink. He had a book and notebook under his arm, but he just left them on the table top. It was the demon script one. Cup considered flipping through it sometime. See if he could find anything useful. It was with these idle thoughts that Holly decided to speak.

Her face was in that squashed expression she got when she was thinking about Nightmare Night. She had been talking to Felix at another table. But when Bendy sat down, she moved over to theirs. She sat down and glanced at Bendy and then him. “So, I have a confession to make.”

“I’m sorry. I can’t.” Cuphead smirked. “You just aren’t my type, tree princess.” Bendy snorted into his drink and coughed. Cup laughed.

Holly’s brows lowered. She gave him a glare, sticking out her tongue while pulling down one eyelid. She was like an angry little sister...or a small dog. “That’s a good thing, because I’d never date a guy who probably takes longer doing his hair than I do,” she responded sweetly.

“A couple brushes and I’m good. You wish your hair was as easy as mine.” Cuphead chuckled warmly.

Bendy cleared his throat. “You two are ridiculous. You’d kill each other before dating.” Cup shrugged, smirk still in place. “But hey, if there’s ever a wedding—“

Holly scoffed.

“So, what is your confession, princess, if not your undying affection for me?” Cuphead asked. Bendy rolled his eyes.

Her smile dropped, and she sighed. “So. Apparently while I was under the influence of the cog, I continued to keep my journal.” She pulled it out and placed it on the table. The smiles fell. Bendy and Cup shared a look. Yeah, fun time was over. Damnit. “I was reading through it a few days ago, and I realized something.” She paused a tick. That couldn’t be good. “According to what I have written here, while you both were unconscious after your encounter with Hat’s curse, I stole some blood from the both of you.”

“What!” Bendy jumped. Cup grit his teeth. What the hell?

“Why?” Cuphead demanded.

Holly pressed her lips together, expressionless. “To experiment. I took the samples and did research on what the White Egret does to demon blood, what happens when I introduced ink from an ink attack into your blood versus someone normal, like mine. From what I understood of my mindset then, I was simply searching for information. I had a kind of obsession with gathering information...” She trailed off. Cuphead swore his stomach landed somewhere in his feet. She sighed. “I’m not simply telling you this because it happened. But from that research I discovered some things...about both your blood work.” Oh hell.
“What?” Bendy looked at her curiously. Cup felt a shiver go up his spine. No! He didn’t want to be a cussing experiment! Not again!

Holly turned to look at Bendy. “Your blood seems to have some sort of resistance to Ink Illness. I compared the deterioration of my blood versus yours after introducing the ink. Yours had unique cells that would nullify the ink for a time.”

“Wow.” Bendy’s eyes widened. “Really?” Cup looked between him and Holly. Was he really okay with that?

Holly looked at Cuphead. “But then I ran into something strange when I looked at your blood.” The chill returned instantly. He hummed.

She must have noticed something in his expression, because then she leaned back. “But if it makes you uncomfortable, Cuphead, I can just leave it alone,” she said quietly. Yes please.

“But it sounds like you found something useful!” Bendy argued. “C’mon Cup! Tell her it’s okay!”

Starfallen cussing moonrocks! Cuphead gazed at the stubborn set in Bendy’s brow and knew the demon would pester him until he gave. Cussing pipsqueak. “Just spill the beans, H.” Cuphead flicked his hands for her to continue in resignation.

“You have that same special cell.” Holly frowned. “I’m not entirely sure, because I didn’t have bloodwork from anyone else like you to compare it to, but I don’t think that’s normal for you. It makes it look like you have demon blood in you.”

Cup felt his heart stop. Bendy turned to him with wide eyes. “What?” Oh stars above!

“I-I-I,” he stammered and shook his head. Holy hell. When did—how did—he—wait! Cussing Black Hat! So that’s what they’d cussin’ done to him. It had to be that. He chuckled. “Damn,” he breathed and brushed a shaking hand through his hair. He looked down at his hand and clenched it into a fist. “I’m gonna kill Hat.” Holly’s frown deepened.


“He cussing screwed me over!” Cup snapped. Demon blood! It had to be Hat! That was the only thing that made sense...unless it was the boss? Something he had done when they were kids? The contracts? Did Mugs have it too!

“Cup?” Mugs came to their table. “What’s going on?”

Cup smiled bitterly. “Guess what I just cussing learned, bro!” Mugs’ face fell in concerned confusion. “I just found out I have demon blood.” Mugs’ eyes widened. He sunk into the seat next to him.

“C-Cup.” Mugs sounded scared. Damnit.

Cup sighed. “Sorry.” He waved at Holly. “Continue.”

She gave Mugman a sad look. “I can’t say for sure, because I don’t have a comparison. But I’ve looked at Bendy’s blood and Cuphead’s. And they share a cell that I haven’t seen in the blood of another toon.”

Mugs’ eyes widened further. “De…” He looked to Cuphead. “Oh Cuppy.” He looked back to Holly. “If you looked at my blood, could you be sure?” he asked tensely.
She nodded slowly. “But...I’d have to take another sample from Cuphead and Bendy...because I have no memory of where the samples mentioned in my journal are.” She glanced down. It looked as if there was something more she wanted to say.

“And,” Cup egged her on. He didn’t like this. Oh by the seven levels of hell, how he didn’t like this.

“There’s more. This may be common knowledge for you, but you also had two cells with healing abilities that far surpass anything I’ve heard of. I doubt anyone could poison you.” Yeah, he knew that from experience!

Cup gulped. Mugs scooted forward. “Well, what are we waiting for? Take the samples! Check!” Oh stars, they were doing this?

Holly blinked. “Well, I’d need a microscope to do that. Unfortunately, I don’t have one here. So, I can take the samples, but I couldn’t tell you anything until we get back to Oddswell’s.”

Bendy puckered his lips. “Wait here.” He got up and walked to the other side of the car to Felix.

“Think he brought one?” Mugs muttered. If he did, he was a nerd. Bendy smiled and talked to Felix for a moment.

Holly stared at Bendy and Felix. “What is he doing?” she asked Mugman.

“What?” Mugs asked. Felix got up and came to the table. He reached into his pouch and pulled out a microscope.

“That,” Holly said deadpan. “I did not see that coming. How is it that he fit an entire microscope in there?” She put a hand to her chin. A smile spread slowly. “He carries a microscope with him. That’s amazing.”

“What’s this about cells?” Felix asked.

“Holly might have found something, but we have to check first.” Bendy smiled and sat back down. Stars. He didn’t want to do this.

Holly flipped open her journal. There was a sketch of several cells taking up one page. Labeled blotches. “These cells.” She told Felix. “Have you ever seen them before?” She pointed at all three. “These were all in Cuphead’s blood.” She pointed at one. It was a black circle with a white circle in its center. “This seemed unique to Bendy’s blood, so I thought it was something only demons had until I saw Cuphead’s sample.”

“So, it might not be demon blood?” Mugs asked quietly.

“That’s why I need a sample of your blood to be sure. If you have it, we can assume it’s normal. If not...” She gestured to Bendy. “For some reason he shares blood cells with Bendy. That he has demon blood is only one potentiality.” Or that it was the boss’ doing and not Hat’s.

Cup glanced at Bendy and Bendy to him. Cuss. He was acting like demon blood was ink illness. “Look man, it’s not that I think you’re bad or that being a demon is--”

“It’s the cussing worst. Don’t worry about it.” Bendy waved a hand dismissively. Wow. Okay then.

Holly glanced at Felix. “...Do you have needles in that odd bag of yours?”

Felix raised a brow. Her expression turned embarrassed. “Don’t look at me like that. I wasn’t
planning on doing any impromptu tests on this train,” she said weakly. He reached in and pulled out a case. He passed it to Holly. She opened it. Needles and empty vials were lined in the case sides.

She sighed and picked up one. Glancing at them, she asked, “Who’s first?”

“I think it’s weird that you just so happen to have one,” Mugs muttered and held out his arm, crease of his elbow up. Cup frowned and tried not to think about every cursing time Flug had done this to them as kids.

“After a friend was poisoned out in the amazon jungle, I found this kit very useful,” Felix defended.

In the end, Holly went looking for soap and a rag. She cleaned the area on Mugs’ arm, used a headband to wind around his arm and took the sample. Then, she moved onto Bendy, who continued to watch curiously. Finally, she turned to Cuphead. He stiffened.

“Isn’t the drawing and notes enough?” he grumbled.


“Shut it, pipsqueak!” Cup barked. Bendy’s smile fell into a frown.

“Who are you calling a pint-sized li—“

“I don’t know if those drawings are accurate. I was not in a stable state of mind when I drew them,” Holly said cutting Bendy off neatly. Of course she wasn’t! Cussing--

“Fine,” Cup grit out and pulled up his sleeve. He really cursing hoped that Holly didn’t notice the needle scars.

“Don’t worry, Cuppy! This is great!” Mugs smiled warmly. Oh yeah, easy for him to cursing say! Moon and stars!

Her eyes narrowed as she wiped his arm off and tied the stretchy band around his forearm. The needle went in fast. She was really good. Cup hardly felt a thing. Once she was done, she pressed a little bandage against it, grabbed his other hand, and had him hold it down while she taped it on.

Yep. Like old times. “Swell. So, how long is this gonna take?” Cup grumbled and pulled his sleeve down.

Holly hummed but didn’t answer, taking three slides and putting a drop of each of their blood on it. She slid Bendy’s under the microscope. Glancing at it and then looking at her journal, she added a few lines. Then she grabbed his sample. She studied it for a moment and then set it aside. Finally, she moved Mugs’ sample up.

She took a long moment studying the sample and then moved back to Cups’. She sighed and leaned back. Turning to him and his brother, she frowned. “He doesn’t have the black cells.”

So that’s it! He had cursing demon blood! Cuss! And it was Hat’s fault.

“But what does that mean exactly?” Felix leaned toward the microscope. “I hope you don’t mind,” he said to Holly.

She got up and waved him down. “Take a look.” The cat did. He switched between slides.

“Interesting,” he said. He looked at her notes. “So, what do these black cells do?”
She nodded. “My journal says I mixed ink from an attack and the cells absorbed it.”

“Really,” Felix said excitedly. “What about the others?”

“Destroyed.” She sighed.

“That could be huge!” Bendy said. Oh yeah. Huge.

“It could be. But it’s only a theory, remember. I wanted to tell you first before I asked Oddswell to look into it further.”

“Well yeah! Of course!” Bendy agreed easily.

“Woah, woah, wait a second!” Cuphead rested his arms on the table, hands up like he was trying to stop something. “You’re talkin’ about the junk in Bendy’s and my blood? What would you do with it?”

“Well, if it can help with the ink illness, I would imagine that Professor Oddswell would take samples and want to work out something similar to a vaccine. If it slows the illness down, I would approve,” Felix said with a shrug. Cup felt alarms go off in his head.

“No! Hell no!” He shook his head. Bendy frowned. Felix looked surprised.

Holly gave him a contemplative look. “You don’t have to worry about being stuck in a lab, Cup. I think what Oddswell needs is just to look at these samples.” She reached out and put a hand on his shoulder.

Cup jerked back like she shocked him. How the cuss-- “Sunblaze you!” he snapped without thinking. “That’s not what this is about, damnit!” Mugs also looked at Holly like she had slapped him.

She stared at him, hand still in the air, a hurt expression on her face.


“Cup, calm down. They don’t understand,” Mugs said, grabbing his arm. Cup growled but listened.

Mugs watched him for a beat before leaning forward. “When we were kids, Cup...something happened, and he was different.” Mugs glanced at him. Cup didn’t say anything. What the hell was he supposed to say? “Cup had something put in his head. It...nearly killed him,” Mugs said haltingly. “He was gone for three days, and when he came back, uh...”

Cup sighed. “I suffer from rage induced blackouts. Have ever since.”

“His eyes turn red and he can get really violent,” Mugs mumbled.

“But Mugsy is usually able to stop me.” Cup clapped a hand on his shoulder. “Anyway, I never found out what the hell Hat and Flug put in me.”

“Wait, I thought nothing could get in your head without you letting it,” Bendy asked quietly.

“Remember the griffin feathers Bendy,” Felix answered without looking away from Cup. “There’s obviously a way around it.” He and Mugs grimaced, but neither argued. “So, now you theorize that
“If it’s the same as Bendy’s? Probably,” Cup muttered. “I mean I don’t have ink illness, so what else could it be?” The table went quiet. All of them seemed lost in their own thoughts.

Demon’s blood! That was what it was, wasn’t it? Stars above! That’s what had the boss flip back then. Mugs’ eyed him pityingly.

Standing, Holly sighed. “I’m afraid I don’t quite have the energy to process all of this at the moment, so I think I’ll be retiring for the night.” She gave a weak smile.

“Wait,” Cup said and glanced up at her. She paused. He couldn’t believe he was actually doing this, but... “Sorry for snapping at you, H. You’re just trying to help.” He sighed. “And thanks for looking.” The little princess didn’t need anymore pressure after the hell she had faced.

Surprise crossed her face. Then she gave a true smile. “You’re welcome. I can’t imagine how...difficult what happened must have been. But I’m glad you’re here with us now.”

He hummed, a little weight leaving him. Her, of all people, was glad. Wow. He never thought he’d see the day. “I’m sorry, I don’t think I heard that last part.” He smirked and lifted a hand to the side of his head. “Could you say that again?”

She laughed, throwing her head back. “Well, that’s too bad. You’ll have to get Bendy or Mugs to repeat it for you, because I’m not saying it again.”

“Darn.” He chuckled. Mugs smiled. Bendy raised a brow and looked between them.

Holly shook her head, still smiling. “Have a good night.”

“Night,” everyone at the table responded.

“Is there something going on between you two?” Bendy asked the moment she was gone. Cup snorted and nearly choked.

“What! No!” Cup snapped.

Bendy raised both his brows speculatively. “Oh really?”

“Yes really! What the cuss! Me and the tree princess? Hell no!” Cuphead shook his head quickly.

Bendy’s lip quirked into a cheeky half smirk that Cup really didn’t cussing like. “Oh? So, she isn’t the girl you were thinking about in the cave all that time ago? Uh?”

Cup felt his face heat. He was talking about Fanny! Aaaaah! No! No! Don’t think back on the last time he saw her! Stars!

“Ah! Look at that face! You so do like her!” Bendy pointed and laugh.

“Bendy.” Felix sighed.

“Bud, I’m so sorry I took your crush out on a date. I promise, there is nothing but friendship between us. She is all yours,” Bendy winked. Cup was going to strangle him.

Cup groaned. “You cussing moron that’s not—”

“Unless you don’t know how to approach her!” Bendy said. “Need pointers? Date spots?”
Mugs was dying on his other side.

“T’m gonna kill you both.” Cup thumped his head on the table. “Cussing morons.”

“There’s nothing to be shy about, Cup.” Felix said and gave Bendy a pointed look. The demon gave him a sheepish look. “If you do like her, that’s fine. If you don’t want to talk about it, don’t. We’ll support you only as much as you want.” Mugs slipped off his seat and was now laughing on the floor.

Stars, could hell take him now? “I will only say this once.” He lifted a finger. “I.” He lifted his head to glare daggers at everyone still at the table. “Don’t. Like. Holly!”

“Suuuuure,” Bendy purred. Oh. This guy wasn’t going to drop it.

Mugs finally got cussing control of himself. “N-n-no!” he gasped. “It’s not--It’s not her, Be-Bendy! Som-someone else!”

Bendy frowned. “Really?”

Mugs pulled himself back on his seat and wiped at his eyes. “Stars! I needed that!” He looked up to Bendy. “Yeah, it ain’t her.”

“But there is someone?” Bendy asked pointedly. Cup growled. He was ignored.

“Yes, there is someone.” Mugs nodded.

“Who?”

“No Mugs!” Cup snapped.

“Calm!” Mugs lifted his hands. “I ain’t gonna say.” Good. Cup would have to consider fratricide if he did.

“Have I met her?” Bendy smirked.

“Yep!” Mugs grinned.

“Mugman!”

Mugs poofed away and was gone. Cussing little weasel! Bendy was now laughing. “So, I can guess who it is.”

Cup turned burning eyes on the hellspawn. “I swear you little sunbl--”

“Okay! I think that’s enough of that for one fine evening! Shall we all call it a night?” Felix cut him off cleanly.

There was a dangerous spark in Bendy’s eyes. “But I need to--”

“Good night!” Cup stood up and rushed to his room.

He could hear Bendy trying to call him back around his peels of laughter. Oh Mugman. He was definitely going to kill his little brother. He just needed to find a good place to hide the body. Because now that little pipsqueak wouldn’t give up until he found out! And once he did, Cup would never hear the end of it!
Boris wagged his tail as he walked to breakfast. Wow. Black cells? Cup having a crush? That’s what he got for going to bed early. He missed all the good stuff. Good thing Bendy never kept secrets from him.

He arrived to find Mugman, Cuphead, and Felix already at the table. Cup looked tired and miserable. Mugs and Felix were awake though. Felix was looking over the newspaper, and Mugs was eating a muffin.

“Morning everyone,” Boris greeted the table.

“Morning,” he got from two of the three.

“Cuphead, are you okay? Did you not sleep well?” Boris asked innocently. Mugs smirked. Cup elbowed him without looking.

“It was a long night.” He glared at Mugs. “And you are lucky to still be breathing.”

“Love you too, bro,” Mugs said and drank a glass of orange juice.

Boris smiled. “Goodness. Did you two have another fight?”

Mugs smile turned into a smirk. Cup pointed at him. “I am warning you.”

“Sorry Boris. My life is now on the line. I can not say.” Mugs zipped his lips. Boris shrugged, unbothered he didn’t get to see Cup’s reactions for himself. This wouldn’t go away after all. Not with Bendy around. Poor Cuphead.

“Is Bendy awake yet?” Felix asked from over his paper.

“Not yet. He’s not a morning person,” Boris said reaching for a bagel and some bacon. Yum! Bacon! He better get some before the demon vacuum came and took it all away.

“Neither am I, and I’m still sitting here,” Cup muttered into what must be morning coffee.

“Holly?” Everyone shrugged. “Mr. Oswald?”

Felix grimaced. “He’ll be with us in a bit.”

Boris nodded. He didn’t really know what to think about the rabbit. He was distant, but not cold. Angry but not hateful. He was kinda like Bendy on a bad day really. Moody. But Boris couldn’t blame him. His little brother was missing! Anyone would be grumpy.

As if his thoughts summoned him, Mr. Oswald sat down next to him and reached for a mug. His hair was messy, but his clothes were fresh at least. “Morning,” Boris greeted him. The rabbit poured a cup of joe and nodded at Boris.

About fifteen minutes later, Holly showed up, tired-looking, but reading a book. It was one of Felix.’

“Morning!” Boris said.

She looked up and gave him a warm smile. “Morning!”

Boris wagged his tail. It was a nice morning. The sun was out. The air was crisp. Everyone was calm...
and peaceful. Bendy finally dragged himself in. He plopped down on Boris’ other side and yawned. Boris pushed a plate of his brother’s favorites in front of him. “Morning bro.”

“Morn’,” he muttered, still half asleep, but put together. Cup had tensed, but after a moment of Bendy not saying anything, he relaxed. Breakfast stayed that peaceful until the last plate was finished and taken away.

Then, Felix leaned forward and put down the paper. “So, I know we talked about the black cells.” Again, Cuphead tensed. “And Oddswell will have to look at all of this before anything can really be explained, but I noticed the two other cells you had in your notebook, Holly. The ones from the cup brothers.” Felix glanced at them. “Some kind of magic immune system?”

Holly nodded, putting down her book. “From what is written in the journal, those two cells work together to isolate foreign elements that could be harmful to your system. Which is why it confuses me how the other foreign cells managed to stay there without getting attacked.”

“There must be something,” Felix murmured. He frowned. “But you did say that you nearly died from...well, what happened. So my theory is that your body did attack the foreign cells at first.” He sighed. “But why did your body start to produce them? And how did the attack from your immune system stop?”

The cup brothers shared a look. So they knew something, but weren’t sharing? Cup ran a hand through his hair. “I got up, but I can’t tell you what they did. I don’t remember anything but feeling sick, miserable, and hot.”


Cup and Mugs didn’t seem to think so. “Well, we won’t know more until the doc looks so, might as well drop it,” Cup said cheerfully. Felix and Holly didn’t look impressed. Oswald seemed to have checked out.

“Okay, then. We can move on to other things,” Bendy said. “So, is it Red?”

“Nevermind, so what are the differences in the cells?” Cup leaned toward Holly and Felix.

Holly gave him a confused expression. She looked at Bendy. “Is Red what?”

“He’s trying to guess Cup’s crush,” Mugs mouthed. Cup elbowed him. Felix sighed, but there was a smile on his face. Boris gave Cup a pitying look.

She blinked for a second. Then a smile spread across her face. “You have a crush?” she laughed.

“That’s it! I’m jumping off this train!” Cup went to stand, but Mugs and Bendy pulled him back down.

“Oh?” Oswald muttered and rested his chin on his hands, face bored. But there was a spark in his eyes that Boris hadn’t seen before unless he was teasing Donald. “Does she know?”

Cup’s face darkened. “Stars no! And it’s gonna cussing stay that way!”

“So, you do have a crush then?” Boris asked just to be sure.

“AAAAGHGHHH!” Cup shouted and tried to stand again. Bendy didn’t allow it. Demon strength. Cup was trapped unless he pulled the finger gun.
“Cuphead, please don’t shout. There are others on this train and it’s early,” Felix said plainly.

“It can’t be Betty. She has a fella.” Bendy grinned. “Who else is there?” He gasped. “Snow White!”

“No! Let me go you evil tick!” Cup pulled, but there was no use.

Holly put her head on her hand. “Who else is there? Red, Betty, Snow, Alice—”

“Oh stars no!” Mugs shook his head quickly.

“One more word Mugs,” Cup coldly warned. Did something change in his eyes for a second there? Mugs zipped his lips.

“Dovil, Fa…” Holly trailed off as she stared at Cup’s eyes. Cup turned to her with a glare.

“Dovil? Isn’t she that nurse, the curvy bird woman?” Bendy asked. Boris puckered his lips. He remembered her a little bit. “Maybe, but I think she’s dating someone. Or she was,” the demon commented.

“She is,” Holly responded, blinking several times.

“You know?” Mugs asked curiously.

She tilted her head at them. “We had a girl’s night out a couple days ago. Everyone plus Betty, Fanny, and Dovil were there.”

Boris noticed Cup stiffen and, oddly enough, Mr. Oswald too. Bendy snorted. “It couldn’t be the Fanny woman. Besides being beautiful and terrifying, she’s married.” Boris looked between the rabbit and the cupman. Fanny? What did she have to do with Oswald? Sure, she was probably the person Cup liked if that small stiffening was any sign...or she terrified him. But the rabbit? Maybe they were related? They were both rabbits, but Boris couldn’t be sure.

Not that Boris really cared. Couples were gross.

“There’s also Minnie and Daisy,” Bendy said.

“Nah.” Oswald suddenly spoke up. “Minnie is holding out a candle for someone, and Daisy has a boyfriend.” He smirked.

Bendy frowned a look of confusion crossed his face. “That only leaves Cala.”

Both Cup and Mugs eyes widened. “Stars! Are you insane?” Cup barked.

That most of them are tied up? You know Betty and Cala. So then…” He trailed off and looked at Cup. Cup stared back warily. Should Boris say anything? He wasn’t sure. “Cup. Do you want to say anything?”

He reminded Boris of a cornered animal. Mugs rolled his eyes. “Is it really that big of a deal, Cuppy?”

Cup glared at him. Apparently it was. Mugs sighed and shrugged.

“What if I don’t give ya a hard time about it?” Bendy offered. Oh yeah right, bro. Like anyone would believe that.

Cup scoffed. “It’s none of your business.”

“Oh c’mon. We’re all friends here.” Bendy leaned on the table. “And Oswald.”

The rabbit’s ears perked. He chuckled in surprise. “Nice.”

“What? This is an adventuring club here, pal, and your talk big, but I haven’t seen anything yet.” Bendy smirked at the rabbit.

Oswald raised a brow. “Oh really?” He glanced at Felix. “Then hopefully Felix will get me chance to prove myself soon.” Felix looked up from his paper, eyes wide.

“Oh? M-me?” He blinked.

“You’re the most famous adventurer here, after all.” Oswald pointed to the book Holly had. “So, you’re the one that hands out the adventure cards.” He shrugged. “Makes sense to me.”

Felix ducked behind his newspaper. Oswald chuckled. Bendy looked back at Cup, still demandingly. Cup sighed, he leaned on the table.

“It doesn’t matter. Nothing’s gonna come of it,” Cup muttered.

Bendy’s face fell. “Bu--”

“Besides, you have a much better chance with that angel.” Cup glanced at Bendy.

Bendy’s brow flew up to his goggles. “Nope,” he denied instantly. Which was weird for Bendy, except Boris knew why his brother was backing off. Alice was dealing with a lot, and Bendy didn’t want it to be more difficult for the angel. That was why Bendy was fine with being her friend...though Boris was sure that his brother was harboring a huge crush for her.

“Oh please!” Cup snorted and laughed. “You like her.” A lot. He’s brother was insufferable with his flirting, but he was also annoyingly pushy, not disrespectful. He just didn’t get the hint sometimes.

“Don’t know what you are talking about,” Bendy denied. And he wasn’t being pushy with Alice. He was considerate to her feelings.

“Then, I can tell her that.” Cup shrugged.

Bendy growled. Cup smirked. Revenge, Boris guessed. He didn’t get it. Why would Cup saying anything matter? It was obvious.

“Everyone knows, Bendy,” Mugs stated flatly. Thank you.
Bendy dropped his head on the table. “Everyone?” his muffled voice asked in defeat.

“Well...everyone but her and Cala.” Mugs corrected. “And Oddswell. He probably doesn’t know.” Bendy groaned.

“Problem?” Oswald asked.

The table went quiet. Oh yeah. He didn’t know Alice was an angel.

“What?” Oswald looked around.

“The situation is...delicate,” Felix told him. The rabbit frowned.

“Why?”

“‘Cause he’s a demon.” Cup pointed to Bendy.

“Cup!” Bendy lifted his head and glared at the cupman.

Oswald frowned. “If she has a problem with your species, then she might not be the one for you pal.” He actually looked sorry for Boris’ brother. “It’s rough.”

Bendy frowned. “It...It’s not her fault. Her family and such…”

Oswald nodded. “I can understand that! My in-laws hated me.”

“Really?” Felix asked.

Oswald nodded. “They didn’t like that I had only a tent and dangerous adventures to offer their daughter at that time.”

“So, what happened?” Bendy asked.

Oswald’s ears fell. “Well, we didn’t talk to them for a few years. It was her choice. I couldn’t force her one way or the other, even if I wanted to.” He cleared his throat. “But things got bette. Especially when the kids showed up.”

“So she picked you,” Bendy muttered at the table.

Oswald stared out the window. “Yeah.”

This was a weird mood. Boris didn’t like it, and he didn’t get it. It was quiet for a breath. “So, I was confused on that binding rune you showed us the other day, Felix,” Boris suddenly said hoping the subject change worked. It did. Felix, Bendy, and Holly all perked at his questions. Thankfully, everything seemed to relax after that, if not be a little more depressing. Another reason to never like someone. It made people moody.

Mugs noticed it too and pulled out the playing cards. Boris perked up. Cards was a great distraction. The cup brothers, Bendy and Oswald joined it.

The games were fun. Mugs had a few really good hands. Cup’s luck was terrible. Boris made sure he won a couple rounds so he and Bendy had some cash, but not too many to make them suspicious. He thought it was funny that no one had gotten it yet. Heh. Bendy gave him a wink.

They stopped for dinner, and then Felix took them away for their studies. Boris groaned silently to himself. He had started this thinking they’d better get to know the symbols the parts used. But it
became really complicated really fast. Felix said they were doing good, but Boris wasn’t sure himself. He was struggling with adverb things and connecting words. Something would make perfect sense. Then Felix would toss in a new symbol and it would change everything.

At one point, Holly joined them looking at the symbols, but when she couldn’t remember the meaning of several familiar runes, she seemed to get frustrated and left a little while after. She really had a hard time with her memories not working right. Boris thought he might understand. If he suddenly couldn’t play instruments, he’d get frustrated too. After the studying, Boris and the rest had dinner. Bendy went off to do his demon studies, some sort of paper on levels of hell or something. Boris stuck around Mugman and Cuphead for the evening until going to bed.

All in all, a good day. Boris promised himself one important thing before hitting the hay. He’d never get silly over some dame. It looked way too exhausting.

Chapter End Notes

Hi everyone! I sorta love everything we got this week. They are all so amazing and detailed!
This first one was drawn by @animenerd&geek on Instagram of a couple scenes from last chapter. I LOVE the last one. Black Hat's face is priceless.
I'm ticked, but I'm fine.

I am protecting a friend!
This picture was drawn by **Khana**, who also has a [deviantart](https://www.deviantart.com) account. She drew this for the 100th written chapter of Inky Mysteries, since we have three that are just art. You should check her work out. It's amazing!
I AM NOT A MONSTER
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone!
Sorry I've been slow with comments and questions. Schools just started up again and I am swamped. Thank you for all the support and love! ^^ You are the best!

Oh. And Happy Birthday Inky Mystery, you are now two years old. ^w^ When did that happen? We're still going strong! Thank you everyone who been with us since the beginning or have just recently joined. Inky Mystery wouldn't be what it is today without! I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy woke up and stretched. Had he really slept the whole night through? Holy cuss, it’d been awhile. It felt amazing. So that’s what a full night’s sleep felt like. He’d almost forgotten. He sat up and looked around. Boris’ bunk above him was already empty. That was normal. Bendy glanced at the pile of books on the desk and groaned. Hat was insane if he thought Bendy would get all those assignments done.

His head was already spinning from the laws that applied to the Surface. All the things he could and couldn’t do with his powers, with property, with taking people to hell, making soul contracts, torture, killing. A bunch of stuff that Bendy would never do, so it felt a bit silly to have to remember them all. A lot of them were just common cussing sense and decency. It made Bendy wary of what hell might be like.

And the demon script was a whole new level of annoying. If Bendy thought ancient Micco runes were difficult, demon runes were up there with egyptian without the rosetta stone. Their magic was ridiculously complex. Micco was all about action. Kentintic energy, something moving from one point to another, something that was pretty easy to imagine, like a ball falling. But demon magic was potential energy. It sounded ludicrous for demons to not have the ‘action magic’ but there it was. It was taking that same ball and putting it at the peak, and then holding it there. It’s maximum potential. Far more difficult. Gravity begged to pull it down. Nature and its law of attractions demanded it to be pulled, and he was to resist. That was the point. Demons seemed to resist the laws of nature that the Micco followed so smoothly.

The more he read, the more he came to understand that a lot of demon culture was about resisting, controlling, restraining, suppressing, in a number of things, and even about one’s self. Their very
instincts could drive them mad if they let themselves get out of control. Their magic, even the weak ones, demanded that level of control too. All demons could apparently change their shape. And if they lost control, it’d be a mess. And that was just one of their most basic powers. Some demons could warp and distort so many things if they lost control. Information was another. The more known, the more vulnerable. So, demons were highly secretive.

Most demons didn’t even go by their birth names. There were certain spells that one could use on demons to summon and bind them. To save themselves, demons use false names. So, that meant that Black Hat’s name wasn’t even Black Hat. Many would use a title, like the Devil. Devil just meaning the king of hell. That wasn’t his name. It was weird. Bendy wondered if he needed to do that...Then again...was Bendy his birth given name?

He had no cussing clue.

It wasn’t like he was left on someone’s doorstep with a note. There wasn’t a person around to tell him the story of where the hell he came from...Though, it probably was hell. But why? Who were his parents? Why was he on the Surface? He was grateful that he was! But all this just brought back old questions that he knew he wouldn’t get the answer to. He didn’t really remember anything before that cold night he met Boris. He had just always been Bendy.

He stood up and picked up the demon script book with a sneer. He'd rather read any of the others, but the history and magic books were written in demon script and the etiquette book was as dry as the desert. He had already gone over the Surface laws. So, if he wanted to get the rest of his assignments done, this was it.

How the hell did Hat expect him to get an entirely different written language, magic and normal, down in a couple weeks, plus his mission to get the parts?

He headed to the dining car. Everyone was already there. Of course. He sat down and grabbed some coffee. It tasted bitter. He added a bit more cream and sugar and opened the book. His head felt like it was full of cotton.

He kept reading even as Cup and Holly started up something or other. He wasn’t sure what. He didn’t really have the energy to pay attention to two things at once right now. It wasn’t like they were flirting or anything. The thought had him pause.

Maybe it was Holly.

He glanced up at the two. The sweet college girl and the thug cupman. Could it be? Cup had denied everyone, but Mugs said it was someone he knew. What would they even have in common? Then again, weirder couples existed.

He looked back down to his book. It really wasn’t his business, but it was fun to get back at Cup. He got flustered so quickly that he didn’t even have good comebacks. Cala was a no with Mugs around. Bendy just didn’t see it. And Red might be warming up to the Cups finally, little by little, but there was no way...Then again, Cup said there would be no way...hmmm.

Bendy shook his head. Focus. He still had to read all this.

“Bendy, what do you think?” Boris asked.

Bendy looked up. Everyone was looking at him. “Uh, what?”

Boris’ ears fell. “We were talking about what we were going to do after we get off the train tomorrow. It’s going to be late.”
“I say we go straight to that bar mentioned in the letter and get our answers,” Oswald stated.

“We have to wait. The bar will be closed anyway. It’ll just be a waste of our time,” Cup muttered.

“But there could be clues at the bar,” Holly argued. “We don’t need to wait for it to open.”

Cup rolled his eyes. They were arguing about what now?

“If it’s an informant or the gang themselves, we’ll have to wait,” Cup said. “We don’t know enough to make a move against this group yet.”

“Well we could stake the place out,” Mugs suggested.

“For what? Them to eventually show up?” Cup rolled his eyes. “It’s a small town, right? If we act suspiciously we’ll stick out even more. Strangers are already obvious, shifty ones will be even worse.”

“Cuphead is right. We’ll already be...noticeable. So, it’s best we don’t draw more attention to ourselves.” Felix sighed.

“Then wouldn’t they be noticeable as well?” Holly's question was thoughtful.

“Matters how many weeks they’ve been there. They may have been through that town a number of times for all we know, even locals.” Cuphead shrugged.

She pressed her lips together and nodded. “So, we wait.”

Oswald scowled and crossed his arms. “If we wait, they’ll stay ahead of us.”

Holly’s brows bobbed up. She glanced at Bendy. “And there's the chance they have an item. I still think we should split up when we do the meeting. They’ll be down at least one person, so it’s the perfect time.”

“That is true. If they are divided, we might have a better shot at the part and Mickey,” Felix said, picking up his mug of coffee. “If they have the part, that is.”

Bendy wasn’t sure if that was the best idea. If they didn’t have the part, then the situation could be completely different, and the group that went after the part could walk into something really dangerous. Like with Cala. “I don’t know if would be a good idea,” Bendy said. “Those things are dangerous, and it’s always been a struggle to get one. I think we’ll all need to be there for it.” It was safer that way.

Boris frowned. “But it’ll be dangerous either way. If the gang has it, that might be the safer thing to do.”

“So half of us go after the part and the other half meet this gang at the bar?” Cup muttered. He shrugged and slouched in his seat. “I don’t have a problem with that.”

“If we get it and it’s not with the gang, we could use it against them too,” Mugs said.

“Unless it’s like the cog,” Bendy said quickly. “We’ll need to be careful.”

“I think at least Bendy, Cup, and Mugs should be the ones to go after the item,” Holly suggested. “Cup and Mugs are well equipped to handle dangerous situations. And Bendy can’t be seen because we don’t know if they’ve realized they kidnapped the wrong person. Boris was listed in the letter, so he, Oswald, and I need to be there for the meeting.” Bendy felt a chill go down his spine at the
thought of being separated from Boris.

“How about Felix goes with Cup and Mugs? Just because we don’t know if they realize it’s me or not, I could stay hidden around the bar somewhere,” Bendy suggested.

“You can’t,” Felix sighed. “Only you and Boris can see the map. One of you has to lead the others to the part. Since Boris was called out, he has to be at that meeting.” Holly nodded in agreement. Bendy grit his teeth. He knew it made sense, but he didn’t like it.

“I’ll be fine Bendy,” Boris promised with a smile.

Holly turned to Felix. “Which just leaves you, Mr. Felix.”

“We all agree the part will most likely be dangerous. I think you should go with Bendy,” Boris said.

Bendy frowned. “Well the gang is dangerous. I think Felix should be with you. The cups and I can handle the part, right fellas?” Bendy looked to the brothers.

Cup hummed. Mugs puckered his lips. “I dunno. That bag is really helpful, and Felix was able to take down that crab-spider thing.”

Cup sighed. “He also did pretty well against that stone monster and stopped--” Cup cut himself off and glanced at Holly. “I mean, I’m pretty amazing, but I have to admit you have some skills,” Cup told Felix. Bendy barely held back a cringe. It was true that Felix had done a lot of good. Depending on where he went, he could be the ace that changed everything.

“What do you think Mr. Felix?” Boris asked imploringly.

The cat adventure was gazing down at the table with deep concentration. He hadn’t moved except for the occasional twitch of the tip of his tail.

“After carefully considering where the meeting place is, what’s at stake, and the chance that this group that has challenged us might have it, I think my skills would be best served going after the part,” Felix said slowly. Oswald scowled. Bendy shook his head. Someone needed to be there to protect Boris and Holly. No offense to the rabbit, but Bendy didn’t know the guy. He wasn’t trusting Boris’ safety with him.

Cup sighed. “For a cure, these parts are a real pain.” Bendy couldn’t agree more. “You’d think this would be easier.”

“With what we’ve seen, I’m surprised it hasn’t been more difficult,” Felix said.

“Dumb luck.” Cup shrugged. “And good aim.”

Bendy rolled his eyes. “I really don’t think it’s a good idea for Boris, Holly, and Oswald to go it alone. If not Felix, then how about Mugs or Cup stay with them?”

Oswald growled. Bendy raised his brows in surprise. “So, we’re just going to talk ourselves into circles, and only two of you are going to the cussing meeting! Do any of you really care? Ditching Mick for a starfallen treasure hunt. I can’t listen to this anymore. I’m calling it a day,” Oswald snipped and stood up.

Felix’ ears fell. His jaw dropped in surprised horror. “Oh Oswald! We didn’t mean anything like that,” Felix said quickly, half standing from the table to stop him.
Mugs gave the rabbit a confused look. “But isn’t it breakfast? The day just started.”

“How tied your ears in a knot?” Cup muttered.

“My brother is gone, and you people only seem to barely care!” Oswald snapped.

“Oh brother.” The cupman rolled his eyes. Then, Oswald punched him so hard that he fell off his chair and knocked Mugs chair over too. The younger jumped up in time to save himself.

There were several gasps from some of the other diners. The car went quiet.

“You want to go, bunny boy!” Cup lurched up.

“Yeah! You try and dismiss Mick like that again, you cussing drink!” Oswald barked. Felix wrapped his arms around Oswald to stop him from throwing another punch. A look of horror crossed his face before it was replaced with determination.

Mugs was already doing the same with Cup. Bendy stood between them, arms out and looked up at both of them. “Alright! Cool it you two!” Bendy barked.

“Cup, stop being a schmuck,” Bendy ordered.

“Me!” Cup’s jaw dropped. “That palooka just punched me!”

Bendy nodded. “Yes. For being a cussing schmuck! Now shut it!”

“And Oswald,” Bendy looked over to him. “We get that you’re frustrated. Any of us would be in your position. But that doesn’t mean we need to lose our cussing heads! We have things to do that some of us think are just as important as saving your brother! We need to plan. But don’t you think that means we are leaving Mickey high and dry. We just don’t have enough information right now,” he said. The rabbit glared at him. “Being mad doesn’t give you the right to punch a mook with a smart mouth.”

“He’s right Oswald! None of us take saving Mickey lightly. We will do everything we can,” Felix said.

“I cussing ain’t anymore!” Cup lifted his chin. Mugs frowned and jerked his arm. “Ouch!”

“Yes, you will. Mickey saved your sorry hide once. You owe him.” Bendy said, deadpan.

“Ma-maybe I should go to the meeting!” Felix said rushed. “I mean, Bendy and the Cup brothers are capable.” They were. And if Felix went with Boris, Bendy would feel more at ease.

“C’mon guys.” Boris stepped up next to Bendy. “Please don’t fight.” He used the puppy face. Cup grimaced and relaxed his stance. Mugs was able to let him go.

He crossed his arms and half turned away. “Fine! I’ll be in my room. Cussing stars!”

Bendy smirked at the retreating back of his friend. No one could say no to that face. Not even the big ‘scary’ thug. Mugs sighed looking at his brother with annoyed eyes.

“Am I really the younger brother?” he muttered. Holly patted his shoulder consolingly.

Oswald shrugged Felix off and walked away without a word. He looked at Felix and turned. “Mr. Oswald!” Felix called after him. “Mr. Oswald!” The cat went to follow.
Bendy sighed. “What a mess,” he muttered. And of course, that was when a train conductor and another employee showed up.

“Is there a problem here?” he asked and then spotted Bendy. He stiffed. Oh boy. They couldn’t kick a guy off a moving train, could they?

Holly leaned over and put a hand on his arm to pull his attention to her. “It was just a couple of fellas with hot heads, mister. We have it sorted. Don’t worry.” She gave him a bright smile.

“We don’t allow fighting on the train. If it happens again, you will be asked to leave at the next stop,” he warned her coldly and glanced at Bendy again. It was like he was a rat. Bendy didn’t react though.

The edge of her eyebrow twitched, but Holly continued to give him a smile. “Like I said, mister. Nothing to worry about.”

“We’re sorry for the trouble,” Boris added.

“Do your best to not disturb the other travelers. This is your only warning,” he stated and turned to go with a half hidden sneer. Was he talking about the fight or the fact Bendy existed? He really couldn’t tell. The guy with him looked like he wanted to run. The fear on him was sweet as honey and made Bendy’s mouth water. Bendy tilted back and little. But he also couldn’t just let that guy go, now could he?

“Have a nice day!” he called after them. The conductor stiffened and the employee jumped. Oh stars. It was sad. Truly. Sad. The poor wimp almost jogged to get away from him and back to whatever job he had.

“Bendy.” Boris sighed.

“What? I can’t wish people a good day?” Bendy asked innocently. Boris gave him a deadpan look that told him that the wolf wasn’t buying his stardust.

Mugs frowned. “I don’t get why people still do that. Aren’t you famous for being a good guy by now?” He righted his and Cup’s chair before sitting down again. The rest followed him.

“I doubt everyone knows him by face. And even then, I wouldn’t be surprised if there are still people who are skeptical,” Holly said sadly.

“How many you think are going to ask me, ‘but what do you get out of it?’ when the machine is open and working for the sick public?” Bendy asked flatly. “Hell, we were famous for murder there at first.”

Holly tilted her head thoughtfully. “I’d forgotten about that.” Then, she scowled.

Mugs grimaced and shook his head. “It’s dumb.” He looked over Bendy’s shoulder and glared. Bendy could guess the looks the other travelers were giving them now. He’d seen it all before.

“They don’t matter,” Holly said firmly, frowning and taking a sip of her tea.

“Only if one has a badge or a knife,” Boris muttered into a muffin.

“Is there anymore bacon?” Bendy asked and picked up his book.

“Not up at the counter, but you can have mine if you want,” Holly said with a sigh. “I’ve lost my
“Thanks,” Bendy said.

“Don’t let it bother you two so much. Bendy and I are used to getting that all the time.” Boris shrugged.

“It’s almost been a dream this past month,” Bendy said, waving a strip of the cooked heavenly meat. “Like that Elliot guy.”

“Actions speak louder than words,” Holly recited. She sighed.

“Didn’t stop Sillyvision,” Bendy muttered around his mouth full of bacon.

She put her head on her hand. “People should judge by them,” she grumbled. Her face softened. “I liked Elliot though.”

“Your fan?” Boris smirked. “And he’s an elephant too.”

“I wish we could have met him.” Mugs smiled.

“Oh shush! You’re going to get famous too if you and Cup keep saving people,” Bendy said.

Holly grinned at Mugs. “Then, Elliot will come looking for you and Cup too and give you both one of his big, bone-crushing hugs.”

Mugs grimaced. The table laughed.

Then a mom and her kid walked by them to get to the other cars. “But mom! I think it’s him! And look, he has a book!”

“Shush Jeremy!” the woman said. “It’s rude to stare.”

“But mom! It has to be!” The kid tugged on the hand that the woman had a tight grip on. He was staring at Bendy like he was a the last candy bar in the store. “Please!”

“Jeremy!” she hissed at him and refused to look up.

Bendy was going to regret this but…”Hey, what’s this about?” Bendy asked.

The woman straightened like he had shocked her. The kid’s face went slack with surprise, and then he ducked shyly.

The woman glanced at him and then looked away. “I’m sorry, sir. My son is just--”

“Are you the Bbros!” the kid asked loudly and then ducked again when Bendy looked at him.

Boris smiled. “Yep, that’s us. I’m Boris.”

The kid lit up and jumped up and down, tugging on his mother’s skirt. “See mom! See! It is them! That’s Boris and Bendy Bbro!” It really had become his last name, hadn’t it?

“Really?” A man in a suit stood up and picked a top hat he had on the table. He looked rather snappy for riding a train. He had a handlebar mustache and a small goatee. “The B Brothers? I was sure you were all from the Circo Del Piacere.” He smiled at them. “With your mix of company and unseen talents.”
“The Circo de--What?” Mugs asked.

“A circus of...unique individuals. They are touring, I believe. Went to it myself a while back. Most impressed,” the man said conversationally.

“Gee mister,” the boy said. “Is it fun?”

“The most fun!” he said.

“C’mon along Jeremy. We’ve bothered these people enough.” The mother pulled her son away with quick steps.

Bendy sighed and took another bite of bacon. Yum. Salty goodness.

The man took another step toward their table. “I’d say if you ever are in need of a job or get tired of the...less than favorable attention, you should look into joining them. As for me, I am grateful. A little show is just what a dull travel like this needed.” He smiled, tilted his head, and left.

Bendy frowned. He waited until he was sure the guy was gone. “Did anyone else find that guy a little disturbing?”

“He certainly seemed...a little odd,” Holly commented.

The next night the train let out a whistle into the dead of the night.

“Shouldn’t that be illegal at this time of night?” Mugs muttered, half asleep.

“They have to warn anyone on the tracks at the station.” Felix shrugged and patted the tired cupman on the shoulder. Mugs hummed and swayed. Bendy didn’t feel much better himself. It was way too late for running around. He wanted to find the nearest bed and collapse.

He was grateful to get off this train and out of confined spaces with Cuphead and Oswald. They had both become insufferable since yesterday, and the nicest they could be was quietly glaring at each other. Bendy had been half ready to toss them both off the train.

“We’ll get a hotel and call it a night,” Felix promised.

“Thank the stars.” Boris yawned. “Hope there’s a place open this late.”

“With the train coming, they better cussing be,” Bendy muttered. The train pulled in and the questers hefted their bags before stepping off. To Bendy’s relief, he didn’t see the stuffy conductor or the creepy gentleman.

“Where is this again?” Oswald asked, dark circles under his eyes.

“Heela City,” Felix told him.

His ears fell. “Why does that sound familiar?” he muttered.

“Did you do a show here?” Boris asked.

“Maybe.” He shrugged uncertainly.

“Well, either way, I’m glad we made it.” Bendy sighed. “Now, that hotel.”
The ‘city’ itself was sad. Bendy was sure that Sillyvision was bigger. There were maybe three blocks of buildings tightly packed together, all wooden. The streets were quiet and bare of life. The moon and stars shone brightly and there was a sharp chill in the dry desert air. It smelled of dust and horses. Cussing horses.

“There it is.” Felix pointed to a two story building. It’s facade was nice but worn with age. The second story balcony was bare and the windows were dark.

“That’s not promising,” Mugs said.

“If I have to camp in the cussing desert, I’m dumpin’ sand in their water tower,” Cup grumbled.

“Get over yourself,” Oswald said.

“Alright!” Felix popped up between them before they could go at it. Again. “I’ll knock.”

When they turned, Holly was already at the door, knocking. Her eyes were closed. No answer. Boris joined her and knocked a bit louder. Nothing. A third time. Still nothing. Holly turned to Cuphead. “Pick it?” she mumbled to him.

“Gladly.” Cuphead reached into his pocket.

“We can’t just break in!” Felix frowned.

“What do they care as long as we pay?” Cup challenged and pulled out a leather wrap of some kind. Pulling the string, he unwrapped it, revealing metal tools. He knelt in front of the lock and picked one.

“Does he even know what he’s doing?” Oswald asked flatly. “I bet we could force a window or--”

The door swung open, and Cuphead stood up. He smirked as he returned his tools. He looked over to the rabbit. “Oh, were you saying something?”

Oswald scowled. Bendy stepped up to Cup. “You have to show me how you did that.”

Cup tilted his head back and forth. “Meh, I don’t know.” They all entered the dark lobby. Mugs jumped over the counter.

“C’mon Cup!” Bendy pushed. That would help him so much in life.

“Fine, but you’ll owe me,” Cup said.

“Deal.” Bendy smirked.

“Bendy. What are you hoping to break into exactly?” Felix asked disapprovingly.

Bendy blushed and looked away. “Nothin’. Just a trick I’d like to learn.”

Meanwhile, Mugs found the log book, the price of rooms, and what rooms were empty. Money and keys were passed around, and to Bendy’s relief, his head hit the pillow sooner than he thought.

Cuphead crept out of his room and looked up and down the hall. Empty and quiet. Perfect. He shut the door behind him silently and headed down the hall. It was a cold night, and it didn’t seem like anyone was out. But he’d still be careful on his way to the bar. If all went the way he hoped, he’d be
back in his bed in no time, no one the wiser, and with more certainty that the meeting wasn’t a trap.

He got to the street and stuck to the shadows, moving with the lethal silence of a jungle cat on the
hunt. He weaved his way through the dark and night to the bar. The Butcher’s Arm bar was dark, its
swinging wood doors not really holding any promise to keep him out. Seriously. This place took old
western a little too seriously.

He slipped inside the joint. The chairs were up on bare circle tables. The bar sat empty, the alcohol
locked up, the register too. He didn’t need to check those to be sure. He jumped over the counter and
looked on the shelves. If there was a note or map that seemed to be for them, maybe an envelope,
he’d find it. Nothing but glass. No insignias that would tip him off if this gang was connected to a
bigger group. He mapped out the area. There was a staircase that led upstairs. The banister for the
second floor circled the first, a great vantage point to get the drop on someone. There was a piano
against the far wall. The windows were tall, six in total. They were a little warped with age. There
were two guns hidden behind the counter. He couldn’t find any secret rooms, corners, or peep holes.
It was just a normal bar.

Whelp. Not a secret mob meet up spot then. That was good news. Best check to upstairs and then
head home. Seemed he would get some sleep, thank the stars. The upper balcony was dark when he
got to the top. It was as simple and as wooden as down stairs. There were a few closed doors and
two halls. He hesitated on checking the rooms, unsure if the owner lived here or not. He circled the
hall looking for the best angles for a shot, for spying, and for jumping over. There were two
windows, both next to shingles of a roof which promised escape from the building even on the
second story.

That’s when he heard a floorboard creak. He froze. He stepped back into one of the dark halls and
lifted a hand, ready for anything. Did he wake the bar owner? Or was it one of the gang? He leaned
against the wall and tilted his head so he could look in the direction of the noise. A dark shape shifted
from in between two tables. A head dipped above the edge of one and then disappeared again.

Great. They were acting cautious, so the chance that he had been spotted existed. Well, time to mess
with them. Cup reached into his pocket and pulled out a coin. If one was caught, but it wasn’t chaos,
it was best to confuse ‘em. He flicked the coin to the other side of the hall. It hit the hall and bounced
on the floor. Hopefully they would think there were multiple people or move enough for Cup to get a
clear look at them.

He crept to edge of hall and slunk to the next shadow around the wall, eyes fixed on the tables for
the shadow, hand still up and ready, but unlit.

When he got to where he’d seen it move, nothing was there. Quiet. Not bad. He circled the room,
back to the wall, and out of all source of light. His eyes and ears were open for any sign of life. He
almost was to the staircase again. The easiest means of escape. If they went for the windows instead,
he’d see.

He was next to the staircase when he finally heard another creak. He caught sight of a hand reaching
up and pushing it barely open. The next second, the figure heaved itself over the edge. Not cussing
likely! He darted after them. “Hold it!” he hissed.

The figured had already slipped out the sliver of space and was scrambled down the incline of the
roof.

“Stop! Or I’ll shoot,” Cup warned the figure and lit his finger with a blue bullet. “I’m a good shot. I
won’t miss.” They were almost to the edge, but even if they had the guts to jump, Cup would be able
to hit them. Wait a second. He recognized that figure. “Holly!”
The figure half turned and then tripped, rolling over the edge.

“Cussing damnit!” Cup hissed as he shoved the window all the way open and jumped out to follow her. The second his feet touched the roof, he heard a scraping sound from above. A sharp pain shot through his head as a pail hit his head with a clang and clattered down the roof.

He slipped and rolled down the roof. By luck, he caught the edge before falling. Holly sat up in the cart of hay where she’d landed. “Oh my goodness, Cuphead are you okay!” she whispered, her eyes went wide.

“What the hell are you doing here!” Cup hissed, glaring down at her. Ow, ow, ow! Stars! Weren’t his black eye and cracks enough?

Her nose wrinkled at him. “What are you doing here? You said looking around the bar was a waste of time!” she hissed back.

Starfallen little tree princess looking at him like--A light turned on inside. He let go of the edge and landed next to her in the hay. “Time to go!” She nodded and they scrambled off.

Cup grabbed her hand and pulled her down the street, turning sharply into a narrow space between two buildings before he stopped. “Stars!” he growled to the heavens. That was close. Thanks to that open window, they’d know someone was there. Cussing seven levels of hell. He hoped that whoever it was didn’t work with that cussing gang. It could spell trouble for all of them! Maybe it was a good thing Felix decided to stay with the pup and princess. Like hell Cup was trusting that bunny with them.

Holly breathed heavily beside him, glancing down the street. Her expression was grim.

“That was too close,” Cup muttered and leaned against the wall next to her. He pulled out his smokes. He’d had to smoke in those stupid gaps between the cars on the damn train. No smoking inside. It was nice to smoke openly without the wind threatening to steal his cig. He lit it with his finger and took a deep breath.

Holly raised a brow at him. “Indeed. I assume you were checking for clues in there then?”

“I was just making sure you wouldn’t have any unpleasant surprises tomorrow without us there to help before you cussing--What the hell was that bucket!” he demanded.

Her face turned apologetic. “That wasn’t meant for you. I’m sorry.” She folded her arms. “I wanted to set rune traps as a defense in case the meeting came to a heated confrontation, but then it still didn’t—" She cut herself off. “So, I was just trying to figure out the next best thing.”

Cuphead frowned. “Didn’ what?”

Her face pinched so tight in a frown she almost looked like a raisin. “Mymgkzntwrking,” she muttered.

Cup snorted. “Was that english? I didn’t know you were fluent in other languages H.” What was this? She seemed really bothered. Did she really feel that unsafe with Bendy and them gone?

She sighed, scowled briefly at him, and looked down. “My magic isn’t working,” she whispered.

Cup paused, his cigarette hanging from his half raised hand. He looked at her. She seemed...small with her head down like a defeated kid. “Your magic?” He blinked. “When did that happen?”
She leaned back against the wall on her heels. “Since I woke up.”

That cussing long? “Do...the other’s know?” Another side effect of the cog, or was it Alice’s and Bendy’s trip through her mind? Did it really matter which?

She paused and shrugged, looking up. “Some. Mr. Felix and Alice know.”

Cup took a moment to try and imagine what she was dealing with. What would it be like if he couldn’t use his finger gun anymore? He’d be cussing useless to his brother and friends. The boss would be ticked. He’d be stuck on the sidelines. There wouldn’t even be a reason to bring him along to these missions anymore. He’d feel like a burden to Mugs. He took a deep breath of tainted air before releasing the smoke through his nose slowly. “That’s cussing rough, H,” he finally said. “Any chance it’ll come back?”

He shifted against the wall and winced when it pulled at one of the cracks in his side. The cussing things were worse thanks to the boss’ treatment. Good thing Fanny wasn’t around to see the damage. The break on the train had helped, but he wasn’t completely recovered yet.

She shifted to her other foot. She shook her head slowly. “I have no idea. I’m not even sure who I could talk to to find out. Mr. Felix had no idea, and Oddswell isn’t practiced in how magic works on a person. I talked to Bendy a little more on the train about what the cog did to my head, but I only have vague ideas of why this might have happened.”

Cup frowned. Vague ideas and a magical block. “You think it’s a mental block, or that the cussing cog ran off with your magic?”

She turned to him and shook her head. “Magic is connected to your soul. According to what Bendy said, my soul is made up of islands that represent things that I care about. Those islands fed into a pool of energy. When the cog took over, it started to destroy those islands, replacing it with its own...representations.”

Cussing islands? That sounded weird as hell. Representations? That was creepy.

“But then Alice and Bendy removed the cog. So, taking away that influence must have taken the energy the cog was feeding into me. But it had already damaged some of the islands and destroyed one.” Her eyes squeezed together as she held her fists tight against her stomach. “What if my soul was damaged in a way that keeps me from ever having the energy to do magic again?”

Cup grimaced. Oh cuss. He was bad at stuff like this. He dropped a hand on her head and brushed her hair back. She blinked in surprise, looking up. He knew what a damaged soul looked like. He had seen enough himself. “Listen. You’re not damaged. At least, not your soul. If ya wanna make sure...” He paused. This was such a bad idea, but...Cup sighed. “Okay, I have an idea, but I don’t think you’ll like it.” He grimaced. “Hell, I don’t like it.”

She quirked her head, frowning. “What is it?”

“There’s one group of people I know that are pros at handling souls. If your magic is gone because of somethin’ in your soul, they could definitely tell ya for sure,” Cuphead told her.

“What?” Her face softened.

Cup almost felt guilty for giving her this hope. “Demons,” he admitted.

She tried to hide it, but the slightest shift of her eyebrows gave away her shock. “Demons?” She frowned. Then her eyelids fluttered. “That’s why Hat or Bendy had to go into my mind,” she said
with realization.

Cuphead nodded. “I’m not sure how much angels handle souls, but it’s pretty, uh, regular for demons. Bendy being the oddball, of course.”

A small smile came to her lips. She nodded. Then she looked up to give him a clear gaze. “But Bendy wouldn’t know enough to do that. So, you’re talking about Hat.” It wasn’t a question.

Cuphead nodded anyway. “He dropped the ball on Nightmare Night. I’m sure I can get the schmuck to help this time. Hell, it could even be his fault this happened. If it did do something to your soul, and he coulda stopped it.” If it turned out to be like that, they probably shouldn’t tell Bendy.

She considered this, fingers playing with the edge of her dress. “And you would trust him enough to do that?”

Cup withdrew his hand and put out his used smoke. “Normally, no. But with Bendy agreeing to his terms, him and Alice keeping their end of the bargain, he really doesn’t have a leg to stand on in refusin’ you. If he fights, we can threaten to tell Bendy. Demons are very particular to keep their side of their deals to the letter. That’s how they work the loopholes they write up. Hat’s excuse is as weak as cuss, and he knows it.” Cup smirked. “He’d lose face if it got out that he flopped like this.” Especially in his cussing little casino. No one likes a demon that couldn’t pay up. It was a big deal to hellspawns.

She nodded and gave him a slow smile. “Your enjoying having something over his head, aren’t you?”

Cup shrugged. “Maybe a little. It doesn’t happen often that he really screws up.” Or at least not without someone dying and it being a cussing tragedy.

One edge of her lips quirked as she hummed. “I’ll have to think about it. But thanks for letting me know, Cup.”

Cup smiled. “Sure.”

She let out a much lighter sigh. “So, we good?” Cup asked. Then he blinked as something dawned on him and laughed. “Did we just have a cussing moment?”

Holly’s face scrunched into confusion. “Oh heavens, we did!” She laughed. “And yes. We’re good.”

“That is just too weird.” Cup chuckled and shook his head. “I never thought I’d see the day.” He slipped his hands into his jacket pockets.

She smirked at him. “You haven’t. It's the middle of the night.”

“Your are as bad as that angel,” Cup accused.

“That’s a compliment,” she preened. They left the alley way and started to walk back to the hotel.

“She at least has beauty and a voice to balance out those jokes.”

She gasped dramatically. “Are you calling me ugly, you big brute!” She smacked him on the arm.

“No!” Cup laughed. “Just that the angel is a little unfair in the looks department. Hell, she gives Snow White a run for her money, and that dame is famous for her beauty.”
She clicked her tongue. “Well, I have to agree with that. She’s absolutely gorgeous.”

“Seriously.” Cup rolled his eyes. “What the hell does she see in the shrimp?”

Holly’s eyes suddenly gleamed as she looked at him. “Goodness,” she said cheerfully. “And I have a conspiracy for you to join,” she added almost casually.

Cup raised a brow curiously. A conspiracy? Well, well, what the hell was all this? “Oh?” he hummed.

“Cala and I were at Daisys talking to her about how Mickey and Minnie adore each other, but are both too shy to ever act on it. After our little conversation during your stay tied to the front room chair—“

‘We promised to never bring that up again.” Cup cut her off with a frown. The cussing worst. These people considered him a friend and cussing tied him up!

She blinked. “Oh?” she said innocently. “I seemed to have forgotten. Drawbacks of loosing my talent. Sorry.” He narrowed his eyes, not buying her stardust for a second.

She continued on cheerfully. “But after you told me about Bendy and Alice, hearing about Mickey and Minnie gave me an idea to help them at least give each other a chance. A group date. Tell Mickey and Minnie we need their help to get Alice and Bendy together. Then tell Bendy and Alice we need their help to get Mickey and Minnie together.” ” Her expression faltered for a second.

“When we get Mickey back.” Her smile returned. “Then, we do a big group date and let them just be themselves. Cala is going to ask Mugs. I thought I would ask Finley. They’ll be relaxed since it’s for someone else. I thought you’d be perfect to help in enacting the plot,” she said with a devious expression on her face.

Cup raised his brows in surprise. That was cussing devious, and he loved it. “Cuss yeah, I can.” He grinned.

She giggled with delight. “Then, you need to find yourself a date.”

Cup opened then closed his mouth. He had no one. He frowned. “That could be a bit tricky,” he admitted.

She frowned, putting a finger to her chin. “Oh.”

“Mugs has a date, but uh...I don’t really.” Cup trailed off. He couldn’t really suggest anyone with all that stardust Bendy had been tossing around about him. Holly might think it was the dame he was...Cussing starfallen dammit. Bendy was the worst.

She hummed. “Well, that is a problem,” she said in a low voice.

“Can’t I go alone?” Cuphead asked drily.

She raised a brow at him. “I suppose so, but do you really want to be the ninth wheel?”

“Tsk.” Cuphead smirked. “You kidding? I’ll get to hold Bendy’s little crush over his head.”

She folded her arms and smirked back. “Oh, come on. Let them have their fun on the date. You wait until after to tease them mercilessly.”

“Fine. I’ll just collect dirt on him then,” Cup relented with a half smile.
“Uh-huh. As enjoyable as having you watch over everyone’s shoulder would be…” She hummed. “Maybe I could find you a blind date.”

Cuphead snorted disbelievingly. “Oh really? What dame you have in mind?”

She paused and sighed. “It’s moments like these I regret not being more social in the past.” Cuphead laughed. She probably just went home and read a book. What a nerd.

Holly turned to look at him. “What sort of girl do you like, Cup?”

A gorgeous and fiesty bunny. Cup nearly tripped. He hadn’t seen that one coming. “Uh, uh, huh?” he croaked.

Her mouth waved dangerously as she fought a laugh. “Well, you were the last person I’d expect to get wobbly knees over that question,” she said with good humor. Fanny was a force of nature that anyone could get wobbly over.

“Y-you can cussing leave that alone,” Cup recovered. “It doesn’t matter anyway, like I told the pipsqueak.”

Holly raised a brow. “I was still thinking of trying to set you up. What were you thinking?”

*Sunblazing cuss!* “Nothing!” Cup snapped.

She shrugged, turning back. “Red’s really confident as well, but she’d probably string you up before going on a date with you,” she said with a sigh.

She was dropping it? Thank the stars. He inwardly sighed with relief. “No kidding. She still has a cold shoulder for me.” Though it had surprisingly been getting better with her.

She hummed. “Maybe Dovil knows other nurses.”

Like any nurse was on par with that goddess. He was feeling a little warm. Were desert nights supposed to be this warm? “Maybe,” Cuphead mumbled, only half paying attention. What was Fanny going to do if she found out his cracks were worse? Yell at him? Force him to the hospital? He cussing hoped not. Maybe he could get her that drink. That would be nice. He’d love to hear her laugh again. “That might work.”

“Okay. I’ll ask her then.”

“Uh?” Cuphead blinked out of his thoughts and back to reality. He looked down to Holly. “What?”

“I’ll ask Dovil if she knows anyone,” Holly repeated.

Cuphead swallowed. That wouldn’t really be fair to any dame the bird nurse asked. “Nah, don’t bother. I’m fine being a loose cannon.” He shrugged and itched for another smoke but refrained.

She gave him a long look. “Do you really like Fanny that much?” she asked quietly.

Cup stopped. His throat closed up. He stared at Holly in bewilderment. How had she figured him out? What the hell? What was he supposed to do? Say? To the princess’ credit, she didn’t look judgemental or disgusted like he thought she would. She had on a genuinely concerned expression, and her frown was a little sad.

“Oh Cup.” Her eyes widened sadly. She reached out and gave him a hug. “I’m so sorry.”

What the hell? What was her issue? Why was she pitying him? He was fine. It didn’t matter. Fanny was married, and he was scum. He would get over it.

Then, why was his vision suddenly a little blurry? What the cuss? This was stupid. He was fine. Holly’s arms gave him a light squeeze. Cussing little princess, thinking she could see through him. Didn’t she get that this was a waste of time? His arms went up to push her away, but instead, he found himself returning the hug and just...accepting this odd warmth and quiet weight that was chained to his heart. It made breathing hard. This was all stardust!

He pushed her away gently after a moment and cleared his throat. “Uh, we should...get back,” he said softly.

She nodded, patting his arm. The hotel wasn’t far from there. They headed toward the dark building. Somehow, he felt a little better. It didn’t fix anything. There was no fixing this, but just having someone else to turn to...Someone that had been kind. That was enough. He’d be able to get past this and push forward again. They entered the building and crept upstairs. Cup paused before entering his and Mugs’ room. He glanced over to Holly.

She gave him a smile. He returned it. To his surprise, he didn’t have to fake it. “Good night, Cuphead,” she said.

“Night.” Cup waved and went in.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys!
This week we've got some cool art. I love it! ^W^

First, we have a drawing made by LollipopDinosaurProductions. It is Bendy and his terrifying shadow powers.
Next, we have some art by fantastickingdomus. I love how cute they look! XD
And oh my goodness! alollinglaughingcat created this beautiful PMV video. It is posted on tumblr and on youtube.

This is the youtube link:

"Lemon Boy" Inky Mystery PMV

And the tumblr link:

"Lemon Boy" Inky Mystery PMV

Also,

the1trueanon

posted a few more panels of the comic she is doing of the Inky Mystery on tumblr.
Check it out!

Also, you should go onto tumblr and give our amazing artists love!
Heela City
Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

“Welcome ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls to the next chapter of Inky Mystery,” Mic proclaimed grandly. “The questers have finally reached the Far West with a plan to save Mickey and get the ink machine part! Will all go well for our heroes? Find out!”

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello!
What a crazy week! I’m exhausted. But happy. I got sick, watched End Game, met up with an old friend of mine, and have to study for a test. It’s been CRAZY. ^^

Thank you everyone for your art and comments! It warms my soul and there aren’t words to express my gratitude. Thank you will have to do. And thanks Aura_Creed for a gift chapter! An Inky Mystery Delta Rune crossover! The link will be down below. Enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Can we get hats?” Boris asked with wide, puppy eyes. Bendy grimaced. That face!

He had to stop this madness. Those cowboy hats had a big price tag on them. “We don’t really have the mon--”

“Sure,” Felix said. Bendy frowned. Felix caught the look and chuckled. “It’d probably be a good idea. The sun in the desert is intense, and a hat will help keep you cool and save you from a sunburn.” Felix glanced at Cuphead and Mugman curiously. “Does the sun affect you boys?”

The two were eyeing the hats curiously. “It’s probably a good idea,” Cup said. He stepped into the doorway. “We’ll take two,” he told the shopkeeper. Bendy’s jaw dropped. Seriously? Felix chuckled.

“Here, I’ll get them,” Felix promised and walked past them. Felix wanted to get him something? The Felix wanted to buy him a...Oh wait!

“Wh-what? Wait!” Bendy went after him, but too late. Felix had laid the cash on counter next to Cup’s. The Cup brothers were already trying a few of them on and making ridiculous faces at each other. Mugs had a gallon hat on and crossed his eyes with a grin that looked a bit like Wakko’s.

“C’mon Bendy,” Boris hooked his arm and dragged him toward Cup and Mugs. “Holly, Mr. Oswald! You should look too!”

Holly wandered over with Oswald. She tried on a wide brimmed hat that immediately thunked down
over her face.

Cup snorted. “Nice,” Mugs snickered.

Holly popped it back up, chagrined expression on her face. “Very funny,” she said monotone, but then smiled.

Cup pulled out a black hat with a folded brim and a leather string with beads at the ends. He lifted a hand and brushed his straw to one side before putting the hat on.

“That one looks good,” Mugs said.

“If you’re a villain,” Oswald muttered. Cup gave him a dirty look. Bendy snickered.

“Yes, but the straw’s in the way.” Cuphead sighed, turning back to Mugs and ignoring Bendy.

“No worries, amigos! A little cut here, a little stitch dere and day weel fit.” A tiny mouse in a sombrero stood on top of the counter, next register.

“Berries!” Mugs grinned with a smaller brimmed grey hat with stitching around the brim in delicate patterns. “Then, I think this’ll be perfect.”

Oswald got a simple white hat and shrugged. Bendy decided on a darker one that fit between his horns pretty well. He had to take off his goggles though. He extended the straps and simply put the goggles around the base of the hat before putting it back on his head. He wouldn’t say, but it might have looked a little like Felix’ hat. If his hat had been a cowboy hat, but whatever. It was a gift from Felix!

Boris had to try them all on. He finally ended on one that was a little lighter with a wide ribbon around the base. It was simple but looked good enough on him. He grinned proudly. “We all look like cowboys!” Boris said. With the bandanna, Bendy had to admit the wolf did look a bit like some of the Westerns they had seen on the television.

Oswald chuckled. “Well, all except this guy.” He threw a thumb at Cuphead. “He looks like he is more ready to rob a train or bank!”

“I’ll rob you if you keep it up, long ears.” Cup raised a brow.

“What about you Holly? Find anything good?” Boris asked.

She raised a short, pale grey hat. “I like this one. The rim isn’t too wide, and it fits.” She smiled at Boris.

“Nice,” he said with a wagging tail. He was having fun. The mouse took the hats that needed adjustments. Bendy was ready for a wait, but it was only a couple of minutes before Mugs and Cup had their own hats ready. Before they could blink, the hats were suddenly on their heads. Cup flinched. Mugs jumped. Bendy and Oswald laughed. “Wow that was fast.” So fast none of them saw the hats appear. Stars. Was the mouse invisible or something?

The mouse grinned at them from back on the counter. “Gracias, Senior Lobo.” He chuckled.

“Thank you.” Felix smiled. “If I can ask one more favor, do you know where we can get some transportation into the desert?”

“Of course,” the little mouse nodded. “De Dogstoyevski farm has horses. Jus talk to de old dog.”
“Horses?” Mugs smiled.

“Horses?” Cup raised a brow curiously.

Bendy froze. “Horses,” he said in a horrified tone. The others looked at him in confusion.

Holly gave him a worried look. “Are there any other ways to travel?”

The mouse laughed but then stopped when he saw their expressions. “Not unless you want to walk, amigos.” He shook his head.

“There isn’t a car or something?” Bendy implored, doing his best to sound like it wasn’t a problem. Boris raised a brow with a piercing look.

This time the mouse laughed and didn’t bother to stop. “Dis isn’t de city. Lo siento.” He chortled, trying to get control of himself. “But you only have de two options, mis amigos.”

“What’s the problem?” Cup asked.

“Nothin’. It’s fine.” Bendy rolled his eyes.

“Yeah,” Boris agreed but was still watching him.

“But we’ll really look like cowboys on horses!” Mugs wrapped an arm around Boris’ shoulders. The distraction had the two chuckling.

“We’ll only need three with the Cups and Bendy going,” Oswald said.

“Ah, don’t kill the good atmosphere,” Mugs muttered. Boris nodded. “Boris can ride a bit.”

“This isn’t a time to play around.” Oswald frowned.

Oh stars. They were doing this. Cussing horses. Cussing glitter dreams. Cup stepped up to him. “You really okay there?” Cup asked quietly while they argued and Felix tried to break it up.

“You really okay there?” Orc asked quietly while they argued and Felix tried to break it up.

“Of course, why would I have a problem?” Bendy scoffed.

“Because you are a frog’s hop away from knocking knees in fear there bud.” Cup smirked.

Holly sidled up to the two of them. She glanced at Bendy. “You’re not riding,” she said firmly.

Bendy scowled. “Would you two knock it off! I’ll be fine! It’s just a horses!” A six foot plus hoof-wielding beast of muscle and rage. He’d be...fine.

“You won’t get five feet,” Holly said, deadpan. “These horses aren’t half as docile as the ones at the fair.” Oh, make a guy feel comfortable!

“Docile? Five feet? What the hell is this?” Cup’s entertained smile shrunk a little. “Do you have a problem with horses, or do they have a problem with you?”

“We went riding on our date, and the sleepy fair horses bucked him off. For some reason, they find him unsettling.” She looked at Cup. Her eyes narrowed. “But you’re really good with animals, right? You could let him ride with you.”

Cup gave Bendy a baffled look. Bendy wanted to sink into the dirt. “I mean sure, but why do they react like that? I was kidding, but really?”
Bendy couldn’t answer that. He refused to answer that. He had sworn he’d rather die. The only witnesses were Hat, a demon equal with him in secrecy, and Snowball, an animal that couldn’t talk. “No idea. They just hate me.” He jerked a shoulder. Snowball meeped helpfully from Holly’s shoulder.

“Maybe it’s like elephants and mice,” Cup muttered.

Bendy growled. “You calling me a mit size peewee, ya chipped wannabe vase!”

“Cussing stars! I didn’t say that, ya freak!” Cup scowled and lifted his hands in surrender. “And who the hell ya callin’ a vase?” Bendy scowled and crossed his arms. “Sun and moon, one word and you go all glowy eyes now.”

Bendy raised a hand to his face. He was? Damnit! Why wasn’t this getting easier? “Sorry.”

“Look, it ain’t that big a deal, pal,” Cup said. “Ya can ride with me, and I’ll keep the steed in control.”

Bendy let in a deep breath. This was such a pain. “Alright. Thanks Cup.”

Holly let out a sigh of relief. Bendy glanced her way. Had he really done so badly at the fair? He thought he had done okay.

“Okay! Let’s go!” Felix said as he pulled Mugs and Boris away by their neck-wear. Oswald watched in entertained and perplexed amazement. Bendy felt like he missed something. Cuphead was snickering.

“C’mon, scaredy cat.” Cuphead walked around him and followed Felix and the rest. Bendy let out a huffed and reluctantly followed. They walked down the dusty street. Towns people passed with curious glances to the cup brothers and Bendy. Cup seemed a bit uncomfortable with the attention, but he didn’t say anything, just walked a bit faster. The old wood facades were worn and bleached from the bright desert sun. Bendy watched a tumbleweed bounce by. The smell of horses, hay, and dust hung in the air. Wow. It really was like a western movie. They walked up to the farm the mouse had mentioned and reached a stable around a corner. Bendy stopped at the sight of the beasts. The rest walked up to the stables. Boris and Mugs seemed excited.

An older looking beagle stepped out from one of the stalls, holding a pitchfork of manure. He raised a brow at the group. “Can I help you?” he asked in a slightly russian accent.

“Yes, we are here to get a few horses for a couple of days,” Felix said. “We have a trip into the desert planned for three members of our group.”

“We’ll only need two horses,” Cup jumped in and held up two fingers. Felix raised a brow and glanced at Mugs and Bendy. Bendy looked away.

The dog tilted his head, but then nodded agreeably. “Well then, come here and take a look.” He gestured to them. The others followed. Bendy lingered outside. Could he go in? What if they went crazy? Bendy cautiously approached the entrance and peered inside. Both side of the building were lined with stables. There was a large middle space that the group was wandering down. A horses’ head would appear over one of their tall stable doors. Bendy took one step in and then another. A horse let out a sharp nervous whinny before backing up and away from Bendy. Bendy froze.

“Are you okay?” Felix appeared at his side. Bendy nearly jumped. He had been too focused on the horses. Felix gave him that concerned look that was almost becoming too familiar on the cat adventurer’s face.
“Y-yeah. It’s just, uh.” Bendy faltered.

“Horses seem nervous around the guy. Besides, it’ll save us some money,” Cup cut in. “C’mon, I think I found a good one.”

It was a calico spotted horse. A blot of grey went over one eye, giving it a comical look. It huffed heavily as they neared.

Mugs had one too. A painted mare with a long mane. Bendy nodded but didn’t go deeper into the building. Instead, he backed away and waited outside for the others to come out. Felix was giving him a questioning look. Mugs and Cup put saddles on the horses, listening to the beagle’s instructions, and nodding once in a while. Boris’ tail was wagging. Oswald was leaning against a wall with crossed arms. Holly had sidled up to one of the horses and was petting its nose as she whispered something to it under her breath.


Bendy shrugged. “A lot of animals don’t like me.”

“Really?” Felix asked.

“Okay, so the horses are a little extra jumpy around me, but I don’t know why,” Bendy admitted. He had an idea but…

Mugs came out and mounted the horse. “C’mon, Boris!”

Boris tried to hop on behind him and slipped off. Holly turned and started to explain how to mount.

Bendy sighed. He really wasn’t excited about this. Oswald stepped up to him and Felix. “So, if you find Mick with this thing—”

“We’ll save him first,” Bendy promised. “I owe him after all.”

“Uh-huh,” Oswald said. “I’m sure I’ll have quite a few stories to listen to if you bring him back.”

Bendy grimaced. Why did he’d feel like he put Mickey in a heap of trouble?

“Bendy look!” Boris called out. “I’m riding!” Boris grinned from behind Mugs. The cupman had the horse trot around. Boris grabbed his hat and waved it proudly, a huge smile on his face as he laughed. Snowball jumped from Holly’s shoulder and latched onto his hat, coming with it when the wolf put it back on. She meeped excitedly, grinning at Boris.

“Nice going, bro!” Bendy called back. He and Mugs looked like they were having fun.

“Wow, we’re so high up!” Boris said excitedly. “This is berries!” Mugs got the horse to gallop as Boris laughed. Snowball held on to the rim of Boris’ hat with a happy determination as the animal shot across the pasture. Well, at least they were having fun.

“Great, but we should probably start heading out. I don’t wanna get stuck in the desert at night,” Cup said.

“You say that like you don’t have all the constellations memorized.” Mugs laughed as he and Boris went by again.

“You do?” Bendy asked.
Cup rolled his eyes. “Not the point!”

Holly looked at Oswald and Felix. “And it’s getting close to the time for the meeting.”

“Aw,” Boris pouted. The old beagle chuckled from the side, leaning against the fence of a pasture.

“You can ride more later,” Felix promised.

“Alright.” Boris sighed as Mugs brought the horse to a stop in front of them. Boris shifted, threw a leg over the beast, and slid off. He stumbled, but Bendy caught him before he could fall. The horse sidled away.

“Woah there.” Mugs tugged on the reins a bit and patted the horse’s neck. “It’s okay.” Snowball turned to meep sharply at the horse, and it gave her a wide-eyed, confused look.

“You sure you can ride one of those?” Oswald asked. Bendy gave him an annoyed glance.

“He’ll be fine,” Cup said on top on his horse already.

“Here Bendy.” Boris reached under his bandanna and pulled out the map. He gave it to Bendy. The demon unfolded and looked it over. “Be safe, okay? I want you home in time for dinner, so we can figure out this gang after the meeting.”

“You too Boris. Be safe and don’t do anything Cup would do,” Bendy said.

“Hey!” Cuphead barked from his mount. “I can make you run instead.”

Holly snickered from next to Boris, Snowball returning to her shoulder after meeping several times at Cuphead’s horse. The horse turned to her, and Bendy swore it gave a nod. Bendy gave the little dandehog an appreciative glance. “Well, if you do, Cup, then you won’t know where to go. Now, help me climb this thing.”

Cup snorted and lowered an arm. Bendy grabbed his forearm and, with Cup’s help, lifted himself up on the tall animal. The horse shifted but otherwise didn’t fuss.

“See you all later. Be smart,” Felix told them. “Good luck.” There was a smile on his face but worry in his eyes.

“Be careful with the machine part.” Boris waved. Bendy nodded. Cup nudged the horse’s sides, and they were off. Mugs and Cup steered the beasts down the street and north out of town. Bendy clung to Cup as they flew above the dirt and eventually the sand. The cacti blurred past and, to Bendy’s annoyance, he couldn’t see over Cup’s shoulder. He was blind to what was in front of them unless he was willing to lean far over or stand up, two moves he was not willing to make at the moment.

“Which way?” Cup croaked.

“Slow down so I don’t lose the map,” Bendy grumbled back. The horse slowed to trot and then a jerky walk. Mugs stayed right at their side. Bendy sighed and slowly released his grip from around Cuphead.

“Stars, I thought you were going to break my ribs,” Cup chuckled, but it sounded strained.

Bendy paused in unfolding the map. “Did I hurt you?”

“I’ll be fine,” Cup reassured. Oops. Bendy was usually really good about his strength. Then again, he was losing it with his eyes, so why the cuss not with his cussing strength too? Ugh. Bendy
unfolded the map and looked. “Northwest,” Bendy said and pointed.

Cup turned their stead, and they started out for the part.

The bar was rather plain in Felix’ opinion. A bit homely. It was an old, wooden structure with two floors and a roof jutting out the middle and top. He wasn’t sure what he expected, but this old western almost movie set wasn’t it. Felix, Oswald, Holly, and Boris moved to sit around a circle table, waiting for something to happen or someone to show. Felix tilted his hat back just a bit to scan the room.

“Ya galootin idjit! That’s not how ya cut tha cards!” a short cowboy with two long whiskers coming down from his mouth growled at a hyena who was gambling at the table across from him. His knees didn’t even reach the edge of the chair. His legs lay flat on the seat with his boots sticking out over the edge.

He had quite a voice. They had waited and waited. Boris started to fiddle with the hands. An hour passed. Oswald seemed to be growing impatient. The rabbit’s foot was thumping a mile a minute. Holly sat stiffly in her chair, eyes scanning the room every so often. Snowball had crawled out onto the table, sitting there for a bit. Then, in her boredom, she had started doing tiny somersaults back and forth across it. It was oddly adorable. That seemed to distract and calm Oswald a hint.

“Hey, can I join?” Boris asked the whiskered man. The wolf was leaned almost out of his chair toward the playing table.

The man looked up slowly, raising a hairy brow at Boris. “This here's a game for men, boy,” he told Boris dismissively. The hyena across the table started to giggle crazily, and the cowboy smacked him. “Shaddup, ya dern galoot!” Oh if they had seen how Boris played, the man wouldn’t be saying that. He gave the Cup brothers a run for their money. Oswald lifted a brow.

Boris’ ears fell, and he sighed.

“Oh,” Boris muttered. “I see. I guess you sirs would be scared of losing to a kid in a ‘man’s’ game. Okay. I understand.” Boris turned and moved back into his seat. Felix’ eyes widened. That was a comment he expected from Bendy more than Boris.

The cowboy’s head snapped. “Now wait there a second, boy!” he growled low. “Are you callin’ me yella’?” A hand went rested on one of the guns holstered at his waist. Felix’ hand tensed toward his bag. Was this man really willing to threaten a kid? Then again, he could be part of the Butcher Gang for all they knew. Oswald looked ready to move too.

Boris turned back to him, his eyes wide. “I don’t really know what ‘yella’ means, sir. Sorry.” He shrugged. “I just thought it looked like fun, and I’ve been bored so...” He shrugged again, his posture easy going, like he hadn’t noticed the gun. “I just figured you’d want someone other than a hyena to play against.”

The hyena started to laugh again, this time openly pointing at the cowboy. The little man glanced at the hysterical animal and slowly turned back around, hand going back to the table. He let out a low grumble. “I don’ abide takin from children. Ya even have any money?”

“Sure!” Boris perked up. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a stack of cash. Felix pursed his lips. Was that all his money or just the money he had won from the Cups? He probably shouldn’t let this happen. He was the adult here, and Bendy trusted him with his brother. On the other hand, it was just Boris doing this out of stress and boredom. They had been sitting here for an hour and half
after all.

“Well, fi--” The cowboy trailed off as he saw the table behind Boris. His eyes landed on Oswald. “Rabbit,” he growled. “I hates rabbits.”

Oswald’s ears went up, his agitated expression turned into a scowl. Felix frowned. What in the world did that mean?

“Sorry?” Boris muttered uncertainly.

“But not my rabbit.” The small man’s eyes narrowed again. “But ‘e looks familiar.”

“Can I help you?” Oswald asked with a sneer. Oh dear. They didn’t need a fight right now.

“That’s Oswald!” Boris said. “He’s Mickey Mouse’s brother. Do you know the television show and circus?” His tail gave a wag.

The cowboy gave Boris a wide eyed look. “Os...Oswald tha Lucky Rabbit!” The man stood up erect from his chair, standing on the seat. Suddenly both guns were out and pointed at Oswald. “Don’t ya’ move!” he shouted.

Everyone was so surprised that they did just that.

“Ed, get me tha handcuffs!” the short man commanded. What was going on? Why were they going after Oswald? The hyena blinked and scurried to get up. The two of them approached Oswald, and as the tiny man hopped down from his chair, his coat swished back and Felix noticed a gold star sitting on his belt.

“Why are you arresting him? We haven’t done anything wrong,” Holly asked, looking between the little man and Oswald with surprise and worry.

“Cuff ‘im, Ed,” the small man growled. His eyes never left Oswald. “This ‘ere rabbit’s wanted for robbin’ the Butcher’s Head Bank. ‘N then blowin’ up tha buildin’.”

“What!” Boris asked aghast.

“Oh!” Oswald dropped his fist into his hand. “That’s why this place looks familiar!”

“You’ve got to be kidding,” Holly said, jaw dropping.

He had done what? “Oswald?” Felix asked.

Click. Ed the hyena closed the handcuffs over Oswald’s wrists. The long whiskered man gestured with one of his guns. “Git up,” he barked at the rabbit.

“Okay.” Oswald shrugged. Why was he acting so casual about this?

“Oswald!” Felix stood too. “Wait, there has to be a mistake! We--”

“It’s okay Felix. I can handle this. You fellas just rest and relax,” Oswald said as he was forced to step next to the short guy.

“Are you sure, Mr. Oswald?” Boris asked worriedly. He glanced at the whiskered man’s guns and back to Oswald.

“Yeah.” Oswald smiled. He lifted his hand and waved. “I’ll catch up to you later.” He reached over
the short man and pulled his hat down over his face before looping a belt over it and pulling the thing tight. “Been a while since I used the old tricks, after all!”

“Hey!” The hyena moved to grab him, but the handcuffs stopped him. “Wha?”

“Leggo, ya varmit!” Both of the sheriff’s guns went off, one right by the rabbit’s ear. The other made Felix dive to the side.

“Cussing!” Oswald grabbed his ear and bolted for the door. “I’d run too!” he shouted and stumbled out the doors.

A string of curses were now issuing from the mouth of the small cowboy. He pulled out a knife, cut the belt, and wrestled his hat back up. Then, he threw the hyena the handcuff keys before dashing out the door after Oswald. Felix stood back up.

The hyena pulled out a whistle and started to blow on it loudly as he fumbled to uncuff himself. The other patrons in the bar all moved to the walls, looking wary.

Boris and the others did the same. What the hell? What was happening? Felix heard whistling coming from where the sheriff had disappeared as well. A group of several dogs, coyote, hyenas and a few badgers in the same type of vest as Ed streamed by down the street. Four broke off and entered the bar.

Ed had finished uncuffing himself. Gun drawn, he panted, eyes narrow as he looked back at the three of them suspiciously. He whined. “Until your friend is caught, you’ll have to come with me down to the station,” he said in a high pitched voice.

Felix tugged on his hat and unzipped his bag. “Sorry. We have some business to take care of here.”

The group of vested hyenas circled them, drawing closer. “Not’n till we got that rabbit behind bars ya don’t.” The hyena snorted. “Don’t make us shoot, cat.”

“You don’t want to do that. Can’t we talk this out?” He stepped in front of Holly and Boris. They were by a window. Holly exchanged a look with Boris.

A rather tall hyena in the group went to tackle Felix. The cat pulled a whip from his bag and lassoed his ankle. He pulled and the hyena went down.

Another on Felix’ other side lifted a gun. Felix turned his wrist, loosening the whip and then lashed it to snap the gun out of his hands. The hyena yelped with pain and dropping it. It went off and several of them ducked. Boris opened the window. Felix pulled out a knife and held it in his other hand. The hyenas all tried to dog pile him. Felix side stepped one, the hyena’s arms landing on the table. Felix slammed the knife down through his long sleeves, pinning his arms to the table. Two dove for him. Felix tilted the table. The one pinned to it flailed and knocked them over. The three went down in a mess. The last, Felix whipped, causing him the dance away.

Felix needed to move. This was going to get messy fast if he stuck around too long. Boris and Holly had already ducked through the window and out into the street.

More animals, three badgers this time, pushed inside. Felix tossed a couple chairs to trip some of them up and used his whip on others as he backed toward the window. More guns. Goodness. He dove to the side and out the window just as a barrage of bullets rained against the bar wall.

Felix reached into his bag and pulled out a boomerang. He threw it down the alley toward a group of badgers that were coming down the way, knocking the heads of one, two, three, four of the animals
before returning to him. That should buy him some time. He turned the other way and raced to the back end of the building. He had to find Boris and Holly and get them somewhere safe. It seemed the meeting was a failure.

“The I’ll git ya, ya long eared galoot!”

Ozzy scrambled around a corner and didn’t hesitate to jump into a barrel. He heard the miniature man run past, pause, and come back. What? Had he dropped something? Oswald leaned into a hole in the barrel to peek.

The tiny man had both guns out. He was standing in the middle of the alley, eyeing the length of it suspiciously. Walking bowlegged he leaned over and threw open the lid off a box on one end. “I know ‘bout dang cheap rabbit tricks, ya varmit. Now come out with yar hands raised!” he challenged, throwing another box open.

So he dealt with rabbits before, uh? What about a magician? Oswald smirked. He stood up, lifting the barrel’s lid, and hopped out. “Alright! You got me.” He waved out his hands, one still holding the lid. He twirled it and put the round lid in front of him.

Sam jumped, pointing his gun towards Oswald. “Ooookay rabbit!” he growled. “Drop tha lid.”

“But if I do that, I’ll disappear!” Oswald exclaimed and lifted the lid up above his ears like a rebellious child. He grinned at the little man mockingly.

“That’s a buncha hooey!” he spat, firing his gun a foot to the rabbit’s right. “Drop it!”

“Alright, but I warned ya,” Oswald called. The mook was pretty trigger happy! He dropped the lid and, just like he said, disappeared from sight. The lid hit the dirt with a thud. The real Oswald was on the other side of the cowboy, ducking behind a wall. He bit back his snickers as he looked at the man’s face.

Sam blinked and then stared, half lowering his gun. He holstered one and picked up the lid, raised it, and dropped it. His frown deepened when nothing happened. “Gosh dern,” he whispered. “The critter’s really gone.” He picked up the lid again, scrunching his face as he lifted it in front of his face and dropped it again.

Oh stars! Oswald was gonna die! He had to laugh! He turned to flee before the chuckles could grow louder. He kept one ear turned back to hear if the little man came his way.

Several dogs ran by, howling as they ran into the alley where Oswald had left the sheriff. Another group of hyenas’d tumbled out of the bar doors, yelping, and howling in outrage. One of them had torn sleeves. What happened? At least the others seemed to be holding their own. That was good.

Oswald turned another corner. Cuss. This town was so tiny it was almost impossible to hide. Oswald slipped into a shop, a tiny grocer’s and ducked into an aisle. He couldn’t believe this place was that town he had messed up forever ago! He’d blown up the bank! That had been before he got married! He’d just been a kid! That had been over thirteen years ago. This is what Daisy meant when she said Oswald’s recklessness would catch up to him. Stars, this place could hold a grudge.

The tiny mouse from before was sitting on the counter in front of the register. He held his large sombrero in front of him with a smile. “Hola amigo, welcome to Speedy Gonzales’ Groceries.” More howling dogs went by, searching. “Oh boy! It is a madhouse out there,” the mouse exclaimed, leaning out over the edge of the counter.
“Uh, yeah. It’s insane,” Oswald said. “This happen often?” He ducked a little lower.

The mouse chuckled. “Mostly when de sheriff chases his robbers.” He perked up. “Oh, an’ when de bunny is in town.” He blinked and looked at Oswald. Then, he chuckled. “You did not make de sheriff mad, did you?” he said jokingly.

“If I did, would you know a way to get to the hotel without anyone seeing?” Oswald asked and cringed as a hyena tripped past, nearly spotting him.

The mouse chuckled again. “For an amigo in need? Definitivamente.” Oswald blinked, and suddenly the mouse was on a shelf right next to him.

“Really?” He had been half kidding. “Thanks, little buddy! I’ll owe you one.”

The mouse winked at him. “No problema. Now, just do one thing for me, mi amigo.” He pulled out a piece of paper from a stack on the shelf. “A signature for mi hermano from his favorite performer?”

Oswald blinked and raised a brow. “Oh?” An autograph. “Bud, get me out of here, and we’ll do special passes for you and your family. Meet everyone.”

The mouse let out a high pitched laugh. “Of course, Senior Conejo!” He jumped down from the counter, zooming almost faster than Oswald could follow to a door at the back of the store. “Just through here.”

That was when the front door slammed open. “Say your prayers, ya long eared galoot! I found ya!” Gunfire went off next to his head. Oswald dove down and rolled to the back. He sprang back up and hopped through the door. That had been way too close.

More gunfire went off in front of the back door. The tiny mouse dodged to the side and then zoomed toward the tiny gunfighter. “Oh, mister sheriff!” he called in sing-song voice. Sam instantly pivoted and aimed for the fast-moving shape. “Arriba! Arriba!” Speedy Gonzalez dodged with ease, laughing maniacally. “Ándale! Ándale!” The sheriff continued to shoot, trying to hit the crazy mouse.

Meanwhile, Oswald went for the back door, hitting it with full force and slamming it open. He owed that mouse big! He’d have to bring the whole cussing circus, a private show, something for the little hero! But for now, Oswald had to run.

The alley sat between the grocery store and another building just diagonal from the back of the hotel. It looked like a barber shop. Oswald stopped. A barber shop? He could work with that. He rushed in, grabbed a barber’s coat off a hook, a hat, folded his ears back, and tied a clump of hair from the floor together to make a false mustache.

The next second, Sam slid to the front of the place and rushed in the door. Guns still in hand, he scanned the place. A cat was having a trim in one of the chairs, a short poofy dog snipping at his hair. Sam’s eyes snapped on Oswald. “Hey, you there!” he said. Oswald straightened and grinned with a nod. “Ya seen ‘ny rabbits runnin’ round here?”

“Vabbits?” Oswald asked. “No sir. Ve only have da trims an’ cuts ‘ere.” He lifted his chin confidently. The poofy dog looked up for a moment, shook his head, and went back to trimming the cat’s face. That was an interesting reaction. How ridiculous was this sheriff if the townsfolk dismissed him or helped the ‘crook’?

Sam stared at him and stroked his whiskers. “Coulda sworn I saw the dern galoot run ‘n here,” he muttered.
“Sovvy sir, I can’t ‘elp you dere, but!” Oswald lifted a finger and shook it a little. “I can help vit’ dat ‘stache an’ hair.”

Sam jumped back, guns raised warningly. “Nobody touches me whiskers. ‘Specially no crazy idjit wit’ a pair a scissors,” he declared.

Oswald sniffed and twitched his mustache. Was this guy scared of a haircut? That was hilarious. He forced a scowl. “I vill not be insulted in my place of buzinez! Come! I vill trim! Give me your face!” Oswald pulled out a pair of clippers.

The sheriff was sweating now, backing away with wide eyes. “Stay away from me, ya dirty scruff hustler!” A scruff what? Oh stars, this fella was something else! Don’t laugh Ozzy! Don’t blow your cover!

Oswald huffed. “Vell, I neva! ‘Ow dare you, sir! Such insult! Maybe s’ave it off den!” He reached for the table and the razor on it. “Prepare for baby soft face!” This was hilarious. Stars, Oswald wanted to laugh so badly.

Sam let out a high pitched yowl of fear, turned, and ran. “I’ll git ya for this, ya crazy loon!” he snapped over his shoulder.

“Next time you come, you come to pay for service, yes! Not insult, lil’ man!” Oswald called after him. The rabbit waited a moment and finally burst with laughter. “Stars! That was too much!” Oswald wheezed. “What a mook!” He shoulders shook with mirth. He took a moment to get control of himself. “What a moron!” Then, he stripped off the coat, put his new hat back on, and raced back to the hotel. He dropped the fake ‘stache at the door. Wow. He hadn’t done that much messing around for a long time. Years even. He had missed messing with palookas. He felt so energized. Like he was a young startup all over again.

He got into the lobby to find Felix was already there. Oswald waved. Felix had just finished climbing the stairs. He stopped when he saw Oswald below. “Have you seen Boris and Holly?” he asked breathless.

“No, I haven’t.” Oswald blinked. “Did something happen?”

“I don’t know. We have to find them!” Felix hurried to the hall. Oswald ran up the stairs two at a time. They’d probably have to pack everything and flee town. It was only a matter of time before that mustached mad man figured they were here. When Oswald got to the top of the stairs, he saw Felix frozen in front of a doorway. His eyes were wide and mouth open in horror.

“Felix?” Oswald asked. He hurried down the hall and saw what had the cat stiff. The door to Bendy and Boris’ room was smashed opened. Their mattresses were flipped, things thrown around the room, lamps and glass were smashed. There was blood splatter here and there. Felix stepped in and lifted a bloodied, metal pipe. “Felix?” The cat’s knuckles paled with how hard he gripped the pipe. Oswald looked around the room for any clue. He spotted a paper on the desk, the only thing not turned over. Oswald picked it up.

*Bring the item to Buffalo Canyon or you’ll never see them alive.*

Chapter End Notes
Okay guys!

Here is the link for Aura_Creed's crossover story. It is amazing and well written. I hope you enjoy it! XD

Also, this week we got some amazing art from Lythecreator, who binged the entire story recently (not a feat to be scoffed at) and drew some hilarious art from some of everyone's favorite moments. Here they are!
Oh no. That was planned!!
You pull fast one on me.
You'll never know.
That guy was a Demon!

You didn't know!!

No!
Never fight with the Warners...
More Snowball, Savior of Demons!!
The plots these two are capable of causing together...
And an attack straight in the feels. T-T
Do you really like Fanny that much?
I do.

oh Cup...
Hope you enjoyed this week's cliff hanger! Have a good week. ^_-
Chapter Summary

“L-ladies and gentlemen.” Mic cleared his throat nervously. “Welcome again to Inky Mystery. Things didn’t turn out for Boris and Holly. Will it go better for Bendy and the Cup brothers? Find.” Mic glanced to the side stage and gulped before hurrying away.

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello! My wonderful readers!
How are you? I hope things are going well. I’m being as busy as ever, making me fall behind on things I want to do, but at least this is continuing! And after such a cruel cliffhanger too! :3 Heh. The show must go on. Thank you all for your love and support. The comments and art make our day! There are hints to other ideas possibly happening for this tale, and if I have the money and time I’d love to try, but all that will have to be for later. For now enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy was done with horses. Even though this one seemed a bit more patient with his existence and, when it did get skittish, Cup managed it well, Bendy was still done. His legs hurt, he had sore muscles he didn’t even know he had, and the sun was brutal. He was very grateful for the hat that protected his head and face. He didn’t want to imagine sitting with that sun beating on him directly for so long.

They had been riding for over an hour now. After the town disappeared behind them, they had only seen hills of sand. They had come across some farm house out in the middle of nowhere with a small chicken coop next to it, but it wasn’t what they were looking for, so they kept going. Cuphead and Mugman had stayed mostly quiet and alert for the ride. That was good but also dull as hell.

Bendy pulled out the map again and checked it. It was probably the same as when he last check it, but he had nothing else to do. He didn’t want to distract the Cups or startle the horses, so he was forced to be quiet too. Well, mostly.

“Cussing sun,” he muttered. He looked down and blinked. It was right ahead of them. He leaned around Cup, wincing as his muscles protested. There was a tall sand dune in the way of the horizon. “I think it’s just over that hill,” he told Cup.

“Oh stars, yes! Mugs!” Cup called to his brother and pointed. Mugs nodded and urged his ride into a trot. How the hell was he still wearing that scarf? And Cup in his cussing jacket. What was wrong with these two? They had to be mental. Bendy tried to brush the sweat from his brow, and it hardly worked. Ugh, he felt disgusting.

Mugs’ horse reached the top of the hill. Mugs jumped off and crept to the edge to peek over the hill.
Cup wasn’t too far behind. He slipped off. Bendy grimaced. He wanted down, but he didn’t know if his legs would be able to handle holding him up. He folded the map and turned carefully. It...was a long way down. Bendy hesitated and thought about how he was going to do this exactly.

“Need some help there, pal?” Cup smirked teasingly as he held the reins loosely and patted the horse’s neck.

Bendy gave him a dirty glare and snorted. He turned back to the drop. Bendy took a deep breath and slipped down. He dropped, and his legs gave out immediately, causing him to tumble down the hill a little and sand to fly around him. He stopped on his back, staring up at the empty sky and burning sun. He coughed grit from his mouth and sneered in disgust.

Cuphead laughed. “That was so graceful.” Sunblazing, cussing schmuck! Were they really friends? Bendy would make him eat sand!

“Would you two quiet down?” Mugs hissed from above them. Cup sobered quickly. Bendy pulled himself up on shaky and oh-so-sore legs. He shook as much sand off of himself as he could.

“You see the mouse?” Cup asked Mugs as he went up to join him.

Mugs shook his head. “No, but there is definitely something goin’ on.”

Bendy stumbled up and saw what Mugs was talking about. It was a train station with an train engine and cars being loaded with boxes.

There only seemed to be one fella in sight. A guy in a suit of all things. “Think he has it?” Cup whispered.

“Either he does or it’s on the train,” Bendy whispered back.

“He’s been the only one I’ve seen,” Mugs said. Bendy frowned. That was odd. Shouldn’t there be a bunch of workers or somethin’ around trains? “No idea what he’s puttin’ in that train either.”

“If he’s one of those gang members, it's either trouble or something stupid,” Cup stated with a snort. Bendy nodded.

“Still, we need to be careful. We don’t know what the part does or what’s going on here,” Bendy said.

“Then, let’s go around the train. We can get a closer look and be out of that schmuck’s view,” Cuphead suggested. Bendy and Mugs agreed. The three of them crept along the dunes until they were out of view of the one man, then they went over and toward the train.

They crept along the cars, wary of anyone else showing up. They passed a few of the cars looking for a way in without opening one of the huge doors and making a bunch of noise. They were getting close to where that fella had been. He could even be opposite the car of them now. They found an open door, but it had to be the one the guy was using. It was risky.

“We go in and wait for him. When he enters, we jump him,” Cuphead whispered. Mugs nodded, looking serious. Bendy gulped but nodded. They headed up the stairs and onto the small platform between cars before going inside. The room was almost completely full of boxes. Bendy furrowed his brows. What were in all of these?

“He’s coming!” Mugs hissed. The two moved to one side of the doorway and Bendy to the other. They pressed themselves against the walls and waited. Bendy heard the sands shifting as the guy
approached the train. He really hoped this worked. If this guy turned into some kinda monster, Bendy was going to be done with this quest. Or at least, he’d want to be.

There was a clank of his shoe landing on metal stair and then another. Almost there. Clank, clank, clank. Almost.

The man passed the doorway. His eyes were focused on the pile of boxes, another in his hands. This close, Bendy saw that he was a monkey. He had a bald head and a black nose. He had big round ears on the side of his head, not Mickey sized of course, but still big.

He took another step in, and then Cuphead had the monkey’s arm in his hand. “Hold it,” Cuphead warned. The monkey’s eyes widened, and he half turned to look at Cuphead. Cup yanked and lifted a finger. “I said hold it.” The monkey dropped the box at Cuphead’s jerk. The monkey gasped as the box thudded against the floor loudly.

“You idiot! You made me drop--” He cut off when he saw Cuphead. “You…”

“Made you drop what?” Bendy asked.

The monkey’s eyes whipped around to all of them in a wide-eyed horror. “Don’t try anything smart pal,” Cup said. “Mugs and I are great shots.” His finger lit. Mugs nodded behind him. “What’s with this train? Are you the only one here?”

The monkey shifted. Cuphead turned his arm, probably to put him in some kind of armlock, when the monkey planted a foot on Cup’s knee and jumped. He swung his other leg up and nailed Cup in the chin with his foot. Cup fell back and lost his hold on the guy. The monkey flipped and landed.

“Hey!” Mugs called out and went to get him, but Cup fell into him. The monkey jumped and dove over the two and out the door. Bendy turned and raced after him. The fella was quick. He was already on the sand. He headed toward a wagon pulled by a horse on the other side of the rundown station.

Bendy jumped the stairs and gave chase. “Hold it!”

The monkey looked over his shoulder. “You’re Bendy B. Brother. You were the target.”

Bendy scowled. Were? “And you are the idiots that screwed up!”

“And yet you’re here.” The monkey smiled. “So the mouse is that important to the other B. Brother then.” Bendy felt a chill go down his spine. He didn’t like that look. It was the look of a predator.

“Give up! You won’t escape!” Bendy growled. The sand was hard to run through, but the monkey was struggling as much as him. “Even if you get to your horse, you won’t get away!”

He chuckled. “Get away? I don’t think it’ll be a problem.” The monkey slowed, allowing Bendy to catch up. Warning alarms went off in Bendy's head. He stopped just as the monkey spun around and swung out his arm. Bright green splashed from the monkey in a blur and hit a blue blast that had been sailing at the schmuck. Bendy’s eyes widened as the bullet vanished in the green. Spots of the colored liquid hit the sand and seemed to melt holes in the sand.

“Holy cuss!” Cup barked somewhere behind Bendy.

“Don’t move or the demon gets wiped from existence!” the monkey threatened. He lifted a...a giant brush? That had the be the machine part! It was long, longer than Bendy’s forearm, with a polished wooden handle. The hairs of the brush were glossy and close together, the upper half of the brush’s
fibers had a glob of green liquid like it was ready to paint. The man was holding it like a wand, pointing it at Bendy menacingly.

“Damn,” Mugs hissed. Bendy didn’t dare take his eyes off the chimp to see how far the Cup brothers were.

“Alright monkey man, what do you want?” Bendy lifted his hands slowly.

“Ape.” The monkey straightened up and scowled.

“Uh?” Bendy blinked.

“I’m an ape,” he growled. “I do not have a monkey’s tail. My name is Charley. I am the leader of the Butcher Gang.” He grinned. “And you will be coming with me, Mr. B. Brother.”

Bendy narrowed his eyes. This wasn’t good. “Tsk!” Cup scoffed. “Like we’ll let you.”

The ape, Charley, looked over Bendy’s shoulder. “If you try, I will erase him easily. I don’t see the girl or the part, so this was obviously a surprise attack. Bring them, or I’ll kill him and the mouse.” He looked at Bendy again. “Now move.” Charley gestured to the wagon with the brush.

“Bendy,” Mugs called.

“Just hold it.” Bendy half glanced back. Cup and Mugs were about twenty feet back. Both looked livid and a bit worried. Bendy took a deep breath, lifted his chin, and walked to the wagon. Charley backed away, keeping both Bendy and the brothers in his sight. Bendy couldn’t let this schmuck take him. He had to get that part. If he did, Cup and Mugs could stop him with their finger guns. If they could catch the leader, they’d be able to get Mickey back without endangering Holly! He just had to wait. They reached the wagon. Bendy had to climb in first. Charley forced Bendy to sit next to him on the front bench.

One quick glance proved that the wagon was empty. The brush was still pointed at him. Charley reached with his other hand for the reins. He glanced away. Bendy moved. He grabbed the handle and turned the brush up.

Charley turned back with blazing eyes, not losing his grip. Instead, a jet of green liquid shot into the air above them. Both toons’ eyes went up. The deadly magic liquid turned to rain down on them. Charley wrenched the brush away and dove. Bendy fell back and off the wagon. There was a splat. Bendy scrambled to escape.

“Bendy!” Cup and Mugs shouted. The horse screamed in fear. Bendy looked behind him to see that the front half of the wagon was melting away into nothing. His jaw dropped, and his racing heart stuttered. That could have been him.

“Bendy! Thank the stars you’re okay!” Mugs sighed in relief.

“You almost died, you cussing moron!” Cuphead snapped. Bendy blinked out of his surprise.

“Where’s Charley!” Bendy looked around.

“Over there!” Mugs pointed. There was the scum on the back of the horse, racing over the sand dune.

“Sunblazing scum.” Cuphead lifted a glowing finger and let a couple shots fly. One hit the sand, causing the horse to whinny. Charley used the brush to erase the other.
“Mugman! Get the horses! We ain’t lettin’ that palooka get away!” Cuphead said and raced toward the sand dune, letting shot after shot fly. Mugs turned and disappeared in a poof of smoke, presumably to where they had left their horses. “Bendy, can you throw a hunk of that wagon at that creep? Maybe slow him down.”

Bendy nodded. He ran back up to the wagon and grabbed the wooden frame that was left. “Look out,” Bendy warned Cuphead. Cuphead backed away. Bendy gave a little grunt as he lifted. The wood groaned, some boards fell away. It was a bit heavy, but not too bad. He shifted and looked to the escaping villain. He had nearly reached the top of the hill. Bendy only had one shot. He moved his arms back, narrowed his eyes, and threw it. The back end of the wagon sailed through the air.

Bendy and Cup held their breaths as the wagon went, went, and there was the green again. Cuphead growled and fired at him rapidly. “You scumwad!” he shouted. The wagon fell apart, Cuphead’s bullets blasting holes as Charley disappeared from view. “Damnit!”

Mugs was back in a moment, riding his horse, and guiding the other by the reins. Cuphead took no time swinging onto the horse. He reached down and helped Bendy up. “Let’s go!” Mugs kicked his steed into a gallop. Bendy clung to Cup as they flew over the sand. He glanced back at the train. They hadn’t found out what was in those boxes.

The horses climbed the hill, passed the wagon, and reached the top of the hill where Mugs slowed. “See him?”

“Just follow the prints,” Cuphead told him and passed Mugs to follow the hoof prints in the sand. They headed diagonally down the hill and around a bend. They started off again. Bendy nearly lost his hat. He lifted a hand to save it. They got around the bend to see the prints disappeared again around another bend. Cuphead growled. “He’s playing with us!” he called to Mugs. “Be ready for anything.” Bendy kept his eyes peeled for traps or tricks. Every time they went over another hill or around a bend he tensed, expecting to spot the dangerous ape but to no avail.

They rode hard for fifteen minutes, taking turns and climbs to stay close to tracks. They reached the top of another hill, and a strong gust of wind forced Bendy to shut his eyes. The sand stung his eyes and skin as the wind picked it up. “Cussing ouch,” he growled.

“Moonrocks! That’s not good,” Cuphead growled.

“What? What isn’t?” Bendy gently rubbed at his eyes to clear them. To hell with that. He pulled off his goggles from his hat and secured them to his face. He didn’t need to go blind today!

“That there.” Cup waved an arm out. Bendy followed the gesture to see a grey fuzz on the horizon. “What is it?” Bendy asked.

“What is it?” Bendy asked.

“That is a sandstorm, and if it gets us before we find him, we’ll lose him,” Cuphead told him.

“What!” Bendy groaned. “Oh, come on! For the love of Pete!” Could his luck get any worse?

Cup and Mugs pushed the horses to go even faster. Bendy felt like they were flying over the sand, only slowing to climb up hills. Meanwhile, the intimidating wall of sand grew closer and closer.

“Cup! I think we need to go! That’s going to be bad!” Mugs called over to them.

“Go where?” Cup demanded. “We’re going to get caught in it either way!” Bendy could feel the wind pick up.
“We have to bunker down!” Mugs called out. Cuphead growled as the hoof prints started getting pulled and erased. “C’mon, Cup!” Mugs turned his horse to climb the nearest tall hill.

“He’s right, Cup.” Bendy leaned around to try and see his face. “We’ll only get in more trouble if we keep going.”

“Cussing scumbag!” Cuphead snapped and turned the horse to follow Mugs. “That schmuck actually got away.” Bendy understood his frustration. He had the part in his hand! Damn that ape!

They reached the top of the hill. Mugs jumped off his horse and pulled out a blanket and tent. Bendy turned and slid off Cup’s horse. “A tent?”

Mugs glanced at him and smiled. “Trust me.” The wind was now stinging with needling sand particles. Cup jumped down, and the three moved quickly to set up the tent and get inside. “Cover your mouth with something.” Mugs said. He pulled his scarf up and tied it around his head. Bendy searched his pockets until he found his handkerchief and quickly tied it around his mouth. Cuphead was doing the same.

Then, the two did something weird. They both balled up a second handkerchief and stuffed it into their straws. Mugs even pulled his out to push the cloth into it.

“What’re you doing?” Bendy asked as he watched.

“Stopping sand from getting into our heads,” Mugs said and put his straw back through his hat and into his head.

“Through the straws?” Bendy asked. Mugs nodded.

“Mugs,” Cup said warningly. Mugs frowned. Bendy glanced at him. Cup had turned his straw to the side and reached up to fit the cloth in. He knew that the brothers were pretty tight lipped about their anatomy, and if Cup had been messed with, as it seemed, Bendy would respect that, but that didn’t stop the questions circling his head. What were the straws really for? Would sand be bad? How did they get junk out of their heads? He ignored them and changed subjects.

“What now?” Bendy asked, his voice muffled by the cloth.

“We wait until it’s over,” Cuphead grumbled. “Can’t do anything else.” The tent leaned and the wind howled. The sand hissed as it hit the tent wall. Dust still slipped in making the air cloudy. Well this was going to be peachy.

Boris grunted. He decided then and there that a horse cart was the least comfortable form of travel ever.

Sure he was blindfolded, gagged, and tied up along with Holly like sacks of produce, but still. The jerky motion was rolling his stomach uncomfortably and bruising his ribs horribly. His face ached a bit where the guy had punched him and split his lip. He was stuck in an awkward angle too, and his legs were starting to really cramp. The man that had grabbed him and Holly hadn’t said more than two words, and the silence was unnerving. Boris hoped that the bloody nose the wolf had given him meant it had been broken. He deserves it for this and probably taking Mickey too! There was a bit of shifting next to him and a muffled protest.

How long had it been? An hour? Two? His hands and feet were numb from the ropes. He was worried about Bendy. He was worried about Oswald. He was worried about everyone!
He took a deep breath. At least the man hadn’t covered Boris’ nose. He was pretty sure he’d be able to get back into town following the scent trail. He knew they were in the desert. It was dry and sandy with hints of bones every once in a while. At some point, a loud wind had started. He heard it blow violently nearby.

The horse eventually slowed to a miserable trot that had Boris groaning. The cart jerked, making his numb and tingling paws sting.

“Nah, shut it!” the man growled in a hoarse, deep voice. The horse, thankfully, started to walk, and Boris’ need to hurl or scream decreased by a small margin. The horse turned a number of times before it stopped.

There was a weird squeak sound ahead. “Yeah, I got her. No sign a the disk or whatsit, dough,” the man grumbled. “Help me git ‘im down.”

The squeak sounded again. The man grumbled and it sounded like he slid off the horse. Boris wiggled, trying to scare the horse. It didn’t move as two furry arms wrapped around his bruised middle and pulled him off the cart. He grunted as he hit the ground. Squeak.

Sugar? Something sweet and earthy. There was also the smell of cooked meat. Fire wood. Sweat. Spices. And...black powder?

“Just git ‘im wit the od’er one. We’ll wait ‘til the boss gets ‘ere,” the man said from the other side of the horse.

Then, Boris was being dragged across the sand and rocks. He felt the sun’s ray disappear from his fur. The harsh sound of wind faded a bit. The ground cooled considerably. An earthy scent again. A different kind of dirt. Dampness? A cave maybe.

He was propped up on a wall. He heard shifting clothes next to him and the almond scent of Holly. And a new scent. Popcorn and butter and a hint of cheese. *Mickey!* Boris wiggled. There was a loud bang next to Boris’ head. His sensitive ears rang. He cowered and whimpered.

“Sit tight an’ you’ll git outta ‘is alive,” the man said and walked away. There was scuttling as the sweet meat smell followed him. It was familiar, but Boris couldn’t put his finger on why fear ruined his focus. He whimpered again.

After a few moments of silence, there was a gasp and a whisper. “Boris, are you okay?”

He nodded his head and grunted. He started to wiggle again. “Who’s there?” Mickey asked in a soft whisper.

There was shifting, and Holly’s smell moved nearer to him. “Mickey!” she breathed out. “It’s Holly and Boris.” There was a tiny squeak. “...And Snowball. We’re stuck in sacks. Are you okay?”

“Yeah. I’m blindfolded and tied to a rock,” Mickey murmured. “Otherwise, I’d help.” He chuckled, but it sounded strained. “They hurt my leg after my last attempt to escape. What are you doing here? Are you okay? They didn’t hurt you, did they?” *They hurt Mickey!*

There was a breath of silence. “I’m fine. I think Boris is okay. We were here to try and get you back.” She laughed sourly. “The others are here too.” A pause. “How bad is your leg?”

Boris mumbled into his gag. How had she gotten out of hers? She didn’t have a snout. Lucky. It was probably easier for her.
“I don’t know. They may have broken it. It’s bruised and swollen for sure,” Mickey said grimly.
Holly hummed, upset. Boris was outraged. “I was able to see where we are. It’s a small canyon that
is surrounded by desert. I didn’t see a town or any landmark nearby. I didn’t get very far, though.”

There was a pause. “There’s a town at least a couple hours ride from here. That’s where they took us
from. I managed to untie myself, but I’m still in the sack. If we can get out and get you on one of
their horses, I’m sure we could outride them. We just would need to figure out what direction to go.”

Boris mumbled again and wiggled his sore, numb wrists. He knew the way! He could lead them! Let
him talk! He started biting the gag and shaking his head in hopes of tearing it. He growled softly as
he shook his head back and forth.

He felt tiny paws on his face and heard a soft squeak. Snowball started to nibble at the gag near his
cheek. Boris stopped so she wouldn’t be shaken off his head. A moment later, he felt it go slack, and
his mouth was free. The dandehog moved to start at the rope closing the sack around his neck.

Boris licked his dry chaps and rolling his jaw a bit to relieve the soreness. Ugh. Gags were the worst.
“I can. I can track our path back with my nose,” Boris told them, his tail wagging in hope.

He heard Holly roll towards him. “That’s great!” she whispered. “Did you hear that Mickey?” The
rope started to loosen. “Snowball?”

“We’ll have to get out of here first,” Mickey said. “There are three of them from what I’ve seen. I
don’t know if they have more.”

“Do you smell any more, Boris?” Holly asked.

“Well, there was the salty grump that likes smoking a pipe.” Boris wrinkled his nose in disgust. “He
was the one that took us. And the sweet, sugary, meaty one that helped bring us in.” He hummed.
“And they mentioned a boss. There were a few more smells out there. A cologne, firewood, spices
and so on.” His ears fell. “Along with a lot of black powder. Maybe explosives. But I think it’s just
three.” The last of the rope snapped, and his sack fall open. He felt the tiny animal scurry off.

“That doesn’t sound promising,” Mickey whispered. “They’re really quick and quiet. They’ve
surprised me twice.”

“Why would they need a bunch of explosives?” Holly whispered in confusion.

Silence was her only answer. Boris lifted his still tied hands to his face and ripped the gag and
blindfold off his head completely. He sighed in relief. They were in a dim corner of a cave. Mickey
was tied to a stalag-whatever-they-were-called. He was also blindfolded. His leg was very swollen,
just as he said. He had a few bruises around his body and face, covered in dirt, his shirt was torn in a
corner.

Holly sat up as the ropes of her sack fell apart at Snowball's work. She pulled off her blindfold.
Snowball squeaked triumphantly and scurried towards Mickey.

“Thanks little friend.” Mickey smiled. She sat on his wrists, nibbling furiously.

Holly stared at Snowball and turned to Boris. “Here. Let me help you with your wrists.”

“Thanks.” Boris lowered the rope from his fangs. “So, have you seen anything that looks like a
machine part, Mr. Mickey?” Holly started to work on his wrists with her fingers.

“I’m not sure. They haven’t used any magic on me that I’ve noticed.” Mickey sighed.
“Do you remember what happened when they took you?” Holly asked, looking up for a moment.

Mickey shook his head. “One moment my wall was melting, the next I was in a chest riding a train with a bad headache.”

Boris winced in sympathy. “I’m sorry. We’ll get out of here and get you home.”

Mickey chuckled. “I almost feel like that should be my line.” Boris smiled. Mickey was the best. Even hurt, he was smiling and calm.

Holly finished with his wrists, and they both moved to help Mickey.

Snowball moved, and Boris yanked at what remained of the knots he had on his wrists while Holly removed his blindfold.

When she were finished, Holly moved to the edge of the cave, peering out the entrance.

Mickey’s binding finally gave. “Thanks Boris.” Mickey smiled. “Can you help me up?”

Moving back to them, Holly frowned. “There’s a sandstorm going on outside,” she whispered, her voice choked with worry. “A bad one.”

Boris’ ears fell. “Uh oh,” he muttered.

The two of them helped Mickey up, and they all took a look outside the cave.

Howling wind blasted sand past the entrance of the cave, making the outside indiscernible. Boris’ hope dropped a few notches. They wouldn’t be able to find their way through that. And even if they could, they would be blasted by the needle sharp sand.

The two of them helped Mickey back to a rock in the cave. Holly bit her lip. “What do we do now?” she whispered.

“We’ll have to wait out the storm. We can’t do anything right now.” Mickey sighed with a disappointed frown.

She sighed. “Let’s at least see if we can take a look at how bad your leg is for now,” she said, moving closer to him. It was swollen and a bit discolored. It wasn’t in a weird angle or anything, but Boris guessed that not every break was like that.

“Is it bad?” Boris asked.

Mickey shrugged. “I’ve dealt with worse.”

Holly pulled a little at the edges of his pant leg, looking down at it. “Let’s wrap it up so more dirt doesn't get in the wound,” she said with a frown.

“With what?” Boris asked looking around the cave. All they had were their ropes and the remains of the sacks they had been in.

Holly looked around. “If only I hadn’t dropped my bag,” she muttered. “At least, lets wrap his leg with one of the sacks.”

“Okay,” Boris murmured and pulled his over. While he held it down, Holly looped the ropes around the sack.
“We’ll have to be careful,” Mickey said. “They don’t seem the smartest, but I haven’t been able to escape them for long.”

Boris and Holly helped him up on either side. Holly leaned towards him. “How did you get out of here last time? And how did they catch you?”

“I waited for them to disappear from sight and then climbed the canyon wall. It was only twenty feet up or so,” Mickey explained. “I planned to simply run after that, but then they caught up to me on horses not three minutes later. I’m not sure how they found me so quickly.”

Holly frowned. “Some way to track you?”

“The sand?” Mickey shrugged. Boris ears fell.

“They don’t have a dog or wolf with them, do they?” Boris asked.

“No, a monkey, a sailor...I think, and a spider kid,” Mickey said.

“Sp-sp- spider!” Boris hissed, his fur standing on end. Why more of those creepy crawling things!

Mickey gave him a worried look. “It’s okay. I’d be more worried about the other two actually.”

Holly gave Boris a sympathetic look. “The sailor? And who’s the other one?”

“Their ringleader I think,” Mickey said. “He tells the other two what to do. He’s a monkey in a suit.”

They waited, sharing news and catching up. Boris and Holly took turns telling Mickey what had happened since he had be taken. In turn, Mickey told them about each of his four escape attempts. The first on the train. Another on the way to this place. He had tried to steal the wagon they had him in, and it had worked until they caught up to him on the faster, unburdened horses. Once he was here, the first time he had left the cave but had gotten lost in the canyon, and the second time was when he'd climbed out, but the gang had caught up again. That time, the sailor was so angry he attacked and hurt Mickey’s leg.

More time passed, and they heard the wind start to die down. Boris took a peek. He could see outside, though it looked dusty. “I’m gonna go check outside.”

Holly nodded. “Could you try and see where the horses are?”

“Yes.” Boris nodded and crept to the entrance. The sand made his quiet paws completely silent. But there was a roaring at the entrance. He peeked out and sniffed the air. Everything had the strong smell of dust and desert. Still Boris’ sensitive nose was able to pick up other smells under it.

The tobacco and sweet meat people were still in the camp but out of sight. The black powder was beyond them. The horses were next to that. The scent of cologne that had to be the third member was older, almost completely gone. So, only two right now. Along with the smell of...paint? Boris wrinkled his nose. Why paint? The wolf shook his head.

And a lizard in the cliffs, but the animal wasn’t important. The canyon made it a bit weird to hear, but it didn’t sound like anything or anyone else was around either. The problem was that the two gang members were between them and the horses. As he waited, he smelled corn, beans, and steak start to cook. Boris’ mouth watered. Steak--No focus! It was not the time for food!

He went back to Holly and Mickey. “It’s just two of them. The one that smokes a pipe and one that eats candy.”
“That would be the sailor and the spider.” Mickey nodded. Boris’ ears dropped. Oh course it had to be a spider.

“The horses are on the other side of camp from us,” Boris said. “They might be distracted with cooking and cleaning off sand, but that’s not a promise.”

“We’ll have to sneak around them,” Mickey said. “But I’ll slow you both down.”

“We’re not leaving you Mr. Mickey.” Boris and Holly said at the same time. Boris shook his head. No way.

“I can distract them,” Boris offered. It wouldn’t be that different from the police in Sillyvision after all.

Holly frowned. “Do you think you could outrun them for a short time? If you distract them and I got Mickey on the horse, I could grab the reins to the second one and loop back around to grab you if you were able to get ahead.”

“Yeah, no problem.” Boris perked up. Spider... Okay, one problem. But he’d deal with it. Holly nodded. Turning to Mickey she asked, “Does that sound like a good plan to you?”

Mickey looked pained but nodded. “It’s probably the best chance we have.”

She nodded again, mournfully. “Okay.”

The plan decided, they went back to the mouth of the cave. Boris leaned out again. Still no sign of them, but he could smell them. He stepped forward and slunk his way to the tent wall. He kept his ears perked and nose ready.

He didn’t look to see Holly and Mickey. He could hear them moving along side the canyon wall. Boris followed his nose closer to the campfire. He slowly looked around the tent to see a spider holding a spatula and poking at the meat sizzling in a pan. It was big. Not as big as the one in the park that had snatched him up, but it was still big. The size of a ten year old child. It had a baggy hat and an apron on over a short sleeve shirt. The apron had a little heart on the pocket. The sailor was in the tent on the other side.

So, what could he do? Knock over a tent? No. It was a good block for sight. So...His eyes went to the pan. He could steal the meat. The meat the spider was right next to…

Boris gulped. He really wished he hadn’t lost his pipe. Okay, he could do this. Just think about what Bendy would do. Or imagine he was back in Sillyvision. Yeah! That meat was dinner, and Bendy hadn’t eaten anything that week. He’s done this a hundred times. It wasn’t a spider. It was that mean badger of a butcher! Yeah! Boris took a deep breath. Okay, wait until he turned around. He only needed a second.

The spider squeaked, a sound far too cute for a creature like him, and turned to a crate next to the fire. Now!

Boris bolted forward and yanked the pan off the fire. The spider spun around with a surprised squeak. It’s mouth dropped in a surprised gasp. Boris didn’t wait, he ran back toward the cave and away from the horses and his friends. The spider hissed.

“Whadda mean ‘at the wolf is out!’” the rough shout of the man came. Boris glanced back to see the spider scuttling after him with a spatula in it’s mitt. It had lost its hat to chase Boris, so the sun glinted off its fangs perfectly. The sailor, a grumpy looking old man with a white beard and a pipe in his
mouth, scowled.

“Don’t let ‘im git far, Edgar!” the sailor shouted. He went to the side of the tent and pulled out a heavy looking shovel. Boris turned away and put all his focus on running. He didn’t think about the sound of the spider’s steps getting closer or the the hissing.

“Whadda mean he stole dinner!” the sailor barked. Boris got out of the circle of tents. “Sunblazin’ lil’ mutt! Keep on ‘im!” To Boris’ alarm, the sailor didn’t follow the spider, instead his footsteps were heading back to the horses! Oh no!

What was he gonna do! He couldn’t let the mook see Holly and Mickey! Boris forced a laugh past his panting as he headed to the mouth of the round corner they had set up camp in. “I’ll eat it all before you can lay a hand on me!”

“What!” the sailor barked and spun to glare at him with one eye. The other was hidden behind an eye patch. The spider hissed again.

“You’ll never get this steak!” Boris grabbed one and bit into it. The shouts of outrage behind him were a little over the top in his opinion.

“Dodgast! You plaguey mutt! Do you know how long we’ve been cussing stuck on beans!” Well, the old grump was sure chasing him now! A bottle hurled past his head and shattered on the cliff wall next to him. Boris ducked and dove around a corner. The canyon was a maze, but thanks to Boris’ nose, he followed the way he had come in. The storm had erased parts of the path, but he was able to find his way regardless. He just hoped that Mickey and Holly would be able to find him. The swearing and shouting behind him hopefully would make it easier.

Boris devoured the first steak to the outrage of the two behind him. The spider was gaining ground to Boris’ horror. He weaved past prickly desert bushes and rocks, but it didn’t seem to slow them.

Boris bit the second steak. Something hit his shoulder painfully and made him stumble. The fist sized rock thumped to the ground. Boris winced as his shoulder throbbed.

“Don’t think we won’ eat wolf! Imma havin’ meat tonight!” the sailor shouted. “Edgar will try anythin’!” The spider hissed in possible agreement. Boris gulped. His legs were burning, he nearly choked on the steak he still had half hanging out of his mouth, and his lungs were protesting. His body and lungs begged him to slow down, but the quickening sounds of the two behind him kept him going.

Another rock came his way. He jumped to the side and yelped when something sharp pierced the pad of his foot.

“Go Edgar!” Boris glanced back to see the spider jump to tackle him. Boris lifted the frying pan and smacked the spider away...losing the last steak to the dirt at their feet.

“You dirt licking scum mutt!” the sailor roared with another rock in hand. “Imma skin you alive and roast you!”

Boris stumbled to run again. He couldn’t get caught! He had to get away! He had to get back to Bendy!

A rock came flying towards the sailor, hitting his forehead. “Boris!” The sailor fell sideways.

“Guys!” Boris perked up as Holly and Mickey came. Holly was on one horse, while Mickey was holding on tight to the other horse. He didn’t have time to celebrate. The spider was getting up.
Holly leaned down, gesturing for him to grab her hand. He dropped the pan and let Holly help him onto the horse. She kicked its sides immediately, spurring the thing to a gallop.

The spider hissed and shook a fist at them. “Golly Boris!” Mickey said. “Are you okay?”

Boris held onto Holly as the sailor and spider disappeared around a bend in the rocks. “Now I am!” Boris grinned. “Thanks for getting me.”

“You were really brave Boris. Thank you for keeping them busy,” Mickey said. Holly nodded in agreement. “Now we can get into town and find help.”

They stopped at a fork in the canyon. “That way,” Boris said after sniffing the air for a moment. Holly urged the horse on. “I just hope the others are okay. They might be worried.” Boris was worried, that was for sure. Were Bendy, Mugs, and Cup okay? What about Oswald and Felix?

“For now, let’s just focus on us getting out of here safely,” Holly responded.

“Good idea,” Mickey said. They rode in silence, with Boris directing them one way or another until he could see where the canyon opened up into rolling hills of sand. Boris wagged his tail. “There it is! It’s almost a straight shot once we get out there.”

They almost reached the end when the ground suddenly shook. The next thing Boris was aware of, he was falling. He yelped in surprise and clung to Holly. The horse under them let out a terrified shriek. He lost his grip and hit the ground on his already bruised shoulder. Boris curled up and hissed in pain as he clung to the throbbing burning shoulder. He hoped nothing was broken. Boris lifted his head to see where they were and what happened to the others. The horse was rolling and kicking its legs in the air, still thrashing in panic before pulling itself up on its hooves and bucking.

Holly had rolled to the ground a few feet away. She looked stunned. Mickey was nowhere in sight.

They were in a hole roughly twelve feet deep. The walls were smooth and shear. The ground was sand and...Boris was laying on a tarp. It was a trap!

“Holly-Boris!” Mickey called down. He hadn’t fallen. He was on the ledge, still mounted on his horse. The nervous beast tossed his head. “Are you okay?”

Holly shook her head, rising from the ground. She looked up. “Mickey go! They’re going to catch up!” she yelled.

“Fair assessment dear, but I was already here,” a man’s voice said. The person, a monkey with beard, a tasteful hat and suit, and a deep frown stepped into view perpendicular to Mickey. He had his hands behind his back. “Mr. Mickey.” He sighed in a tired manner, like a putout father. “Haven’t we been over this? You can not leave until I have procured what I desire.”

“Let them go!” Mickey demanded and turned the horse to face the monkey man.

“I am afraid not!” He looked down to Holly and Boris with cold eyes. “Ms. May and if it isn’t the B-Brother. No Mr. Mickey, these two are far more valuable to me than you. I don’t see the item we requested but never mind that. With the other brother still free, there is a chance it is near.”

Mickey looked around. “You better let them go or--”

The monkey laughed. “Or what? You can’t even stand. Will you run me down on the horse? Please Mr. Mickey, let us not extend this farce. Dismount the horse, and you will not be harmed.”
Boris sat up and looked between Mickey and the monkey. “Just run, Mr. Mickey! Get out of here! We’ll be okay!” Boris shouted. Mickey tensed. “You can get help! They can’t hurt us if they want it!”

Mickey grimaced.

“Now, now, cease that thinking. You will regret trying to flee. This will be the last time I tolerate it, Mr. Mouse. This is your last warning. Get off the horse or else,” the monkey threatened smoothly. Boris looked around for a rock or anything that he could throw.

“Mister, what point is there in keeping Mickey?” Holly called up. “You have Boris and me. At this point, Mickey would be more inconvenient for you than anything. You could give him a message to take to the others at Heela,” she reasoned. “For your item.” She gave him a calm, level stare.

The monkey glanced at Holly and smirked. “How clever of you, Ms. May, and you may call me Charley, leader of the Butcher Gang.” He took a deep breath. “Sadly, Mr. Mouse has proven to be a rather effective nuisance. If I let him go, he’d interrupt my plans. With the wolf here, I’m sure you found out about the explosives. No. You all know far too much.”

Mickey turned the horse and disappeared from sight. Boris swallowed a whimper of fear.

“What do you even want with me and the cog? Why do you have all those explosives?” Holly pleaded, trying to distract Charley.

“Why, erasing a town, but in a more classical approach.” Charley smiled.

Holly’s jaw dropped, speechless. Boris didn’t fare much better. He was going to blow up a town?

“You see, the police there have gotten rather tiresome. If things are to go forward smoothly...Well, it’s best that the place simply isn’t there anymore.” Charley sniffed. “The last train in will have quite the delivery.”

The monkey’s eyes snapped toward the direction Mickey had disappeared. Boris could hear the horse’s thudding gallop. Boris stood up. “Why are you doing this!”

The monkey glanced at him. He seemed unbothered with Mickey’s fleeing. “Why? Dear me, isn’t it obvious?” He turned and brought his hands in front of him. In one was a rather large paint brush, about as long as Boris’ forearm. Boris’ ears dropped in confusion. “There is someone that has an interest in the girl and the item that was used on Toon Town.” He waved the brush, and suddenly there was a jet of lime green liquid that shot out of the end of the brush and out of view. The liquid had a strong acidic stench that burned Boris’ nose.

“What are you doing!” Boris demanded. Then Mickey and his horse shrieked, a terrifying sound that chilled the wolf pup to the bone. “S-stop it!”

“Mickey!” Holly paled.

Charley flicked the brush with a flourish, stopping the liquid and tsking at them. “Honestly, there would be so much less trouble and pain if only you were willing to cooperate. Is a civil meeting and conversation so hard to ask for? A little patience, perhaps?”

Boris’ heart nearly stopped when he didn’t hear anything. Then, there was a moan from Mickey. It was faint. “H-he’s alive. Whatever that was, Mickey’s alive.” Boris hissed to Holly. She gave him a wide eyed look. The horse, though...He didn’t hear hooves or grunting or any hint of the beast still running.
Holly shook her head slowly, still pale. “Charley!” she called. “What did you do?”

Charley looked down at her with a look of disappointment. “I would expect the witch of Toon Town to have figured that out.”

She pressed her lips together. “That’s a part.”

“Correct.” Charley smirked and twirled it. “Maybe there is hope yet.”

“Boss!” Oh no, the sailor. “Boss!” The monkey frowned and half turned to look behind him.

“There you buffoons are,” he stated flatly. “You are lucky I was ready and saw them coming.”

“Sorry. They’re a tricky bunch,” the sailor huffed. The spider wheezed right next to him.

“You didn’t block the wolf’s nose. That was a mistake. We won’t have to worry about Mr. Mouse running away anymore.” Charley waved his hand. “Bring them back to camp. We need to talk.”

“Yes sir,” the sailor grumbled. The spider saluted. The spider deflated and squeaked.

“Our dinner?” Charley asked. The spider pointed to Boris. “No. We will not be eating the wolf. If he stole your meal, that is your fault for not being careful, Edgar.”

Edgar puffed out his cheeks.

“Well...you could have horse if you are so desperate,” Charley suggested and glanced the way Mickey was. Boris gulped.

“Mickey!” Boris shouted. “Mickey are you okay! Answer me!”

“Get them out. And this time, no screw ups.” Charley waved a finger at the two. “Do you understand?” They nodded. Charley went out of view while the spider walked down the smooth wall like it was the normal ground. Boris cringed away.

Holly watched in pale fascination, stepping to be next to him. She took his hand and squeezed it silently.

“He’s alre’dy mad ‘bout that meat!” the sailor shouted down at them. “If ya try an’ fight ‘im, I don’ know what ‘ell do to ya.” The grump laughed at them.

“Better than a shipless, black-hearted pirate like you,” Holly snapped.

“Wha’s that! No ship! Ya don’ know the first thing ‘bout me girl!” he snarled. The spider reached the ground. He scowled at them and reached behind him. Boris tensed. The spider pulled a silky thread from behind himself. “Now, we’ll be pullin’ ya up with that.” the sailor said, crossing his arms. Boris whimpered. Was he gonna end up stuck on a giant spider’s web again? He really didn’t want to relive that experience. “Hand out in front of you! We don’ got all day!”

Holly hesitated. She squeezed Boris’ paw again and held out her hands. The spider stepped up, Boris couldn’t hold back the shiver. He wrapped the silk over her wrist and squeaked. It was still too cute for a huge spider. He pointed at Holly’s other wrist.

Her frown deepened, but she simply clenched that hand tightly as well and offered it to him, wrist next to wrist. He wrapped them quickly...and it didn’t seem like he did it too tight. He also never touched her.
The spider then turned to Boris expectantly. His scowl deepened, and Boris shuddered and curled into himself. The spider’s head lowered, but he waved for Boris to move. The pup gulped and held out his wrists. The spider did the same to him as he did Holly.

“Hurry up!” the sailor grouched. Edgar guided the two to the wall and climbed up the wall.

“Do you think Mickey is okay?” Boris whispered.

Holly’s brows went down. She didn’t answer for a moment. “I...I don’t know. That sounded...awful. But he’s alive.” She paused. “I’m sorry Boris,” she whispered.

The spider and sailor started pulling them up the wall slowly. Boris could hear another horse and Mickey’s growl. What was going on?

“Oh please,” Charley huffed. “Are you going to even fight me to get you on the horse?”

“Y-you low down thief! You’re--”

“Yes, yes, I’ve heard it all before.” Charley dismissed him. They reached the lip of the hole, and Boris could finally see. He searched for Mickey. The mouse was being pushed onto a different horse. The one Mickey had been riding was lying on the ground. He couldn’t make out what was wrong with it, nor Mickey. The standing horse was blocking his view. Mickey was left laying across the horse’s back.

Charley took the reins and led it back to them.

Holly took a step forward, brows low with worry. “Mickey?”

“Stay there!” the sailor barked and yanked on her ‘rope’ forcing her back. She glared death at him.

“I will bring them back to camp. You two nimrods will take care of the horses, both of them,” Charley said. He walked up and snatched the cords out of the sailor’s hand. “And I want the living one back at camp!”

The spider squeaked and pointed down. Charley turned to him. “Fine.” He lifted the brush in his other hand and waved it at the hole. Green liquid shot out on one of the sides. The lime green liquid hit the side, and it dissolved. The wall also melted. Boris’ eyes widened. “The rest is up to you,” Charley stated and started to walk, pulling them and the horse along. Boris stomach was left in the sand behind him.

Holly’s head snapped back to the horse and mouse. “Mickey?”

“I’m okay,” Mickey grunted. He was shaking and looked pale.

“W-w-w-what did you do to him?” Boris whimpered. He tried to see. But from this side, Mickey seemed okay, pale and shaky, but fine.

“Oh, he’ll live,” Charley said. “I was simply tired of runaways, and now that there are more of you, it’s imperative you all understand the consequences of trying to leave. Mr. Mouse simply volunteered to be the example since he seems to be a leader.”

“You’re scum,” Mickey hissed. “Boris is only a kid. He and Holly don’t belong here!”

Charley snorted. “They forfeited their claim to naive innocence the moment they decided to go after these.” Charley waved the brush. “Anyone after this power is dangerous.”
“And what do you know about them?” Holly asked, her eyes hateful.

Charley chuckled. “Wouldn’t you like me to say.” He shook his head. “Now, on to business. Boris B. Brother, I have an understanding that you and your little squad are after the parts and that you have a way of finding them.”

“No, not really.” Boris looked at Mickey with worry.

“Please don’t waste my time lying. I am not an imbecile.” Charley rolled his eyes. Boris swallowed.

“I have nothing for you.” Boris whimpered.

Charley frowned. “That’s...disappointing.”

Mickey pushed himself up and glared at the monkey. “You better not lay a finger on him, Charley or I’ll...”

“What?” Charley looked back at him. “Throw sand at me?” It was the angriest Boris had ever seen his idol.

“You’re not going to get the other part,” Boris said.

“Oh we’ll see if that holds.” Charley smirked. “After all, there are new and old ways for me to get what I want.” Boris frowned.

They got back to the camp, and instead of taking them back to the cave, Charley stopped right next to the dying campfire. “Sit,” he ordered. He pulled out a blanket from a crate and laid it out next to Boris. He then turned and pulled Mickey off the horse and onto the blanket.

“Since we can’t have you away, then I might as well keep you in sight,” Charley said and walked to the other side of the camp to put away the horse.

Boris turned to Mickey. “Mickey a-a-ar-” His jaw hung open. Mickey sat hunched over, hands on the blanket, legs crossed...except the right one. Just below the knee. It was gone.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys! On that horrible, horrible note...I have some art for you. T-T

This drippy, inky Bendy was drawn by ebonyjester. He's terrifying...just as terrifying as what happened. Oh...my poor heart. Poor Mickey. Poor, poor Mickey. Good luck to you all until next week!
"Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girl welcome back to Inky Mystery!" Mic smiled brightly. "With Boris' group in bad shape will Bendy and the crew be able to find them in time? Find out today!"

Chapter Notes

Hello! Hello my lovely readers!
Not much to add this week. Life is good, school is hard, and the weather is wet, but at least it isn't snow! There is some bonus material that's been added to Inky Extras. Holly's translation of the page that talks about the parts. There is also a short of what happens when Bendy and Alice run into the game versions of themselves on the street!

Hope you enjoy the chapter and have a great week!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy and the others sat in silence and listened to the mournful storm.

“I hope that schmuck chokes,” Cuphead said.

“Cup,” Mugs sighed. “Calm down.” He gave his brother an annoyed look. “We at least know what the machine part looks like, right?” Mugs glanced to Bendy.

“And what happened with Mickey’s wall,” Bendy muttered.

“Hey, can’t we use that map again?” Cup perked up. “If that scum has the part, the cussing storm won’t matter! We’ll still be able to find him.”

Bendy blinked. Oh yeah! The map! He reached into his bag and pulled it out. He unfolded it and searched the map for the part. Sand. Sand. A cactus. It wasn’t there...

Why wasn’t it there! Bendy’s jaw dropped behind the fabric. What the sunblazing hell was this?

“Well?” Cuphead asked impatiently.

“I don’t see it,” Bendy choked out.

“What do you mean, you don’t cussing see the part!” Cuphead snapped.

“It’s not there!” Bendy snapped back.

“Why the hell not! We don’t have it yet!” Cuphead argued.
“Don’t cussing yell at me!” Bendy shoved the map at him. “Take it up with this damn thing!”

“Damnit!” Cup’s eyes flashed red, and he balled up the map and threw it. Mugs caught it.

“Cups!” Mugs chastised.

“What cussing good is it!” Cuphead snapped.

“Stars! Both of you! You keep the red light show going, and I’ll kick you both out in the sand!” Mugs growled.

Bendy paused. “Again?” He sighed. He lifted a hand to his mostly covered face.

“Yeah, I can even see it through your goggles,” Mugs said. “I get that you’re both angry that he got away, but taking it out on each other or our tools isn’t going to help.” Mugs smoothed out the map with his hands. “We need to work together, and yelling doesn’t do that.”

Cup snorted and crossed his arms. “What’re you talkin’ about Mugs? This is just how Bendy ‘n I talk to each other.”

Mugs’ deadpan gaze completely disagreed.

Bendy managed to chuckle at Mugs’ look. It wasn’t like Cup was wrong either. “You need to learn how to treat friends better,” Mugs grumbled.

“What? I treat my pals great!” Cup tapped his chest with his thumb. “I cussing spoil them!”

“You could be nicer,” Mugs muttered and returned the map to Bendy.

“I tried!” Cuphead said. Mugs furrowed his brows. Bendy wasn’t sure if it was confusion or disbelief. He glanced to Bendy.

“Wait.” Bendy smirked. “You talkin’ about that overly nice guy act when you first wanted to cussing join Boris and me?”

“Overly nice?” Cup sounded like he sneered.

“Well, yeah. I knew you were a mook under all that glittery charm.” Bendy waved a hand. “Hell, the facade didn’t even last that long. You were back to acting like a palooka when we were climbing the mountains!”

“Hey! I’m a nice guy! The cussing best, even! That charm is real and---Uh, what the hell is a facade?” Cup stumbled at the end.

“A mask. A fake.” Bendy snickered. “Like the decorations on those building fronts back in town.”

“They have a cussing name for that?” Cup blinked. “Weirdos. And I ain’t cussing fake!”

“Sure, sure,” Bendy said easily.

Mugs snickered. “Don’t know, Cup. You put it on thick whenever you stole cookies from the kitchen.” Cup glared at Mugs, which caused Bendy to laugh.

They went back and forth and talked until the wind died down. When Bendy left the tent, he was shocked by how much had changed. Any prints in the sand were gone. His clothes and fur were full of sand. It fell off his hat in rivets. He patted himself, and dust lifted in the air again. Some of the hills
Cup and Mugs followed him out. Their tent was half buried, and they had to dig it out.

“Well. That was bust. So we better head back to the train.” Cup sighed and shook sand from his jacket. “Cussing stuff is gonna be in my pockets for months,” he complained.

“We better get back to town,” Mugs said. “That meeting has to be over.”

“But what about that load of stardust on the train? We didn’t get a look at what was inside,” Cup argued.

“Cuss Cup. Do you even know which way the cussing train is now?” Bendy growled, exasperated.

“Well no, but you have a cussing map. How hard could it be?” Cup asked.

Bendy balled his fists. “I’m completely turned around out here! I have no cussing idea where we even are on this thing! How the hell am I supposed to know?” Bendy snapped.

“So...we’re lost?” Mugs asked.

Cup dropped his head back and glared at the heavens. “Oh, starfallen fantastic, then! Lost in the cussing desert.”

Bendy’s shoulders dropped. Well, this couldn’t get much worse.

“Town is East of us, right? And even if it ain’t, we might hit train tracks, and that could led us to town,” Mugs suggested.

“Great idea, except, I have no idea where East is Mugs.” Bendy sighed.

“You have a compass?” Bendy blinked in surprise.

Cuphead smirked. “C’mon losers. We better regroup and figure out what to do next.”

“Who you calling a loser, bubble brain?” Bendy snorted. The horses were covered in dust. They hadn’t enjoyed the storm and were less than excited for Bendy to even approach them. Cup had to calm both of them down before they could head off in what was hopefully the direction of town.

Bendy didn’t know how long it took, but it felt like forever. Bendy’s legs were going to fall off, they were so sore and numb. The sun started to sink in the sky, casting long shadows from the cacti, bones, and dunes. They ran out of water. The heat was still unbearable.

At long last, the view of buildings came. Bendy was cautiously optimistic. He had heard about desert mirages tricking people. Luckily for them, it was real. They rode down the streets and stopped at a water trough for the horses. Bendy slid off and fell. He didn’t even feel embarrassed. He was too tired and sore to care what people thought. Cup and Mugs’ grimaces and limps seemed to indicate they were in silent agreement with him. Cup helped pull him up, and they limped to the hotel.

As they walked down the street, they noticed a group of two hyenas and two dogs wearing uniforms talking. A moment later, they broke apart, heading in several different directions. One of them knocked on the door of a tiny two story apartment building and stepped inside.

“I really hope that the others had better luck then we did.” Mugs sighed. Bendy nodded. He could
sleep for the next two days. Boris would fill him in as he stuffed his face before he passed out. When they got into the building, there was still no one behind the counter. Was there even management here?

They climbed up the stairs and around the corner to the hallway. They stopped, the door was ajar.

“What’s the hold up?” Cuphead asked. This couldn’t be good. The last time Bendy had come back to a broken door, he and Boris had to flee their home town.

The demon sprinted down the hall, aches and pain forgotten, Mugman right behind him. The door to Bendy and Boris’ room was smashed opened, splinters of wood everywhere. The moment the demon reached the room and disappeared inside, he was calling names. “Boris! Holly! Felix! Oswald! Are you here!”

The room was destroyed. The beds were turned, papers and glass were everywhere. Bendy rushed to every corner of the small space. “Boris!”

Mugman turned over one of the ripped up mattresses. Cup joined them. There was blood splatter on a wall and the floor. “Where are they!” Bendy demanded.

“Not here,” Cup said. He turned and went out into the hall again. “The other rooms are clean, but I think they’ve been looked through!” Cup’s voice shouted from the down the hall.

“They’re gone?” Bendy asked. They had to be okay, right? Boris was okay? They were with Felix! Of course they were!

“Got something,” the other cup brother stood up. A bag in hand.

“Isn’t this Holly’s bag?” Mugman asked with a worried knot between his brows. The contents were spread across the ground next to the window of Bendy and Boris’ room. His brother didn’t answer him. Cuphead stepped up and looked it over. There was a piece of paper sticking out from one of the books. He reached in and pulled out the paper. “Is that something?” Mugs asked.

Cup unfolded it and shook his head with a sigh. “No, just scrap.”

“Sunblaze that! That meant they had been here!” Whose blood was it then? One of Bendy’s friends? One of the people that fought them? Worry gnawed at Bendy’s mind as fear twisted his heart. Where were they?

There was the sound of feet coming up the stairs.

Cup stuffed the paper in his pocket. Cup and Mugs raised a fingers to the door.

“Did you see the sunflowers outside! They’re so big this year;” came a feminine voice from the stairs. A moment later, a small female beagle ran up the stairs, looking back as she moved. She had a cowboy hat on, there was a ribbon tied around her neck, and she had floral print cowboy boots on.

Behind her a collie followed. She also wore a cowboy hat, but it was grey, and her pants were more fitted to her hips. She also wore a thin jacket that went to her waist.


“Your level of energy always amazes me, Dimitri,” the collie sighed. The two of them reached the door where Bendy and the cup brothers stood. The collie blinked as she looked inside. “What
happened here?"

“We think a break in,” Mugs said. “Does anyone know what happened? Is there someone we can go to and ask?” Mugs inquired almost pleadingly, worry in his eyes.

That seemed to throw her off. She blinked at him several times. “Sure…” she said slowly. “Follow me, mister.”

“Mugs,” Cup hissed.

“We don’t know what happened! What do you want to do? Run back out into the desert?” Mugs asked with a frown.

“I have to find Boris,” Bendy stated. He left no room for argument.

The beagle frowned at them, her big eyes curious.

Cuphead sighed and waved a hand for Bendy to continue. Like he needed Cup’s permission. Bendy turned on his heels and quickly followed the dog.

The three of them walked down, the beagle following last. They were half way down the stairs when Bendy felt hands grip his shoulders. There was a whoosh. He looked up to see the beagle somersault over his head, still gripping his shoulders. She landed on the steps in front of him, and using the momentum of her acrobatics, yanked him off his feet and over her head. She grinned as he flew. “Ca-pow!” she whispered. Bendy slammed straight into Cuphead’s back.

They both tumbled down the stairs in a painful heap before landing at the bottom with a loud thud. Bendy had the breath knocked out of him as Cup landed on top of him.

At the bottom of the stairs, the border collie whirled around, leg snapping out to sweep Mugman off his feet. She grabbed his wrist as he fell, twisting it behind him as she slapped cuffs on.

“What the hell!” Cuphead growled from on top of Bendy. This wasn’t helping his sore body. Not in the least. He gasped for air, wishing to ask Cup to move.

The beagle jumped and landed on top of them. “Ugh!” Bendy grunted with more weight added to his chest. Wasting no time, she pulled out of a pair of handcuffs and yanked Cup's wrists together behind his back.

“Hey!” Cuphead snapped and tried to pull his hands away.

“Come on, mister. Don’t be grumpy,” the girl chided, her grip tight. She latched one side closed, pulling on the other and slapping it closed too. She shoved Cuphead’s head down with a knee and reached for Bendy’s wrist. Bendy wiggled and threw his arms in front of him. No! He didn’t have time for what the hell ever this was! He tried to pull himself out from under Cup without hurting him.

A hand grabbed him from behind, keeping him from moving any father. The collie twisted him over onto his face while the beagle slapped handcuffs on him. The beagle yanked Cuphead up while the collie pulled him to his feet.

Bendy now noticed two hyenas and two other dogs in the room with them. The other dogs hyena held either side of Mugs’ arms. A scowl etched on Mugs’ face as he glared at their captors. The other two hyena’s moved to help the beagle and collie hold them.

The collie started to speak. “You three are being taken in for collusion with known bank robber,
Oswald the Rabbit, on suspicion of your connections with the Butcher Gang, as well as breaking and entering,” she said in a flat tone. “I suggest you cooperate and this won’t be too painful.” Say what!

“Breaking and entering? When?” Mugs asked confused.

“The hotel, mister,” the beagle answered cheerfully.

“But we paid!” Mugs protested hotly.

“What the hell do you mean, bank robber?” Cup cut in.

“The only connection we have with that damn gang is that they kidnapped someone!” Bendy snapped. Possibly more now. Those schmucks might have Boris!

The two dogs exchanged a look. “You think it’s an act?” the collie asked the beagle.

The beagle shrugged her shoulders. “Don’t know, Trish. All I know is that rabbit is driving Nita nuts.” She giggled. “And Sam.”

What the hell had Oswald done? What was going on here? “What about the others?” Bendy managed to ask.

Trish shook her head. “I’m gonna leave that to the sheriff and deputy sheriff to handle this. C’mon.” With that, the group was towed out the front door. Bendy grit his teeth. What the hell! What the cussing hell!

“Are you the schmuck’s that fought in their room?” Cup demanded as the three of them were forced to walk forward. He glared at the collie. She glanced back at him, eyes narrowed. She didn’t answer. A couple blocks later, they were dragged into the front door of sheriff’s office.

Felix growled. It was odd for him, yes. But this was unacceptable! They couldn’t keep holding him here while Boris, Holly, and Mickey were in danger!

The rottweiler sitting in the folding chair in front of him didn’t blink. She just twirled the barrel of her pistol, his bag pinned firmly underneath her foot. She was on the other side of the cell door.

His bag had tried to come back to him. That was pretty normal for it, but the dog had been sharp. She had stopped it three times, and this fourth attempt had obviously broken the last of her patience. Felix was rather annoyed himself. If he could just get a pin, he’d be out of this cell and on his way to saving everyone. This had been one of his worst mistakes! He should be with them!

He had gotten distracted. Seeing the bloody pipe and trashed room had made him forget they were being pursued themselves.

In the background, he heard soft talking from the room where the sheriff and the retriever had taken Oswald. He hoped Oswald was fairing well.

After they had seen the hotel rooms, they’d been ambushed by this group of police dogs. There had been a beagle who’d distracted him and a collie who had stolen his bag. Then, this rottweiler and a golden retriever had come at Oswald from behind, knocking him out before he had a chance to react. Felix considered fighting them off and running, but that would have meant abandoning Oswald, and he didn’t know if these officers could be trusted.

The cops had raided their rooms. They’d taken the books Hat had given to Bendy, the bloody pipe,
and the note the Butcher Gang had left. So they knew someone had been taken, but they weren’t
doing anything!

He’d been locked in the cell for an hour now while the deputy sheriff, a retriever named Anita Burp,
and the long whiskered sheriff talked to Oswald. It was all a terrible mess. When the sheriff had read
the note, he’d said it was the cops job to handle it. He’d ignored everything Felix had said.

When they had disappeared into the interrogation room, Felix had tried to talk to the rottweiler,
convince her that this had all been a mistake and that he needed to go, but he hadn’t gotten much of
a response. Just a grunt here and there. Eventually, he’d heard the sheriff leave through the front
door. He had tried to fiddle with the lock but had to stop each time his bag—and the dog tailing it—
appeared. He was stuck with her silently glaring now.

“You know, that bag is going to keep doing that until I get it back,” Felix stated. “Doesn’t matter
where you lock it up or how far you take it. That bag always finds its way back to me.”

That made her give a low growl and simmer lower into her seat.

“Does that bother you? You comfortable sitting there for a few days?” Felix narrowed his eyes. He
could feel his tail lashing back and forth in aggravation.

Her ears flicked to the side and back towards him. “If I have to,” she growled.

Felix stood up. “Oh really? Even though you know that there have been innocent people taken,
you’d rather sit there and hold that bag down.”

The dog narrowed her eyes. One side of her frown deepened. Her ears folded back against her head.

Oh boy. Would nothing get through to them! “One of them is a girl, a college student. She just
wanted to help!” Felix looked at her sincerely. He had to go save Holly and Boris! If only she was
just a touch closer! He could reach her. Come on bag! Move!

As if sensing his thoughts, the dog pressed harder down on the bag. She leaned forward, arms still
crossed. Her eyes flicked towards the door where Oswald and the other cops were.

Felix’ frustration got the better of him. “The other is just a kid!” He grabbed the bars. “I have to save
him and the others before something terrible happens! I get there’s justice and all, and I wouldn’t
mind working through the process, but good people are in danger right now!”

Her eyes flicked back to him again. “Don’t like it either,” she finally growled.

Felix glanced at the door she had looked at. “It’s that sheriff, isn’t it?” Felix said, his fur starting to
rise with his frustration despite his efforts to stay calm.

The dog’s expression was unreadable. “He’s out lookin,” she said tonelessly.

Oh great. Wonderful. Fantastic. “And how long exactly has he been looking for this gang?” Felix
said deadpan.

A low growl started at the back of the dog’s throat. She didn’t answer. That wasn’t comforting.

That’s when the front door was shoved open, and voices flooded in. The rottweiler twitched, and her
eyes glanced to the door, her foot pressing harder into his bag. Poor bag. It didn’t deserve this. He
couldn’t really argue for the fair treatment of a magical item though, not without things getting more
complicated.
Felix looked over to the source of the ruckus. Had they caught the Butcher Gang? Was it Mickey and the others? Or was it more trouble? Felix flicked an ear and leaned forward to hear better.

“Look, I just need to know if there was a wolf with them. Please. It’s important.” That was Bendy. Felix’ heart plummeted, all his frustration replaced with cold dread. What was he going to say? They were getting him back, obviously, but how could he apologize for failing to protect Boris? Bendy had been so hesitant to split up in the first place. His ears folded back as he thought over how Bendy was going to react.

There was a sigh from the collie. “No kid.” She glanced over at the rottweiler. “Anita finish with the rabbit yet?”

The dark dog growled and shook her head. She turned back to Felix. Without a word, she picked up his bag and headed towards the interrogation room. The collie’s eyes followed her in surprise. Felix held back another growl. Instead, he stepped back from the bars.

The collie and beagle moved the group into the back hall where the cells were. The beagle opened the doors and each of them was put in the other three cells. Bendy ended up being led to the cell next to Felix. Bendy stopped when he spotted Felix.

“Mr. Felix!” Bendy rushed to the bars in between their cells. “What happened! Where is everyone! They got you and Oswald, but what about Boris and Holly? What happened in the room! Whose blood was that!” Bendy’s grip on the bars was so tight that the metal groaned.

Felix reached through the bars to pat Bendy’s head comfortingly. “Oswald is here. I...I lost Boris and Holly, Bendy. They got them. They left a note. I think they’re with Mickey now.” It was like swallowing hot coal.

“What!” Bendy’s tail shot up. “B-but you were with them! How did they...How did you...” He started trembling and shaking his head back and forth. “That can be right!”

“Bendy, I’m so sorry.” Felix heart squeezed painfully in his chest at the horrified look on Bendy’s face. “We’ll save them all. I promise. I’ll do all that I can.” Bendy started gasping. “Bendy?”

“Can’t breathe,” he gasped. The metal in his hands groaned again. Felix’ eyes widened. It wasn’t an ink attack, was it? He felt a bit warm, but he wasn’t coughing. His breathing was quick. He wasn’t looking at Felix. “Boris.” Bendy shivered even harder. Suddenly, the bars in his hands snapped from the pressure. Felix, the Cup brothers and the two cops all jumped at the sound. Two fist sized twisted holes now were between Felix and Bendy. Tears came to his eyes, and he sunk to the floor to ball up. He dropped the squished metal like he didn’t even notice.

“Hey! Bendy! Are you okay!” Mugs shouted from off to their right in one of the other cells. Felix wasn’t sure, but he had a guess at what was happening. There was a crash from the other room.

“Bendy. Hey, I’m right here. I’m not gonna leave you. We’ll get Boris back, okay?” Felix said as he dropped to his knee and reached through the bars to brush Bendy’s head and horns.

“Hey Trish. That guy looks pretty bad,” the beagle whined from the front of the hallway. The collie moved next to them.

“Hey,” she said when she got to the bars of Bendy’s cell. She looked at Felix. “What’s going on?”

“I think he’s having a panic attack. Please, do you have anything to drink or eat? And maybe a book or something?” Felix pleaded, not lifting a hand from the unresponsive demon.
The dog whipped around. “Dimitri, get me a book, an apple from the snack table, and a cup of water!”

The beagle straightened like a pole and flashed out of view.

“Ah, Felix, we might have a bigger problem,” Cup muttered from his cell, looking on in concern.

“What?” Felix asked, looking over to him. Cup pointed to the ground. Felix looked down to see that Bendy’s shadow and the shadows of the bars were withering and shifting like living snakes. Oh boy. Demon magic seemed to be at least partly emotional. Would Bendy lash out or lose control because of a panic attack? “Oh Bendy, you’re okay. It’s okay Bendy. Look at me.” Felix didn’t pull away. Even when one of the shadows brushed his leg and felt more solid than it should. The warm room became freezing.

The collie stared. “Starfallen—” She backed away.

A second later the beagle was back. Her jaw dropped when she saw the shadows. A little water dripped from the cup. “Uhhh,” she said gulping.

Bendy lifted his tear streaked face to stare at Felix with wide red eyes, his chest heaved with every gasp. “I--I--He’s gone. I can’t--I'm going to--” He tightened his grip around himself.

“What’s that they brought for you, Bendy? Can you tell me?” Felix asked gently. Bendy’s brows furrowed with confusion, and he turned the blazing scarlet on the officers searchingly.

The beagle yipped and scrambled back, apple and cup still in hand, book underneath an arm. Felix frowned.

“Oh, would you cussing get over yourself!” Cuphead barked roughly. “Cussing give them the damn goods, woman!” He had pulled his coat closer to himself as the temperature continued to drop. Felix saw his breath as he spoke.

“What is she holding? Describe them,” Felix prompted.

“An apple.” Bendy ducked lower. “F-Felix, I think I’m dying.” The shadows moved faster, some even lifting off the ground. One hit a bar with a sharp twang. Mugs and Cup jumped at the sudden sound. The collie instinctively put a hand on her gun belt.

“You’re not,” Felix promised. “You’re okay. You won’t die.” The shadows slowed a little. Felix lifted his free hand and waved for the officer dog to give him the items.

The dog whined. For a second it looked like the collie would grab the things from her, but then she scooted forward offered the apple and cup through the bars.

Felix took the book and water and set them down. He then offered the apple to Bendy. “Here.”

“I-I don’t—“

“Please?” Felix asked.

Bendy hesitated and then took it. He bit into it. He was shaking so badly that he nearly dropped it. Felix brushed some of the tears away with his hand and sat down next to the bars. He grabbed the book and opened it. It was one of Bendy's books on Demon history. He flipped through the book. It was in demon script, so neither of them could really read much of it yet. He stopped at a picture. “Come here, Bendy.” He offered a hand and took Bendy’s. “Tell me what this is.”
“An angel,” Bendy mumbled.

“What is she holding?” Felix asked.

“A spear,” Bendy said. Felix keep this up for a short time. He would find pictures and ask Bendy to describe them in the most basic way possible. He encouraged Bendy to eat the apple and drink the water. The shadows slowed down and then sunk back down to the floor before they stopped moving completely. The room was cold, but warmth was slowly returning. Bendy’s breathing evened out, and his red eyes dimmed.

Eventually, the poor kid fell asleep, half leaning on Felix, half on the bars that separated them.

The whole thing felt like hours but was probably only ten minutes. Poor kid.

The collie knelt down beside them, frowning at Bendy. “Is he prone ta those?” she asked quietly.

“This is the first time I’ve ever see him have one,” Felix confessed.

“That,” Cup spoke up, “was intense.” Mugs nodded with wide eyes.

“No kidding,” the beagle chirped. Her eyes were still large and round. Felix shifted and brushed the last of the tears from Bendy’s face.

The collie hummed. “How did you know that would work on a demon?” she asked with a frown. “I thought nothing stopped them when they go on a rampage.”

“Lady, that wasn’t a rampage,” Cup chuckled dryly. He stuffed his balled up fists in his coat. “That was fear, just fear. If it was a rampage, this buildin’ wouldn’t still be here.”

Felix furrowed his brows. Cuphead had seen a demon rampage before? How involved with demons did Hat have Cuphead and Mugman?

“Y-yeah.” Mugman nodded, looking at Bendy with worry. “That was scary, but thank the stars it wasn’t that.”

The collie blinked at them. The beagle whined. “I don’t like this, Trish. Why can’t we just let them out? The…” She hesitated. “He got really worried about those people. Sam only brought the dumb hyenas. He didn’t even bring ‘Nita to the exchange place on the note!”

Felix scowled. This sheriff seemed to be dropping the ball. He was grateful the officers here were at least keeping a level head about Bendy. Felix knew others that would have panicked.

Before Trish could answer, the interrogation room door slammed open. “What the hell is happening out here?” a tall golden retriever strode out of the room. Surprisingly, Oswald was right behind her, uncuffed.

The rabbit looked them over and shivered. “Why is it so cold?” He rubbed his arms.

Anita raised her brow at the collie. Trish glanced at Bendy. “The demon had a panic attack,” she said.

Oswald blinked in surprise and looked over to Bendy. He’s ears fell. “Oh,” he said lowly.

The retriever raised her other brow. She glanced warily at Bendy.

“It was hearing about the missing people,” Dimitri added helpfully.
Anita frowned.

“He,” Cuphead growled. “He was hearing about his kidnapped little brother.” He glared at the beagle. Felix pursed his lips. He agreed with Cuphead, but they wouldn’t get out by snapping at them.

The dog frowned back at him, shifting.

“S he gonna wake soon?” Anita asked. She glanced at Oswald. “Longer we take, more time tha idjits out there have ta cause trouble,” she huffed. “N’ for tha sherrif ta notice I let ya out.”


The dog threw a thumb at Oswald. “Me ‘n bunny made a deal.” Her face scrunched. “Now, we don’ make a habit of workin’ with bank robbers...”

“Not a bank robber.” Oswald lifted a finger, his ears coming up again. “I never took a cent.”

“Yeah, yeah, long ears. I heard ya tha first six times.” She started to walk forward, looking at each of them. “But the Butcher Gang fellas have been a pain in our rumps for months now. Stealin’, trashin’ buildings.” She stopped in front of Cuphead’s cell. “An ‘ntire search party tha’ wen’ after them jus’ disappeared like that. No bodies. No bones. Nothin’.” She scowled. “Fact is they’re idjits. We shoulda caught ’em within the first week. The problem is that they’re good at showin’ up and disappearin’.” She started to pace again. “But then again, like I said, they’re idjits. We’re pretty sure they’re holed up ‘n a canyon northa town. The problem is whenever we set up a posse to wait ’em out at the exits, they never show. Yet, somehow they’re still gettin’ out.”

Her eyes swiveled to Felix. “’N then bunny tol’ me you’re a tracker ‘n you could help us find them.”

Felix perked his ears. “I can.” He sounded as eager as he felt. His tail flicked back and forth impatiently.

She nodded curtly. “Jus’ a couple things first.” She pulled out a cigarette and lit it.

“Can I smoke too then?” Cuphead raised a hand in question. A light glow to it.

She blinked. “If you light that finger up, I’ll shoot you,” the dog said casually. “But you can use one of my smokes if you want.”

He snorted and dropped his hand. “Fine.” He pulled out his own pack and approached her. She waited until he offered the cigarette through the bars and then lit it with a match. Cuphead took a deep breath and let it out with a sigh. He looked laid back, but there was a tension in his shoulders.

Stepping back, she sucked in a breath of hers and then blew it out. “First off, me and my girls are coming with you.” That sounded fair to Felix. He nodded.

“Second off, tha lotta ya have ta skedaddle outta town as soon as this whole thing is over. We got Sammy outta tha way by sendin’ him ta tha train station tha gang wants ya ta meet them at. But if he finds out I let ya’ll outta here, he’ll lose a gasket, and I’ll lose my badge.”

“Nita?” Dimitri said with worry. Anita waved her off.

So, there was risk for them as well. Wonder why they didn’t trust their sheriff? Either way, they were willing to help, and that was enough for Felix.
“Great. Then, let’s stop wasting sunlight,” Oswald said and clapped his hands together.

She snorted. “Sounds peachy.”

Bendy groaned and shifted. Felix blinked and turned to him. Bendy’s eyes fluttered.

“Hey Bendy. How are you feeling?” Felix asked.

Bendy frowned and sat up. He looked around a bit lost before focusing on Felix. “What happened? Did I have an attack?”

“Oooh pal, you had an attack, just not the one you think you had,” Cuphead said.

Bendy furrowed his brows. Felix decided to save Bendy the confusion. “I think you had a panic attack, Bendy.”

“Oh.” Bendy blinked again and yawned. “Great. Another thing to add to my list of ‘I’ll deal with it later’. So, what are we doing now?” He looked exhausted. If Felix didn’t know that Bendy would fight him tooth and claw to go save his brother, Felix would push for him to stay behind in town and rest.

“Goin’ ta get your friends,” Anita said, pulling out her keys. “Once you show me your papers, we can get this train wreck out the door,” she said through her cigarette.

Bendy paused. Papers? Oh no. He shared a worried look with Bendy. “Papers. My papers.” He barely stopped himself from making it sound like a question. Oh no! They wouldn’t be able to fake their way out of this.

The dog froze, eyes inching towards him. “You do have papers, don’t you?” she said in a low, dangerous voice.

Bendy dropped his head. The papers Hat was working on now. No they didn’t. What was going to happen now? Felix wasn’t sure. “Our room was ransacked before we got there. They took my papers,” Bendy lied.

She removed her cigarette, glaring at him. “And you were stupid enough to leave them there?” she questioned. “I may live ‘n a small town, but I’m not ‘n idiot, kid.”

“Well, I guess I am then,” Bendy said and looked up blankly. Cuphead snorted and lost it in his cell. Mugs was chuckling too, but at least he was trying to control it.

The dog raised her eyes to the ceiling, hand over her face. “First bandits, then the bank robber, and now a cussing rogue demon. What’s next? A clan of skinwalkers?” she groaned.

“Uh! It’s not--I’m not!” Bendy choked.

“You don’t need to worry about Bendy, ma’am. His situation is unique. He’s a good person.” Felix spoke up for him. She was already letting them get away with so much. Maybe they could get away with this too.

“Yeah dame.” Cuphead struggled with chuckles. “He looks mean and dark, but the guy’s a softy.”

“Bendy is really nice! Please give him a chance!” Mugs called from his cell.

Anita glanced curiously at them. “Well, warm my night slippers and give me a chance to burp, a group of goons who vouch for the character of a demon.” She clicked her tongue, considering.
Felix gave her an uncertain half smile. Saying it like that sure did make it sound strange. “Normally, I’d tell ya tough luck,” she said flatly. “But since there are innocent lives at stake, and we need as many hands as we can get, I’ll make an exception. Demon-do-right was never here. I never saw him. Capiche?” She flicked her cigarette at Bendy. “But if you so much as sneeze in the wrong direction, I’ll have Dimitri call in the angels faster than you can say tumbleweed.” Felix heard Bendy gulp next to him.

Bendy nodded quickly. “S-sure. Absolutely! I owe you one. I’ll make it up to ya, I swear.” He stumbled up on his feet. Felix reached over to help steady him.

She narrowed her eyes and nodded. “But don’t show your mug around here again without papers, or I won’ have a choice but ta report ya.” Felix would make sure they didn’t.

Bendy chuckled nervously. “They should be waiting for me when I get back to where we came from.” Felix really hoped that was the case.

That seem to satisfy her. In little to no time, the group was hunched around a map she had. “This is the canyon I was talking about.” She pointed. She glanced at Felix. “Think if I give you a starting point you can follow them, whiskers?” Felix narrowed his eyes and studied the map. The sand would make it difficult but not impossible if they were going through a canyon. They had hope for plants and disturbed rocks.

“I think I can do that,” Felix said confidently and straightened up.

Boris couldn’t hold back the tears. Mickey’s leg was gone! It was all their fault! He’d never walk again! He had hurt one of the people he looked up to most. Oh stars! Oh stars above!

“Boris! Boris! It’s okay!” Mickey’s voice cut through Boris’ thoughts as a thin tail wrapped around his wrist and tugged on his bound hands. Boris blinked his watering eyes. He gasped for breath. He was sobbing. “You’re okay.” Mickey smiled at him, his tail giving another tug.

“B-b-b-but M-M-Mr. Mickey! Y-y-your le-leg is--”

“I know. But I’m still alive,” Mickey said reassuringly. Boris tried to get control of himself. “It doesn’t even hurt.”

Holly stood motionless, staring at Mickey’s leg in silent horror, her eyes wide and mouth pressed into a tight line. The nub was a few inches below his knee. It wasn’t an open wound. There wasn’t any blood. The leg was just gone.

“Cut dat rukus! ‘N you! Sit yur tail down ‘fore I make ya,” Barley, the old salty scum, barked. Holly didn’t react.

“Holly?” Boris gasp past his sobs. He lifted his hands, Mickey letting his tail fall away so he could. The wolf gently tugged on Holly’s wrist.

She blinked and started to shift.

Apparently, she was moving too slow for the sailor’s taste because he came up behind her and shoved her to the ground. Boris snarled at him. The sailor looked at him and threateningly lifted the shovel. Sadly, something fell away from Holly and distracted him.

Snowball let out a meep of surprise as she rolled across the dirt.
“Well w’at we has ‘ere?” Barley stepped over Holly to the little animal. “Looks eatable.” Snowball wasted no time jumping into the air to escape, but there was no wind, so she only moved as fast as her tiny feet propelled her.

The sailor reached up and snatched her from the air easily. “N it floats!” he scoffed.

Squeaking, the dandehog wriggled in his grip.

“No! Leave her alone! You’ve already done enough, you monsters!” Boris barked.

The sailor chuckled and turned to walk away toward the fire and cooking things.

“Get. Your. Disgusting mitts off my dandehog!” Holly snarled, leaping up on him, tied wrists yanking violently at whatever bits of hair she could grab. The man roared and fell back, landing on top of her.

“Holly!” Mickey called in alarm.

Holly umphed and gasped in pain as he landed, but didn’t let go of his hair. Snowball meeped and wriggled more violently, trying to escape. Boris pulled himself up to help but froze.

There was a scuttling sound, and the spider came around the tent. He hissed and hurried up to them. He pulled Holly off, but it cost Barley a clump of his hair as she stubbornly held on. He covered her hands in webbing. He hissed and pushed her away. She landed next to Boris. The spider hissed at the sailor.

“I don’ give a damn! Imma gonna kill ‘er! Move!” Barley rolled up, grabbed his hat out of the sand, and glared daggers at Holly. Snowball was still in his hand. Boris stepped in front of her defiantly. It was a good thing too, because Holly glared right back, looking like she might jump back up and try again. The spider frowned and squeaked at the sailor.

“Over wat? Dis cuss’ snack!” Barley lifted Snowball. The animal squeaked frantically. The spider’s eyes widened. “She dink’s she can jus’ attack? I’ll show her! N den Imma gonna eat dis ding really slow wi’ salt n whiskey.”

The spider gasped and stood in front of the sailor. It let off squeak after squeak.

It was at this moment that Snowball decided to sink her teeth into Barley’s hand. Barley shouted and threw Snowball down. The dandehog let out a cry of pain.

The spider squeaked...in alarm? And fell to the ground next to Snowball so they were eye level.

“Snow!” Holly lurched forward and tried to get past Boris. Boris stopped her with the spider right there.

The spider squeaked to the dandehog and lifted a mitt.

“Move! Imma killin’ it!” the sailor declared angrily. The spider looked up and hissed at him, covering Snowball with his mitts protectively. “No! W’at da cuss you mean no! Dat ding bit me! She attacked me! I get even!”

The spider hissed again and gently picked up Snowball. Barley’s face darkened in rage. “You’ll cussing fight me!” Boris shivered. That was a scary glare. Holly blinked in surprise. The spider hissed again.
“Barley! Edgar! What are you buffoons yelling about?”

“That lil’ witch attacked me!” Barley accused. The monkey appeared now with a deep frown. He looked at the group and then rolled his eyes.


Edgar saluted with one of his free hands. Charley half turned with an expectant look at Barley. Barley cursed and appeared ready to argue until Charley cut him a cold look. The sailor gave them all one more nasty look before turning away.

Edgar watched until he was gone and then turned to face them. He eyed them. Boris gulped. The spider lifted his mitts and squeaked at Snowball again. Wait. Was that cooing? Was the spider cooing at her? Was Boris going crazy or was the spider cooing?

A moment later, he heard Snowball meep back uncertainly. The spider smiled and squeaked again.

“Do either of you understand what’s going on?” Mickey asked quietly as he watched the spider and dandehog. Boris shook his head. Holly shook her head too.

They squeaked back and forth to each other for a minute. Edgar seemed pleased and happy. It was...really weird.

They settled down a moment later, and Edgar put Snow oh his back...thorax? He scuttled up to them on all six limbs. Boris shivered as fear cut through his soul, and he stumbled back into Holly. She caught him gently. He tried to go around her and tripped instead. He gave a little yip when he hit the sand, pain shot through his injured shoulder.

Edgar stopped and turned his head at Boris with a frown. Boris gulped and still pushed himself away. Edgar frowned and turned to face Holly. He moved right in front of her and stood up on four legs again. He took Snow and turned to offer her back with a happy squeak.

Confusion crossed Holly face, but she raised her hands, and the dandehog scurried across them, disappearing down the back of her shirt. “Thank you,” she said.

Edgar smiled brightly, showing his two sharp fangs before taking a couple steps back and plopping down on the sand. Boris shared a confused look with Mickey.

“Oh, thank you,” Mickey told the spider. Edgar smiled and squeaked. Boris didn’t get it. Now though, he understood one thing. Mickey was right, at least they were all alive for now.

Felix stopped at another juncture in the canyon. This was suspicious. He had stuck mostly northeast in the rocky climate. There was no doubt that the gang had the part. There was something off though. From the map that Anita had shown them, the paths on the map the actual layout of the canyon didn’t always match. There was new paths and changes. Possibly, the work of the brush the others had explained to him. Felix avoided going down the paths that didn’t have the hooves or other markings of travel. Still, it was tricky to track them. They’d disappear, and then at a new corner or turn, they’d reappear only to go away again.

These guys had set up false trails too. They had done a good job. Once in a while, Felix would see a broken twig or a shifted rock that would give them away. At first, when Felix chose not to follow some obvious tracks, Anita turned and gave him a low stare. Then later on, she mentioned that there were new trails she didn’t recognize. She had to have been back here before several times. Good to know he wasn’t the only one to notice. He went to the mouth of one of the new trails and looked at it
more carefully.

Bendy leaned around Cuphead. “Mr. Felix?” he asked.

“Are these walls a little too smooth?” Felix asked the dog deputy as he looked from one side to the other. They were rough and jagged like the others, but there was no signs of weathering.

She followed up, running a paw over the side of the wall. She frowned darkly. “Like a polished boot. This ain’t no natural path,” she spat. Good to know his theory was correct.

Bendy shared a knowing look with Felix. It had to be the machine piece. A paint brush that could erase anything, even the Cup brothers’ magic bullets. This was going to be dangerous.

They continued. There was a problem that Felix didn’t know if they would camp in one of the old coves or the created ones. The map the deputy had would also be useless with these new paths. She seemed to figure this out as well and stuffed the map away in annoyance not long after.

They continued in silence for a few minutes. The only sounds were the huffing and thuds of the horses as they went. Felix also kept a close eye on Bendy. The horse for Cup and Bendy would shy or act nervous, but Cup did a good job of keeping the stead calm. Bendy looked just as nervous. Every once in a while, Cup would wince, probably from Bendy’s strength. Bendy would loosen up each time. Mugs and Oswald had stayed silent since they left the town. They both seemed on high alert for signs of anything suspicious.

He came to a spot where the obvious signs of travel matched with the direction he was going. It seemed something large had been dragged. Felix followed it curiously until he came to a stop with a flash of horror.

Blood and bones. For a second, the worst of his imagination hinted at gruesome terrors, but Felix was able to shake it off quickly. The bones were too big to be any of their friends. No, this was either a cow or a horse. He couldn’t be sure without the skull.

“What the hell!” Mugs exclaimed.

Chanzti growled and hopped off her horse, sniffing the carcass. “It’s that sailor and the spider again. And the acid smell,” she continued in a gravelly voice. “From before.”

“How many are there?” Cuphead asked. Bendy stared at the bones, pale and unseeing.

“Bendy, it’s fine. This wasn’t a person.” Felix promised. Bendy gulped and nodded slowly. He looked at Felix and then away. He seemed so young like this. Felix steeled his nerves and determination.

Anita gave Bendy a sad look. She glanced at Oswald too before answering Cup's question. “Three that we’ve seen. A sailor, a monkey, and a spider. Damn monkey’s the leader.”

“Three,” Cuphead muttered. “A sailor…”

“Oh man, a spider? Poor Boris!” Mugs sighed. Bendy dropped his head. That’s right. Boris had developed a fear of spiders after his last few unfortunate interactions with them.

“Poor?” Oswald asked.

“He’s nearly been eaten by spiders twice now,” Mugs said. Oswald grimaced. Oswald had a run-in with a cave of them. If anyone understood, it’d be him.
“Ah,” Oswald muttered. They moved past the bones. Drops of blood were now part of the trail ahead. There was a new tension hanging over the group as they urged their rides forward. Urgency burning their souls.

Felix noticed Anita move up to talk to Trish. She leaned over next to her. “Think ya have ’nough ta treat bad wounds?” she said in a low voice.

Trish glanced back at her and let out a grim nod. “Let’s hope it doesn’t come ta that,” Trish muttered. Felix felt a grim cold close around his heart. He hoped they were okay.

Anita leaned back. “Kay then. You’re on hostage duty. You see someone hurt, you get ’em out,” the dog said.

Felix spared at look over the others. Cup and Mugs were quiet and stony but determined. Bendy was pale. Felix was still worried about him after that panic attack. Oswald also seemed a bit tense. It was only a matter of time before they came to whatever lie ahead. Please be okay.

They came to a corner and turned. “Slow down,” Oswald said with his ears up. “I can hear voices ahead.”

Everyone tensed. The police dogs pulled out their guns.

Cuphead and Mugman slipped off the horses. Bendy almost fell off. He had to jump back to avoid being kicked. “We’d be quieter off of these guys,” Cuphead said. Felix tilted his head thoughtfully. “True, but some of us should stay on horses in case any of them try to make a run for it,” Felix suggested.

“Dimitri, you set up here and catch anyone who runs.” Anita nodded at the beagle, who made a sharp salute to her.

Felix and Oswald jumped off their steeds. They continued on foot, the dog deputy leading. They climbed up the canyon wall, getting onto an overhanging ledge as they moved toward the sound. Chantzi, the rottweiler, got on the ground and shimmied up to the lip, gun prepped as she looked down. A moment later, she put a finger to her lips and motioned for the rest of them to join her at the edge.

Everyone shifted forward. The camp was a circle of three tents with a single campfire in it’s center. The fire was out. There was a cave under them. And it seemed the sand had been shifted around on the other side of the alcove. Felix could make out a few individuals around the fire pit, one standing just outside the tent circle and four sitting. He couldn’t quite make out who was there. He thought he spotted Mickey’s round ears.

Just then, a horse entered the area. A man in a suit trotted into the circle of tents. “So, now what?” Cuphead whispered. Felix frowned. It was a hard question to answer. Hostage situations were always delicate. They didn’t have the item the gang wanted, and they had placed themselves in the middle of the alcove. Anyone that wanted to get to the camp would have to cross a ten feet of empty space from every side. The tents were the only cover from view, and the hostages were right there with the gang members. If they entered a standoff, there was little to no hope of getting them safely. They had to plan this smart.

Chapter End Notes
Wow! We're getting to the climax of this arch! I'm really really excited for next week's chapter.

On that note, this is a bit of art that was redone recently, that we haven't posted up here before. It was done by artistofdreams. I love the camaraderie I can feel in the picture. :)

![Image](image-url)
See you next week!
The Rescue

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"Lady and gentlemen! What an exciting day! The crew is going to try and save the hostages! Will they succeed? Will they get the part? Find out!" Mic said excitedly. "Oh, and this is Inky Mystery."

Chapter Notes

Hi guys! Don't have a lot of time. I gotta go to a wedding!
You have fun here! Thanks for the theories and support readers! You are all amazing!
I'm so excited to see what you think of this one. XD The climax is upon us! Have a great week!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy grit his teeth. No one answered Cup. Boris was right there, and he wasn’t moving! He didn’t know what to do.

“Our best chance is probably to get close an’ grab ’em before we’re spotted,” Anita whispered finally. “We need somebody wit’ long reach who cin move fast.”

“I have a rope,” Felix said. “I’m pretty fast with it too.”

The dog nodded. “’Nybody else confident with their reach n’ speed? There are three hostages down there.” She glanced at Bendy. “Demon-do-right?”

Bendy hunched his shoulders. “Speed sure, but reach?” He didn’t trust his shadows to stay calm. What if they went nuts like at Warnerburg? Sure, Hat’s power was probably different, but it had still been a bit more dicey at the jail than Bendy had thought. The dark power had wanted to act violently, and it took everything Bendy had to stop them. Trying to grab his brother or one of his friends in a high tension, possibly loud situation? Uh no, he’d be terrified they’d get thrown into one of the cliff walls. That, and he wasn’t very emotionally stable right now either. No, it was a bad idea all around. He was stuck as average joe for this one.

The dog clicked her tongue. “Fine then. What about you, dish boys?” She looked at Cup and Mugs. “Think you can grab one?” Cup looked to Mugs. He watched the tents warily but nodded. Was something up? They were usually serious but not this quiet...Okay, Mugs was, but not Cuphead.

She nodded. “‘Kay. Here’s the plan. We creep up closer, dish boy pops in there, grabs one, and surprises them. At the same time you,” she nodded to Felix, “grab another.” She sighed. “Just leaves us with one ta get. Tha hard one.”

“I’ll do it,” Oswald said. “I’ll get my brother. I’m fast and quiet.”
She nodded. “That’s it then.” She motioned to one of her dogs. “Trish, you stay on standby to treat ’nybody. Chantzi, when we get down there, I wan’t ya keep a gun trained on tha spider. I’ll aim for the sailor.” She glanced at Cuphead. “’N can you keep tha monkey in your sights?”

Cup clicked his tongue and pulled out a cigarette. “Cake,” he growled.

She smirked. “That’s what I like ta hear. If ’ny of them makes a move towards tha hostages. Shoot.”

“Right,” everyone agreed. The questers tasked with retrieving the hostages carefully got up and headed to an edge that was partly covered from view. Felix took the lead, Oswald right behind him. Bendy and Mugs followed. They moved far slower than Bendy wanted to, but they couldn’t allow themselves to be spotted. It seemed to take forever to inch down and finally shift from the rocks and ledges to the sandy floor.

“Mugs, you take the lead. If anyone goes for them, you have the farthest reach of any of us,” Felix whispered. Mugman nodded and tugged his scarf up, his eyes steely. He crept forward, as silent as a shadow, the others following slowly. There was fear in the air both from the people around him and from the camp. It was strong and sweet and delicious and--The demon tried to breathe shallowly. Bendy was a ball of tension. He didn’t need this cussing distraction!

When they got within view of the group, Mugman paused. Bendy ducked under his arm to see. The tents were old and worn. To one side were a couple more bones. On a blanket sat Mickey, Boris, and Holly. They looked a bit rough. There was dried blood on Boris’ sleeve. Bendy gripped his fists so hard they hurt.

Boris sighed. Things had calmed down a little. Edgar was fiddling with a toy duck he had pulled out of a bag after a while.

Holly had moved closer to the two of them, so that they were all pressed together. When Charley and Barley had come back she had stiffened. Barley eyed her but didn’t approach or speak to them. Instead, he went into a tent.

Boris sat between Holly and Mickey as the sun inched away to the evening. Boris hoped that it would cool down soon. He wondered what happened to Bendy, Mugs, and Cup. They went out to go after the ink machine part. The one that monkey had. Did that mean that they failed or that Bendy was on his way? What if Charley had used that brush on his brother and friends?

Fear nearly choked him with the thought. He tried to distract himself, but every time he glanced to Mickey, the thought came back. He had wept on and off, still crushed over what happened to Mickey. The mouse himself remained comforting and positive, but there was a moment here or there that the smile fell, that his bound hands went to his knee. He couldn’t be as okay as he pretended. He was like Bendy, acting like he was okay when he wasn’t.

They had to get out of here. That’s when a scent drifted to Boris’ nose.

Mugman. Boris’ ears perked before he dropped them quickly so he didn’t alert anyone.

Not just Mugman. Bendy, Felix, Oswald, and a few scents he didn’t recognize.

Holly glanced at him and frowned.

“They’re here,” Boris whispered as softly as possible. His tail threatened to wag. He shifted and sat on it to stop it. He couldn’t mess this up! He had to be calm. He couldn’t give them away!
Holly eyes twitched, but she managed to keep a straight face. Mickey blinked and tilted his head ever so much. He was a great actor.

Holly leaned into him and whispered. “There’s a stick of dynamite and a matchbox in the band of my skirt.” When had she gotten that? When she stole the horses? She gestured with her web covered hands. “I can’t reach it, but…” She gave him a meaningful look.

“How--Nevermind,” Mickey whispered, his mouth barely moving. He must have had the same thought as Boris. Mickey didn’t look at them, just stared at his lap. “Can you reach it Boris?”

Boris swallowed and glanced at Edgar. He was still playing. Barley was in the tent. Charley wasn’t in sight at the moment. He reached over to Holly and felt along her waist until he found the dynamite and box. He grabbed them and slipped them into his vest.

Then, there was movement by one of the tents. Boris was worried that it was Charley catching him, but it wasn’t. It was Mugs and Bendy. Boris’ heart started pounding. They had to distract them. If they were caught, Charley would use that brush again. Boris quickly turned away. Charley was coming back into the circle of tents.

From beside him, Holly spoke up. “Mr. Charley, I have a question I’ve been pondering this entire time. How is it that a trio of buffoons who couldn’t even kidnap the right person manage to get their hands on something like that weapon?” she asked in a sweet tone.

The monkey sneered at her. “How can such a naive looking girl like you turn a city such as Toon Town on its head so completely?” he countered. Boris shook a little with nerves. There was movement again, but Boris was too afraid of giving them away to look. “Honestly, this took a lot of blood to get.” Charley pulled the brush out and turned it in his hand. “I’m hoping the same doesn’t need to happen for the part you have.” Boris shifted the dynamite and got a match. This would be loud. This would work. He struck the match as Holly kept them distracted.

Her eyes had narrowed in anger at the monkey as he had spoken. “You think that because you’re smart and have that brush, you can do whatever you want?” she said.

Charley raised a brow and smirked. “Whatever I want? Dear, do you even understand what you have gotten involved in?” He chuckled. “I honestly expected a challenge from the B Brothers and their little gang.” His eyes slipped to Boris. The wolf froze in his attempts to light the explosive. “After all, the ink machine wasn’t public knowledge until after you two showed up, but I have been sadly disappointed.” Boris’ brows furrowed. What? Involved with? What was he talking about? The ink machine was for a cure.

“Charley.” Holly raised her voice. “Do you even know how the other part really works?” She gave him a haughty look. The monkey looked back at her with dark amusement.

Boris went back to lighting it. Finally, the match and then the dynamite wick burned. A hiss sounded, and Edgar perked up at the sound.

Holly stood, blocking Edgar’s view. “It’s indiscriminate. It can’t be used.”

Charley chuckled. “Well, thank the stars. So is this. Only a few can use it for one reason or another.” Charley turned the brush again in his hands. “Thus, I don’t think I have much to worry about. I’ve gotten the brush to work for me, so the disk that you used shouldn’t be too much trouble.” Boris gulped. The idea of this guy with the cog was terrifying.

“You don’t know what you’re asking for there, sir,” Mickey warned. “That thing is dangerous to
everyone involved.”

Snorting, Holly nodded. “It isn’t a fight of wills. There’s no you to fight it.”

The wick burned shorter. They didn’t have a lot of time. Boris lifted the dynamite. He had to throw it as far as he could from them, but his bound hands were going to make it hard. He leaned back, drew his arms back and then threw the explosive over Holly and as far as he could away from them.

“Unlike with us,” Holly added cheerfully. Edgar squeaked in alarm.

Charley scowled. “What in the name of--” The explosion in the middle of camp deafened Boris and threw sand and smoke into the air. One of the tents caught on fire. Boris whimpered and covered one of his ears, not able to reach the other.

“Starfallen insane dame!” Barley growled from his tent. Barley came rushing out. He was hard to make out in the dust and smoke. The fire spread quickly in the camp. Mugs dove and tackled him. “What the cuss!” Barley roared.

“Move!” Felix ordered from somewhere. He sounded muffled and far away, but that had to be the ringing in Boris’ ears.

Bendy rushed around the corner to bolt for them. The wind changed, and suddenly the view was blocked. “Boris!” Bendy called from the cloud. Boris coughed as smoke and dirt got in his throat and nose. “Move it!” Bendy’s voice barked. A spider hissed.

Holly coughed. “Boris, help me move Mickey,” she gasped, trying to loop her covered hands under one of Mickey’s arms. Boris scrambled, tripped, and then was able to get up. Mickey’s hands were bound like his.

“Here,” Boris ducked down, “loop your arms over my head.” Mickey nodded and quickly did as Boris suggested. Boris couldn’t help hold Mickey up with his bound hands though. Getting up was going to be hard.

While Boris pulled, Holly pushed, eyes darting around for the three gang members.

“Edgar! Barley! Hold them off!” the monkey’s voice sounded in the cloud. Boris could barely make out the sounds of struggles in the dust cloud and growing fire and smoke. Half the camp was ablaze now.

“Oh look. A furry bug,” Oswald said somewhere out of view. The spider hissed. “What? Is the big spoon suppose to scare me?” There was the sound of scuttling.

“Oswald!” Mickey gasped.

They needed to get away. Boris stumbled a few steps away from the smoke and flames as more supplies burned.

There was the thud of hooves, and suddenly Mickey was yanked off his back. “Hey!” Boris barked in surprise. He stumbled and fell, nearly choked as Mickey’s arms were yanked over his head.

Holly’s eyes widened as she saw Charley. “Horsefeathers,” she hissed. He sat on a horse. Mickey struggling in his grasp, kicking with his leg uselessly and with the brush pointed at his face. No!

“It’s your choice girl! Come with me or I kill him!” Charley snarled.
Holly froze for a fraction of a second and lurched forward. “Holly?” Boris asked with wide eyes as he watched in frozen shock and horror.

“Holly!” Felix came out of the smoke cloud and raced toward them with a determined look in his eyes. She leapt up, scrambling awkwardly onto the horse behind Charley. The monkey pulled Mickey in front of him and kicked the horse into motion. Boris half reached for them, lost as to what to do.

“Holly! Mickey!” Boris called. Felix reached him, pulled out a boomerang, and threw it at the villain. Charley pointed the brush over his shoulder and hit the boomerang, melting it away. Boris saw Holly flinch back, shock and fear crossing her face as the green liquid shot out mere inches from her.

“Damn,” Felix growled. He glared at the monkey. Mugs jumped out of the smoke, arms crossed, a strong blue energy building up in front of him.

“Stop right there!” Mugs shouted. Charley kicked to horse to move faster. Mugs punched his fists forward, the huge blue blast shooting out from him and hitting the rock wall of the canyon. The wall cracked and boulders tumbled to block the way. Boris’ ear perked. They were trapped!

“Boris!” Bendy called out, worry in his voice. Charley didn’t slow though. He lifted the brush, and a huge gush of green shot out over the rock blockade.

“No!” Boris stared as his friends disappeared around the newly cleared canyon wall.

“Cuss!” Mugs clenched his fists.

“Boris!” Bendy’s voice rang out.

“Bendy!” Boris called out. “He’s getting away!” He fought to get up, nearly sobbing as he pulled himself onto his knees. No, no, no, no! He got away! And he took them! They were supposed to escape together! Felix’ hand was on Boris’ head, brushing his ears comfortingly. Felix gave him a pitying look and gently led him back.

Felix pulled off his bag, and it changed into a giant fan. He flicked it on a low setting and revealed the camp again. It was a wreck. There was a hole from the dynamite, fire, and one tent had collapsed. Things were still burning. Oswald had pinned the spider using a rope and a spoon. Bendy had the sailor pinned, eyes glowing red. The angry old man was letting out a slew of curses.

Mugs looked up as Boris passed. “I-I’m sorry Boris--”


Boris was led back to the last standing tent. Felix pulled out a knife and cut the spider thread away. Boris rubbed his wrists weakly. Felix stood beside him and prompted him to sit again. Felix tried to comfort him, but Boris wasn’t really listening to him. Bendy scrambled over. “Boris!”

Boris’ ears perked, his eyes were huge and glassy. “Bendy!” Bendy fell to his knees and wrapped the pup in hug. “I’m--Ouch--I’m okay!” Boris winced as Bendy put pressure on his shoulder.

“Like hell you are! Your shoulder is bleeding! What happened? What did they do to you?” Bendy pulled back and looked him over. There was a soot smug on his cheek. He looked tired and haggard.

Boris could imagine what his brother was seeing. Boris was dirtied. Besides the shoulder, he had a bruises here and there, and his paw was bloody too, from his run with the steaks.
“Forget all that, Bendy! He still has Mickey and Holly!” Boris said. Bendy’s eyes snapped back up to Boris’ face. “That’s not all! They’re planning to blow up the town! They have a ton of explosives!” Boris pointed to the burned hole. “It’s a bomb, Bendy!” Boris’ hands were shaking as his gripped Bendy’s arms. His panicked eyes begged his older brother to do something. Bendy leaned away. “Bendy?” Confusion entered the wolf’s eyes before understanding came. Bendy could smell fear, and it bothered him. Boris let go.

“Why would they do that?” Felix asked with wide eyes. A retriever with guns on her belt joined them.

“Something about the police! I don’t know!” The dog blinked. ”You have to stop him! He’ll kill Mickey! I just know it!” Boris whimpered. That cruel scum didn’t mind killing anyone in his way.

“Hey don’t worry kid,” Oswald said. “There’s a cop just around the bend. He won’t get far.”

Boris pulled on his ears. “No! You don’t understand! He has a part! He already used it on Mickey!” Bendy’s jaw dropped, and he paled. Boris gasped for air. At least Bendy seemed to get it. They were in trouble!

Cuphead and a dark colored grumpy looking dog joined them.

“A part?” the retriever asked in confusion.

“Ah cuss! What’d it do?” Cup scowled. “Is he alright?” Cup and Mugs seemed just as pale as Bendy.

Then Boris burst into tears. Bendy’s eyes widened. He brushed Boris’ head and ears comfortingly. “H-his leg! He took M-Mickey’s leg!” he howled. Bendy tensed. So did Felix as Boris’ word sank in.

“What!” Oswald was beside them in an instant. The spider had been handed off to the dark dog, who gave it a snagle-toothed scowl. “What do you mean he took Mick’s leg!” Oswald grabbed his shirt pulling him up to be nose to nose with him. Boris was limp.

“Hey!” Bendy protested.

“I’m sorry! W-we didn’t know! We tried to escape, and then he sto-stopped us with it! W-w-w-we didn’t know what it was or what it does!” Boris gasped weakly. “It erases stuff, Bendy! A brush!” Oswald pulled back with a growl, dropping Boris. Bendy caught him before he hit the sand. The demon glared at the rabbit before turning to Boris again.

“Lay off him! This isn’t his fault,” he told the rabbit.

“Boris.” Bendy pressed his forehead against his brother’s. “It’s okay. I’m here now. I’m sorry! I let you down! We’ll save them, Boris! I promise.” Let him down? What was Bendy talking about? It was Boris who failed! Bendy had been protecting him for years. Now when he was away, Boris hadn’t been able to do anything! “Where’s my little wolfie?”


“Where’s your smile?” Bendy asked. It was like Bendy read his mind.

Boris shook his head. He couldn’t. Bendy brushed his ears understandingly. “We have to move,” Boris told him. Bendy nodded.
“Well cuss! That cop isn’t gonna be able to stop him!” Cup stuffed his hands in his pockets. “All those explosives have to be on that train. That’s gotta be where he’s headed.” The retrievers frown deepened, and now her eyes flicked to the path the monkey had gone down.

“Then we go,” Oswald snarled. “Now!” Oswald ground out between his teeth. He seemed pale. Oh stars, he hoped Oswald would be okay.

The dog stared at the map and then at Bendy, frowning. “Long ears is right. We need ta move. I can git us ta tha train station.” She turned to go, then paused. “Chantzi, stay here wit’ the spider and the sailor.” The dark dog paused in surprise and then grumbled, but moved to the pair.

“I think Mugs and I will hang back here too,” Cup said quickly.

Bendy turned confused eyes on him. “You’re staying?”

“One of us lights up a finger, and everyone goes sky high bud. I don’t think having us there would be the greatest idea in the world.” Cuphead shrugged and gave him a pained smirk. Cup didn’t look like he wanted to stay, but he was being realistic. Bendy sighed and nodded.

“Can we stop talking and go!” Oswald barked. Bendy grimaced and stood up. Boris watched him with big, worried eyes.

“Okay, Boris you stay here with--”

“NO!” Boris barked. He grabbed Bendy’s arm and pulled himself up. “I’m coming.”

“Boris, you just went through a traumatic experience,” Felix said gently. He had a placating hand up.

“And it probably won’t be the last,” Boris admitted honestly. “But I have to do something!”

Boris wasn’t going to budge on this. Bendy studied him for a long moment. Boris lifted his muzzle, daring Bendy to tell him no. “Fine,” his brother finally said with a defeated sigh.

“What!” Felix looked surprised.

“Would you all quit yapping?” the dog snapped. “Bunny over there already left a minute ago.” She turned to stalk off to her own horse.

“Well, this is going great,” Cuphead snipped. Bendy growled at him before going back to the horses and paused. They seemed to glare at him. Boris frowned.

“You can ride with me.” Trish held out a hand after mounting her horse. “Cloud is really nice.” Bendy swallowed and followed her. He climbed on behind her. The horse shifted a little, but the dog held her steady. Felix and Boris shared another. Boris wrapped his arms around the cat, ignoring his shoulder.

“Kick his sorry tail for me!” Cup called with a raised fist.

“And give Holly our well wishes!” Mugs called after them with his hands on either side of his face. Bendy waved, and then they were off at full gallop. Boris wouldn’t let Mickey down again.

Cuphead, and Mugman finished tying up Barley and tossed him next to the spider. Chantzi had already tied him up in some sort of complex knot that involved all his legs. She looked a bit proud of herself for it. If the barest twitch of her muzzle could be considered a smile.
Barley glared daggers at him, but didn’t say anything. Cup dared a smirk before turning away. “So, now what? When we gettin’ these idiots back to town an’ behind bars?” Cup asked.

The black dog growled, but then the noise turned into words. “Rrrrright now.” Her voice was husky and dry. She grabbed the back of the spider’s shirt and started to drag him towards her horse.

“Are you thinking that she’ll do something?” Mugman whispered to Cuphead.

Cuphead deadpanned. “With the thing involved that even the boss is bending over backwards to get? Why wouldn’t she! She’s an idiot!” he hissed back quietly. It was only a matter of time until the other shoe dropped. If Cup had known that the Butcher Gang had this idiot Barley in it, he would have gone about this differently. Hindsight was a load of stardust! Now, he and Mugs had to hang back here while the part of getting away!

Chantzi paused at her horse. “Comin’?” she growled, looking back at them.

“Yeah, yeah.” Cup turned to grab Barley and then back to the horses. He looked up just in time to see the gate open up behind the dog cop and the tall figure jump out. The being looked like a tall, far too slim fox or dog with long ears and a ridiculously fluffy tail. Her blouse was tight and torn in one sleeve. The skirt she wore over her speckled fur legs was far too short to be appropriate for anything. She also wore striped legging socks that contrasted with her speckled fur pattern.

Chantzi’s ears twitched. She spun, hand pulling out her gun as she turned. But it was too late. With one quick flick of the fox’s spindley, spider-like wrist, the dog was out and thumped on the ground. The new arrival ‘humped’ and straightened up. She was a foot taller than Cuphead, over seven feet tall. Her spikey hair covered the left half of her face when she turned around to glare at them. Her horns curved back slightly from the top of her head to stop just short of passing her ears. “You idiots!” she barked, showing her fangs. “Oh, of course you two came here and cussing screwed up everything!”

“Hey Ava.” Mugman waved weakly.

“Hey!” The demon woman barked. “Hey!” Her slitted pupils flashed red. “That’s what you have to say after ruining my plans!”

Cuphead rolled his eyes. “What the hell did you think was gonna happen if you started after the parts, Ava? Stars, you and the other high demons know the boss wants ‘em.”

She growled and yanked Edgar off the horse. “That damned Devil! To hell with him! Every cussing time!” She flexed her hand. The claws that made up her hands were grotesquely long, making her fingers look more like daggers then hands. She flicked her hand, and the rope was cut like paper. Edgar let out a joyful squeak.

“Shut it moron! Imptails! What am I gonna do with you idiots!” Ava growled. Edgar ducked his head shamefully.

“I’m surprised you haven’t eaten their souls yet,” Cup commented flatly. She’d had Barley as a debtor for a couple years now. Cup knew about the guy’s short temper and failures in crime. There was no way this was the schmuck’s first disappointment to the demon.

“Cuphead!” Mugs gasped.

“Untie me and say that to my face, Devil dog!” Barley snarled. Oh please.

Ava looked over to them and frowned. “Oh I would, but...” She sighed dramatically and shrugged.
“What can a demon do?” Cup hummed. There must be something in their contracts that prevented her. “So, are you just going to stand there, or are you going to return my property?” Ava narrowed her eyes.

Cup looked down at Barley, smirked, and tossed him over. The sailor landed with a painful thud. “There you go.” Barley was on a cursing train again. The ol’ coot never changed. Idiot.

Ava eyed the old man disdainfully before lifting one of her feet, equal in long black disturbing claws, and slicing the rope like it was nothing. Barley pulled himself up and glared daggers at Cuphead.

“This is the part where I threaten to kill you,” Ava crossed her arms.

“And we both know you won’t do a thing because of the boss.” Cup smirked and put his hands in his pockets in an easy going manner.

Ava pouted, her one showing eye wide and sad. “Are you sure you two wouldn’t rather work for me instead of that mean old furryball Devil? I could get your debts taken care of and your dreams set if you would only tell me.” Her voice went from the harsh growl to a soft purr.

Cuphead rolled his eyes. Mugs was the one to answer her though. “Sorry Ava. You already know we won’t do that.” Her pout became a scowl.

“Let me shoot ’em. Beat to a pulp! I can take them, Lady Ava!” Barley gruffed, swinging an arm and taking a step toward them.


“Seriously, why haven’t you eaten these morons yet?” Cuphead said deadpanned. Mugs frowned at him.

Ava sighed again and dropped her arms. “They have to be infamous before I can do anything,” she ground out. Edgar nodded naively.

Cup and Mugs shared a confused look. That should be simple for a demon of Ava’s power. Sure, she wasn’t the boss or Hat. She was young for a higher demon, but still.

“And?” Mugs asked.

Barley pulled out a knife. “None of your cussin’—”

“These morons keep screwing up their own plans!” Ava threw her arms out in exasperation. “They even mess up my plans!”

“Lady Ava!” Barley looked at the demon with angry betrayal. Edgar dropped his head again in shame.

Cup burst with laughter. “So, they signed to be an infamous gang, and now you can’t do anything to them until they are! Holy cuss, that’s good!” Cup wheezed. Mug frowned at him, but his shoulders were shaking with repressed laughter. “You really screwed up those soul contracts!”

Ava growled and suddenly towered over him, flames in her hair and eyes. “I will rip out your eyeballs and rattle them so far into your head they’ll never come out!” Her voice took on that creepy double echo that demons could do when they fed power into their voices. It was meant to provoke fear. But after living years with Hat and working for the king of hell, it didn’t work on him or Mugs anymore...Usually. A rock rolled down from the cliff-side.
Cuphead smirked up at the demon. “Do it,” he dared, narrowing his eyes. They had to keep the
demon here. They couldn’t afford for her to go after Bendy or the part.

Bendy clung to the dog woman as the wind whipped past them. They rounded the canyon wall
and raced back the way they came. There were holes in the pathway where Dmitri had been stationed,
but no sign of the dog or her horse. Oh, this wasn’t good. Bendy looked around, trying to spot the
woman. Boris directed the group with his sharp nose, allowing them to race around corners and
through the forks that had slowed them down before. Bendy actually thought they might be able to
catch up when they hit a roadblock. Oswald was raging there too.

It was a wall of fallen boulders. Bendy grimaced. “Oh no.” The horse shied at the sound of his voice.
Trish had to grip the reins like steel and fight with the horse for a moment before she managed to
settle it again.

“Where do we go!” Oswald demanded.

“That way!” Boris pointed behind them. “I think there’s a way around!” And they were off again.
Left, left, right, left, and another right. It took them another half hour to find their way out of the
rocky maze and into the open desert. Boris pointed in a direction again, and they were off.

“So what’s the plan when we catch up to him?” Bendy asked nearly biting off his tongue from the
movement of the horse.

He looked to the dog deputy. The dog spoke through the rhythm of her horse. “Well, Sam’s there,
and I know for a fact how stubborn our sheriff is, so he’ll stall the monkey for at least a little while.”
Her brows fell darkly. “Or at least that’s what I hope. ‘Cause if that train’s already left the station, the
chance of catchin’ it’s the same as not smellin’ after steppin’ on a dead skunk. I’m hopin’ that at leas’
Dmitri’s still behind him, causin’ trouble.” She had to stop for a second as they rounded another
corner. “‘F we do have a chance, we’ll need two teams. One to stop the damn train, the other to get
those hostages ‘n’ the monkey.”

“I’m getting Mickey,” Oswald claimed with absolute single mindedness.

“I’ll help you,” Felix told him.

“Good. You two are ‘n charge a tha mouse. Demon-do-right, you and tha’ wolf find a way ta stop
tha train. Me n’ Trish’ll handle tha monkey.” She turned towards Felix and Oswald. “I reckon he’ll
be more focused on tha dame since he threatened her ta come with him. So, I’ll jump in after her.
That’s your cue ta go for tha mouse.” She waved a finger at Oswald. “Once got ‘im, long ears, you
get the cuss outta there. If that mouse can’t walk, he’s deadweight.” She shifted to point at Felix.
“Whiskers, if it makes sense, once ya know the rabbit and mouse are clear, come back and give me
’n Trish backup.”

“I can do that!” Felix told her.

Bendy was going to stop the train? He’d never seen the inside of one—Well, there had been that one
time when it broke down in Sillyvision—but that was hardly a guide on the break system!

Anita turned to him and Boris, a grim look in her eye. “‘N if you two can’t find a way ta stop that
train, ya have to be ready ta blow it before it reaches tha town.”

“B- Blow it!” Bendy barked. The horse startled and bucked. Bendy squeaked in surprise and clung
on for dear life. To Trish’s credit, she didn’t swear, but she got close, yanking the reins right up to
her chest to force the horse into submission while hissing in pain.
Anita glared at him. “Loosen up!” she ordered. Bendy let his grip soften. “’F your not ready ta do somethin’ like that, then Trish’ll switch ya. But ya have ta be ready for tha possibility.”

Possibility sure, Bendy just wasn’t ready to hear it from some law authority. “You want me to blow up a train?” Bendy asked in a calmer voice so the angry horse wouldn’t kill him.

She nodded, a look of disgust on her face. “Only ‘f there’s no other option. ‘N get people off first.”

Well that went without saying.

“Bendy we can do it!” Boris called out.

“Stars,” Bendy grumbled. They were insane! All of them! Blow up a train! Sun and moon, so much for keeping a low profile! “Being blown to bits isn’t on my list of ways I wanna go!”

“We won’t let that happen!” Oswald said and pushed his stead to go faster. Bendy felt like he was going to fall off at any minute with how wildly Cloud was moving. Trish winced, and Bendy had to loosen his grip again, against his instincts. They rounded a dune and saw the train. At least it was still there! It was surrounded by a crowd of hyenas and dogs. Sam stood on the platform, a hard glare on his face. He had his guns in his hands, but they were pointed down as he scowled. The monkey man peeked outside of the conductor’s window before pulling the whistle. The train lurched and started forward.

“Cuphead!” Mugs’ eyes widened. He had a hand up and ready to fight.

“Do it, Lady Ava!” Barley shouted. Edgar lifted his mitts into the air and cheered.

She growled. If she touched him, she ran the risk of getting the boss’ attention. Cuphead’s smile grew. “I wonder what secret trouble you’ve been getting into to make you hesitate so much Ava,” Cup taunted. “Does your brother know? It’s not a plan to overthrow his favorite person again...is it?”

She howled and swiped at Cup. He rolled back and dodged as flames danced away from her claws and just over his head.

“Cuphead! Why did you have to taunt her!” Mugs growled as he dodged away in puffs of smoke. Because he’d rather she fight them than go after the monkey.

Cuphead chuckled. “I can’t help it!”

“So, then what the hell’s your master’s brilliant plan, huh? You two just tag along with those snacks, and then kill them all when you have all the parts?” Ava roared flames shot out of her jaws. Mugs grabbed Cup and poofed away. Cup let out a barrage of shots. She danced away lightly on her spindly limbs.

“What’s he plannin’ then? Hoard them for himself? Finally rip hell open to let everyone out! How about burning the Upper to the ground!” She grabbed a boulder and threw it at them. Cup snapped his finger and let out a rebound shot behind him that turned and sliced the rock in half, missing the brothers.

Cuphead straightened up and raised a brow. “Well, we know what you want to do with them at least.”

Ava paused in surprise, then hissed angrily. Her forked tongue shot out and licked her fangs. “You! You! You’re practically half breeds! Soulless puppets!”
“Oh, ouch. I’ve never heard that one before.” Cup huffed and rolled his eyes. “We don’t have to tell you stardust! We don’t cussing answer to you, spitfire. Maybe we should let Azazel know though? Is his circus around? I’m sure he’d be thrilled to help you!”

“Leave my idiotic brother out of this!” Ava lifted a claw threateningly.

“I don’t get how different you two are. Aren’t you twins?” Cup smirked.

“That moron is fine with being a dog! But not me! I’m going for the top, baby!” Ava growled, flames danced around her hissing as it swept and melted the sand.

Mugs blinked. “But...aren’t you a demon dog?” That brought her up short, half her flames dying. Cup snorted and covered his mouth. She roared again and let out a jet of fire. The morons were still cheering behind her. Cup and Mugs dodged it easily.

“Look Ava, if you hurt us or kill us, the boss will know. And if you do either of those things, I won’t have a reason to not tell him everything,” Cup said. She stopped, the flames dancing in her fur and claws. “But, we could work something out.”

“Cuphead?” Mugs turned surprised eyes to Cup. This was risky, the whole reason she was acting out like this was because she was afraid they would report her to their boss. No matter her words, she was still a demon under the Devil’s rule. If he found out she was after the parts for herself, he’d most likely either banish her or kill her.

Cup guessed she was hoping to kill them and then go after her monkey. She’d probably try to make it look like an accident, but that wasn’t a promise she was home free after that.

Ava stopped and straightened up. The smooth persona of hers was right back, replacing the snarling hell beast with glowing eyes from a few seconds ago. If Cup wasn’t so used it, the change would have been startling. “Oh?” she said sweetly. “Is that so? Does that mean you want a contract?”

Cuphead sneered. “I’m not signing anything!” She frowned, her muzzle turning downward. He sighed calmly. “No, we keep our mouths shut, and you leave with your minions there.”

Her ears perked. “That’s it?”

“Yeah, that also means the part, though. Bendy is going to get it, I’m cussin’ sure,” Cuphead said. Ava narrowed her eyes. Mugs’ eyes widen. “Oh, and leave that guy alone too. Hat took him as an apprentice. You won’t lay a cussing claw on him. Got it?”

“Cup, what are you doing?” Mugs hissed urgently.

Ava sneered. “Black Hat’s. Yuck.”

“Got a deal?” Cup asked.

“Ha! It doesn’t seem like I get a lot out of it,” Ava growled.

Cup narrowed his eyes. “You get to sunblazing live! We’re cussing lying to our boss for you. The strongest demon there is! You want cussing more?” He clenched his fist. C’mon!

Ava’s pointed ears fell. She tapped the tip of her chin with a claw.

“Okay! Fine!” Ava lifted her head, her smile stretched wide over her fangs. “I’ll leave Hat’s underling alone, and in exchange, you keep your traps shut.”

“Deal,” Cup said.

“Cuphead!” Mugs complained. Cup knew what he was doing. He’d been around these monsters long enough to get how they thought. Cup had just put a target on Bendy. There was no way Ava was going to leave him alone now. He had the parts, and Cup had demanded she leave him alone.

“Later Mugs,” Cup murmured. That also meant Hat would have to get defensive of Bendy, since Ava was a demon lord. If Cup could get Ava and Hat to start fighting and Ava was able to get her plans further along, then the boss may get distracted enough that just maybe they would have some breathing room to do a few risky things of their own. He didn’t really like throwing Bendy in the spotlight like this. Using him as bait was a starfallen thing to do. But in the end, it might save the pipsqueak from the bigger threat. The boss.

“Excellent!” Ava clapped her claws together giddily. “Then, let’s seal the deal with blood!” she said cheerfully.

Cup scowled. “I said I wasn’t signing anything, and that includes blood.” Cussing hellspawn.

“Not yours, silly!” Ava laughed and leapt to the side. She scurried up the canyon wall like a lizard. Her fluffy tail whipped behind her and disappeared for a second. Cup’s nerves jumped a couple notches.

Cup heard the sound of rocks shifting. The next second, he saw Dimitri jump from the top, rolling when she hit the ground and bolting back down the trail. The beagle was fast. Her usually cheerful expression was plastered with fear. Ava hurried after her, giggling and scurrying like a nightmare, across the canyon walls on all fours. Her claws cut into the rock like they were nothing, and fangs flashed from her huge, twisted grin. She leapt from wall to wall and shot flames in front of Dimitri, blocking her path. Cup shuddered. He hated watching demons hunt. It was always disturbing. Like a cross between a cat playing with its prey and a snake striking and twisting its jaw to swallow prey whole. It wasn’t something one could get used to.

To her credit, Dimitri didn’t even falter. She dove straight through the flames. “Oh! A feisty one!” Ava cackled. They both disappeared behind the fire.

“Ava!” Mugman called. He moved to chase after them. “Don’t kill her!” Cup cringed and grabbed him. Like either of them would be able to really help with this. “Cup!” Mugs glared at him. “Let go! We have to stop this!”

There was more clattering of stones, the sound of gunshots, thuds, and finally a yelp before everything went quiet. Both of them turned to look. The flames died down, and the debtors all waited with held breaths.

Ava came flitting back in, thankfully on two legs again. She held up Dimitri by the scruff of the neck, her claws curled around her throat like a cage of knives. For a second, Cup thought the demon had killed her, a clear breaking of the treaty. But that was demons. Didn’t care for the rules. Then, Dimitri kicked her legs back, trying to hit the demon fox, to no avail. Cup let out a breath of relief. Mugs sighed, his shoulders sagged. He glared at Cup and pulled his arm free.

Dimitri’s fur was covered in blood and dust and burned in several spots, but she was alive. Ava hopped up to the group with the giddy energy of a young child, tail swishing the sand excitedly. Dimitri grimaced painfully, her paws at Ava’s claws, trying to protect her throat but cutting her hands
and fingers. “That was fun! Oh, I should hunt more often!” Ava giggled. Hell no. “Now, where were we?”

Cuphead watched warily. Oh, this couldn’t be good.

Edgar squeaked.

“Oh that’s right, Edgar dear! The deal!” Ava lit up. “Well, since we aren’t signing anything, then you two can prove how serious you are to keep this secret by killing this witness.” Ava lifted up Dimitri a little higher in the air. The dog cop glared at them, her face crumpled as she thrashed wildly. She only managed to clip Ava’s side a little. The demon giggled. “You better be quick too! She smells delicious, and a girl can only wait so long.”

The train had just passed the edge of the platform when Sam leapt at the last second, catching the back of the car. He nearly was flung off, but then he managed to climb over the railing.

Bendy watched as Oswald and Felix raced to end of the train. The small sheriff jumped in baffled surprise as he saw that two of them. “Howdy sheriff! Mind makin’ some room?” Oswald tossed his leg up and half crouched on his horse’s saddle.

Sam’s brows went down in a snarl, and he looked like he considered decking Oswald for a second. But then, he opened the back door and moved out of the way.

The rabbit hopped the moment Sam’s body was out of the way. Felix followed in a second. The train was picking up speed. Boris jumped next. Bendy’s heart jumped into his throat when the wolf slipped and fell short. Felix and Oswald caught him and pulled him over the railing. Bendy let out a sigh of relief. The train had really started moving. The horses were starting to struggle keeping up.

“Too slow, short stuff,” Bendy heard Anita say behind him. The next second, she grabbed the back of his shirt, pulled him from the saddle, and flung him towards the railing.

“Cuss!” Bendy flailed for only a half second before he reacted and clung to the bar railing, his heart pounding in his chest. The metal rail bent in his hold. “You crazy dame!” He glared over his shoulder.

She hit the bar, but only her hands caught, and her feet dangled as she flailed, a growl of panic on her muzzle. Her hat flew off her head. Trish didn’t make it. She hit half a second after Anita but couldn’t get a good grip on the bar. Slipping, she rolled into the dirt behind them, quickly growing smaller.

Bendy reached down with one hand and pulled Anita up by the back of her shirt.

The dog grimaced at her retreating friend and gave him a shaky smile. “No plan without a couple surprises, huh?” She got up. “Thanks.”

“Sure.” Bendy crawled over after her. “Let’s go.”

Inside, Sam glared at them, muttering expletives as they entered. Boris waved weakly at Bendy. The long whiskered cowboy had his gun pressed into Oswald’s stomach. “What’s the hold up? We have to stop this train!” Bendy scowled.

“Don’t tell me! Tell him!” Oswald glared at the cowboy with disgust.

“Tha lota ya aren’t supposed ta be here,” he growled. “‘Specially you, rabbit.”
“Sheriff, I’m sorry, but we don’t have time! This train is set to explode, and it’s heading to town now,” Felix cut in. He had the serious, disapproving frown on his face.

“Look! Arrest us all later when our lives aren’t on the line!” Bendy pushed forward. “‘Til then, get out of the way!” Bendy pushed the gun down and stepped in between them, giving the shorter man a glare.

Sam stared at him for a moment, gun inching up again. Bendy narrowed his eyes. The demon thought he saw the man give the faintest shiver. Then, with a growl in the back of his throat, he turned away. “Fine,” he snapped.

“Great!” Oswald snapped and bound forward. Everyone was on his heels. They got through the first car without a problem but stopped at the next. It was chalk full of explosives in boxes. Bendy gulped. All the cars with all these boxes. Good stars above.

“That’s a lot,” Boris muttered. No one added to that. They stepped around the bombs carefully. Every time the train shook, Bendy’s tail twitched nervously. Would a big enough bump cause them to go off? Stars, he hoped not.

Oswald finally got the door to open to the next car.

“...Hello?”

“Holly!” Boris perked up. They hurried into the car. It was similar to the other car, but this one had a timer attached to the middle of the explosives and was counting down with a chirp. They only had twenty minutes! Under the timer on the floor was a bundle of ropes with Holly’s head craning back to look at them with wide eyes.

“Thank goodness!” she exclaimed. “I’m so glad you’re here!"

“You look like a rolled up rope rug,” Bendy stated.

She gave him a deadpan expression that told him what she thought of that.

Felix stepped forward. “I’ll get her untied. You two keep going. Stop the train.” He reached into his bag and pulled out a dagger. Sam was already moving forward, not waiting for them.

“Yes sir,” Bendy and Boris said together and kept going. Oswald followed with grim determination.

Anita glanced up at Sam, a deep frown on her face. “This means tha monkey’s up front,” she muttered. ‘Ts gonna be harder if he’s with the mouse.”

“I may need help with this bomb too. Even if they stop the train, if we don’t stop the timer, it’ll still explode,” Felix said.

Bendy looked to the deputy.

She grimaced. “Trish woulda been able ta help. Her da was a miner. But I don’t know nothing ‘bout ‘splosives.”

That wasn’t good.

Boris stepped toward Felix. “I-I could tr—”

“Don’t you even think about it.” Bendy threw an arm out to block him and glared up at him. Boris looked down at him, surprised, before scowling back.
Anita raised a brow. “You’ll blow us to smithereens. Tha way I see it here, there’s only one person who could qualify.” Her eyes flicked to Oswald.

The rabbit tensed, and Bendy saw his jaw jump as he grit his teeth. “But Mickey is still in danger,” he argued.

Her expression softened. “We’ll get ‘im out, long ears. But if that bomb goes off, it don’t matter.”

“We’re all in danger as long as this thing is ticking,” Felix said pityingly. Oswald grimaced and looked from the door to Felix and back again. He clenched a fist and banged it against the car wall.

“Fine!” he growled and turned on Bendy and Boris. “But you make sure you get him out safe!”

Boris nodded quickly. “Absolutely!”

Bendy nodded and turned on his heel to catch up to the sheriff, who had long since disappeared. They opened the door and stepped into the next car. It was a reflection of the last two.

The door at the other end clicked shut as they entered the car.

“He could wait just a little,” Bendy grumbled.

“We’re lucky he didn’ jus’ start shootin’ at us when we climbed on,” Anita said darkly.

“Your boss would do that?” Boris asked alarmed.

“Wouldn’ be tha first time,” she said with resignation, moving quickly towards the other door.

“Your law enforcement sounds as warm as the ones we grew up with,” Bendy muttered as they made their way around the dangerous explosives.

They had almost reached the door when a familiar burst of expletives rang through the closed door. It started to melt. Bendy jumped back, bumping into the other two.

“That’s the brush! Whatever you do, don’t let that stuff touch you,” Boris warned. No kidding! Bendy had already gotten too close once!

Anita looked at the rapidly deteriorating door in horror.

And Bendy thought giant killer mermaids or evil voodoo witches were bad. He stepped forward slowly. He peeked around the edge of the once-was-door to see what had happened. The wind and sand stung his eyes as it blasted his face. He pulled his goggles down. The door to the engine was gone.

Sam was stuffed underneath the window of the wall between the cars. One of his guns was gone. He had the other out and was shooting at Charley. He could just made out the arm grasping a large brush. He watched it wave about as a green liquid was shot from the bristles and to the window. The window gave and started to melt quickly. What a terrifying weapon.

Sam swore, jumping up to grab the edge of the roof to dodge. He barely caught it and hoisted himself up.

They couldn’t get close at all as long as that monkey had the brush. The arm disappeared from view. Maybe he was too focused on Sam to notice the rest of them. He slipped out, careful not to touch the edges, unsure if it was safe or not. He reached the wall opposite of the one that was gone, not even a puddle was left.
He dared to glance in. Charley was glaring at the ceiling tensely. The engine controls were on his other side. Mickey sat against the corner, curled up and glaring at the monkey. He noticed Bendy. His eyes widened, and then he quickly looked away from him.

Bang! A bullet forced the monkey to jump back. “Give up!” Charley called roughly. “It’ll only take one swipe for you to be erased from existence!” He lifted and shook the brush.

Another bullet pounded down through the ceiling, this one catching Charley’s arm. “One bullet ‘n yer dead, ya varmint!” Sam replied. Charley chuckled and inspected the wound.

“I’ve heard about you before. The bank robber turned sheriff,” Charley called in a mocking tone. “Tell me, how has that helped you with that hunt of yours? The collector that has never gotten his one real goal, correct?” Uh?

Just then, Sam rolled in through the open window next to the driver’s seat and slammed into Charley. “I’ll teach ya ta talk ‘bout things that ain’t ta be talked about,” he growled.

Charley’s hand swung out wildly and a gush of green hit the controls. The dials and levers of the train quickly melted.

Cup felt his stomach drop. He saw Mugs pale next to him from the corner of his eye. Kill her? Starfallen, cussing, damnit. This...was the worst. Cup grit his teeth. “Why the hell should we?”

“Because if you don’t, I will let my brother know you are willing to do things behind the Devil’s back. Surely that will go over well.” Ava grinned. “Even if you two are some of his top dogs. How far is his trust in you? You think you’ll get my brother to listen to you?”

Cup looked to Mugs. Mugs looked to him. Oh cuss. What were they going to do now? He could see the conflict in his brother’s eyes. If the Devil found out, they were already on thin ice. Azazel was one of the boss’ most loyal followers. If he heard about traitors, he wouldn’t put it past the demon to come after them himself. Mugs’ brows went down in determination. “No.” Mugs shook his head. “She didn’t do anything wrong. We aren’t hurting her.”

Ava’s brows shot up in surprise. So did Cuphead’s. “Wha--”

“He didn’t mean that!” Cup barked. Mugs turned shocked eyes on Cup. Cup yanked Mugs back. “Give us a minute.” Ava narrowed her eyes at them but didn’t say anything.

Cup dragged Mugs far enough away that they could speak privately. “What do you mean no!” Cup hissed.

Mugs wrenched his arm out of Cup’s hand again. “Me! What the hell are you doing! This whole deal! We can’t kill her! She’s innocent, Cuphead! She isn’t a mobster! She isn’t a debtor! The only thing she did was be here at the wrong time!”

“And that’s enough! She heard everything, Mugman! You think she won’t spill the beans? She’s a cop!” Cuphead hissed. “And then the boss will hear about this, and we can kiss our hides and everyone else’s goodbye! Boss doesn’t allow traitors!”

“So, we warn her about what talking will do to her! The boss will try to have her killed too if she talks!” Mugs said.

Cup snorted and shook his head. “Oh yeah! She’ll definitely listen to us after hearing everything. We’re not knights in shining armor here, Mugs! This will not just put you and me at risk! This is
risking everyone at the house! All those sick that you swore to protect!”

“And I will! But I’m not killing a good person! I may not be a knight, but I’m done being the bad guy!” Mugs growled.

“You don’t know her!” Cup roared.

“And neither do you!” Mugs shot back. “Hell, she could have a husband and kids for all we know! What about her family and friends, huh?”

Cup grit his teeth. Oh stars! Mugs wasn’t going to budge on this! “Just shut your cussing mouth and keep your head down!” Cup turned around and headed to the demoness.

“Cuphead wait!” Mugs called out, but Cup ignored him.

Cup stepped up to the demon with a straight face.

Dimitri had stopped struggling now. She was shivering quietly all over her body, teeth grit, eyes enraged. At some point, tears had started down her face. She stared at him with grim resignation in her eyes.

On the other hand, Ava was eyeing her like a steak. Her slitted eye hinted red, and drool dripped from her fangs. Cup didn’t allow the shiver that wanted to race up his spine, and he was grateful for his long sleeves hiding the goosebumps on his skin.

“You want a deal, Ava?” Cuphead growled. The demon’s visible eye slid from the captured dog to him. “Drop the dog.” He flexed his hands and rolled his neck.

“Ooooh, a show?” Her eyes glinted with excitement. “Make it slow, Cuppy. You dishes have such an intense way of burning people, after all.”

Cup scowled. “Drop. Her.” He looked back at the dog and lit his finger with power.

Tears were still streaming down her face, but her expression was defiant. Good. As long as she still had some fight in her, the demon hadn’t won yet. Ava grinned and snapped her claw open. The dog fell to the ground. She didn’t try to run, but she tensed, the look in her eyes remained the same.

Cup lifted his glowing finger grimly. Mugs was suddenly between Cup and the dog, glaring at his brother with the same defiance as the dog. Dimitri straightened in surprise. Cup frowned. Starfallen stinkin’ brother. “I won’t let you,” Mugman said evenly.

“Ah! A fight between the Cup brothers! Oh! Oh hell! I never thought I’d live to see the day!” Ava said, excitedly clapping her claws together. They sounded like metal tinkling together.

“Actually, no.” Cup stepped forward, around his idiot brother and pointed...at Ava. “You don’t get to see us fight. See, this deal? It can still happen, but that doesn’t mean Mugs and I are your new cussing pets. We’ll keep the secret, but we aren’t following your starfallen hellspawn orders. Got it?” Dimitri stared at him.

“Cuphead.” Mugs smiled. He sighed in relief.

Ava scowled and rolled her eyes. “Then, let me eat her.”

Just then, there was a groan. Chantzi, who was still on the ground facing away from them, twitched a little. Dimitri bolted, moving faster than he expected considering her injuries. She moved in front of
Chantzi. “Oh! Two snacks!” Ava licked his chops.

“Ava!” Cup warned. Mugs inched over. Would he be fast enough to reach her? Cup wasn’t sure. Ava could strike like a snake.

Dimitri’s eyes flickered in a panic between the slightly shifting Chantzi and the demon. Chantzi groaned again.

“Ava, get out of here!” Cup barked.

Ava glanced at him and smirked. She crouched down and sprung forward. Mugs moved to grab Chantzi. Cup fired at the demon...and missed.

Ava landed in front of Dimitri. She leaned down, fangs flashing in the sun.

“I-I wanna make a deal!” Dimitri half screamed, half choked. Ava froze and snapped her jaws shut. Cup’s heart froze with dread. Oh no.

Chapter End Notes

This is such an intense ride! XD Here’s a little visual for you guys. Meet Ava, the demon behind the Butcher Gang!
Trouble on the Train

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls welcome again to the excited Far West! Will Boris and Bendy be able to stop the train in time? Will Cuphead and Mugman be able to save the officers from the ferocious demon Ava? Find out!” Mic declared grandly before the lights dimmed.

Chapter Notes

Hello readers! Extra long chapter today! (Sorry Mercowe!)
I'm also sorry to those of you that left comments last chapter. This week has been nuts for me. ^^u Hopefully things will calm down soon. I still loved reading them. Enjoy the chapter and thank you all for the wonderful support! Whether it's art, comments, gift writing, support, or coming back here every week to see what's going on with the crew. You are the best, and I appreciate the effort. I can never tell you in words how much it means to me. Thanks guys. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sam didn’t even seem to see the damage to the controls. He raised a fist and punched Charley, taking swing after swing. Blood streamed across the monkey’s face as his nose broke. Bendy and Mickey moved at the same time. Mickey grabbed Charley’s arm, and Bendy pulled Sam off. “Okay! Enough, you idiot!” Bendy barked.

“Git offa me, ya yellow-bellied son of a snake,” Sam shot at Bendy as he writhed. Bendy didn’t budge. Mickey managed the yank the brush away from the monkey.

“No!” Charley reached for Mickey as the mouse scooted back quickly, holding the brush as far from the crook as possible. “That’s mine! You can’t take it! You don’t know the things I did to get that!” He moved to get up.

Bendy slammed a foot down on Charley’s leg. Charley banged his knees on the metal floor. The monkey whipped his head around to glare at Bendy. “Move, and I won’t cussing hesitate to break it,” Bendy warned darkly.

“Mickey! Bendy!” Boris quickly came in behind the demon. “Good job.”

Sam jerked away from Bendy, finally. He turned a glare on the monkey, but then his eyes turned to Mickey. He walked toward the mouse, a dark look in his eyes.

Mickey lifted the brush, his face serious. “Don’t,” he warned. “I don’t want to use it, but I will if you try.” He was against the wall again, sitting down. Just as Boris had said...His right foot was gone. Weirdly enough it wasn’t bandaged. It didn’t even seem to be wounded, just gone. Bendy was struck
with the horror of it for a moment.

“Tha fraga prica crackin’ thing ain’t yours,” Sam growled.

Mickey narrowed his eyes. “You’re right. It’s theirs.” He indicated to Bendy and Boris.

Bendy was a little surprised Mickey said that, but he didn’t show it. “He’s right. Now, back off before you do something stupid.”

“Um, fellas,” Boris called out nervously. “I think we have bigger things to worry about.”

Bendy was just about to look at Boris when he heard a click. “Give me tha damn thing,” Sam warned, gun trained on Mickey. Bendy tensed, automatically reaching for the shadows and feeling them wither in excitement, his eyes lighting up red with borrowed power. Boris tensed beside him.

“Sheriff.” Anita’s voice was cool. Sam’s eyes shifted barely. “Put tha gun down. This ain’t the time for that.” Bendy glanced over to the deputy.

Her muzzle was pressed, and she was tense, hands raised. “Ya can’t catch Bugs if ya die here. Now, let’s get this train ‘n tha station ‘n then we can talk.”

Sam’s teeth clenched down and for a second his finger twitched. The shadows begged Bendy to let them loose, to rip him apart. What the cuss was with this aggression? Was it because it was Hat’s power or...was it him? A fledgling thing? Either way, it wasn’t a pleasant feeling to hold back. Sam holstered his gun. Bendy relaxed a margin. Thank the stars. Boris moved off behind him.

Anita immediately moved to Mickey’s side, putting herself between the short man and the mouse. She put an arm behind his back and helped him to stand. “Thanks.”

“Bendy! We have a problem!” Boris’ voice edged on panic.

Bendy let out a sigh and looked over his shoulder. “What is it?”

“I can see the town in the distance, and look!” Boris pointed to the pipes, dials, levers, that had all melted away. “The controls are gone!” He stepped up to an empty spot a lever once occupied. “I think this was the breaks.” The wolf cringed.

“Cuss.” Anita scowled at the panel.

Charley laughed. He sounded deranged. “You’ll never stop it!” He suddenly jabbed his arm into Bendy’s leg. Bendy gasped and fell back. Charley rolled up and dove out a window in the span of a breath. Holy cuss, that monkey was fast!

Bendy looked down to see a knife sticking out of his leg. “That starfallen fleabag just cussing stabbed me!” he hissed angrily.

“Bendy!” Boris gasped.

“Forget it! We have to stop this train!” Bendy wrapped a hand around the handle.

“Don’t pull it out, ya idjit! You’ll bleed ta death,” Anita hissed at him, helping Mickey move back towards the door.

“And in a few minutes we’re all gonna be blown to bits!” Bendy growled and yanked it out. He winced and then stood up. He limped, Boris quick to help him, to the controls. He looked over what was left.
“Would putting out the flame help?” Boris asked.

“It’ll stop it from going faster, but we need something to stop the momentum we already have,” Bendy muttered.

“Hold on,” Mickey said. Bendy and Boris glanced back. Mickey half turned back to look at them. “I think I have an idea.” He glanced at the deputy. “Can you help me over there?”

She nodded. This time, instead of helping him move, she simply grabbed his wrist and lifted him over her shoulder fireman style, setting him down where he had indicated. Mickey looked taken aback, his eyes wide and face a little flushed, but he shook it off quickly.

He lifted the brush. “This thing is a paint brush right? If it can erase things, maybe it can make things.”

Bendy blinked. That wasn’t a bad idea. “But none of us know how to use it!”

Mickey shrugged. “It can’t get much worse than it already is.” He stuck out his tongue and waved the brush. A blue liquid shot out of the brush and washed over the control panel. What once was melted was then back, new looking and clean.

Bendy’s jaw dropped. Anita yanked off her bandanna. “Well I’ll be a blue-blooded mutt,” she muttered, eyes wide.

Boris yipped excitedly. “You did it, Mickey!” He hopped and threw his fist in the air.

“Mick!” Oswald rushed into the room.

“Ozzy!” Mickey gasped. “What in the world are you doing here!”

“Comin’ to save you, ya big palooka! Stars, I’ve been worried sick!” Oswald said. Felix and Holly came in after him.

“We stopped the timer. How’s the train coming along?” Felix asked tensely. “Because we are in the outskirts of town, and if we blow it now, buildings will go with it!”

“We’re working on it,” Bendy claimed. He pulled the now restored lever down. The train lurched, the brakes squealed loudly. Everyone fell forward. Oswald and Mickey were practically on top of him. “Will it stop in time?”

“If it doesn’t, and we hit the station wall we can kiss this town goodbye!” Oswald growled.

“Great! Thanks!” Bendy deadpanned.

“It’s going to be close!” Felix said leaning his head out the window.

“We’re not gonna make it,” Anita growled.

“Is there anything else we can do?” Boris asked.

“What about the brush?” Holly squeaked, holding onto the edge of the door.

Sam grabbed Mickey’s shoulder. “Do somethin’ with that magic wand thinga-ma-jigger,” he said urgently. “Make somethin’!”

“Junk up the wheels!” Boris told him.

Oswald and Anita helped pull Mickey to the side so Mickey could lean out with the brush. He waved it and blue liquid hit the wheels. The blue turned pink, and the squealing grew louder. The train lurched again. Bendy slammed into the controls with a grunt. That was going to leave some wonderful bruises tomorrow. If they made it that far. They went to the other side and did the same. The sound of squealing wheels was now deafening. Bendy could see buildings race by out the window.

“Felix!” Bendy shouted. The break’s lever shook in Bendy’s hands.

“The station is just ahead!” Felix shouted in answer.

“A-A cushion!” Holly yelled. “Give us a cushion!”

Mickey waved it one more time in front of them. Bendy couldn’t see what he put there. Bendy had one last idea pop in his head.

“Brace for impact!” Oswald shouted. Bendy threw all the energy he had left into the shadows and had them wrap around the wheels and tracks like ropes. Pain exploded in his head. Bendy wrapped an arm around Boris, regardless of the blinding pain and clung to the pipes. Felix lept from the window and covered both Bendy and Boris. The squealing had his head ringing. Boris cringed against him as they waited for impact.

Cup gasped in a breath. It was dead silent for half a second. “I won’t say a word about what I saw from the moment you showed up until you leave. In return, you can’t kill me or Chantzi,” Dimitri said in one breath. Her body was shaking again, but her eyes were lit with determination.

“Hey! Don’t do that!” Cup barked, finally getting control of himself.

Ava grinned. “And if you break your end of the deal?”

“You can have my soul,” the beagle swallowed, fighting the shaking.

Mugs’ face fell in horror. “Wait! You don’t have to--”

“Deal!” Ava stood up, the fangs back to a nice smile, claws away from ripping the dog and up to reach into a demon symbol. A paper appeared in one claw, a quill in the other. “Just sign here, and you and your little friend are safe!”

The dog panted, without hesitation, she reached out for the paper.

“Wait damnit!” Cup snapped and aimed a finger at the demon. She paused and smirked at him. “A starfallen contract ain’t the answer!”

The dog paused, her hand hovering over the contract. She smiled, an exhausted smile. Her eyes didn’t leave Ava as she shivered. “And what do ya have in mind cupman? Watch my teacher get slaughtered before dying myself?” Cup grimaced. He shared a look with Mugs. It would be hard to get the deadweight to safety. Neither Mugs or Cup would be able to outrun a demon carrying someone. Hell, it was almost impossible on their own. They’d have to fight. And defending the two dog from this spitfire hellspawn wasn’t going to be easy.

Chantzi twitched again, and Dimitri looked at her with worry. She hissed as she shifted, cradling her ribs. “You were going ta shoot me until your brother changed your mind. Don’t try ta deny it. The
way I see it, at least now I’m saving a life.”

Damnit! Starfallen cussing damnit! This was his fault! She didn’t get that death was better than a soul contract! Stars, he had Screwed up! The demon chuckled. “She has a point Cuppy-boy.” Cup glowered at her. She raised an eyebrow at him mockingly.

The dog grabbed the paper, scanning quickly.


“It’s her choice. Butt out, or I’ll cussing rip you to pieces,” she hissed.

“Make me.” Mugs lit his finger. Cup steeled his nerves, ready to fire at the demoness if she moved. He could berate himself later.

“The hell…” The rottweiler groaned.

“Cuss,” Dimitri whispered under her breath. She tried to put the paper to her knee to sign, but then winced in pain as she tried to lean over. Mugs leaned back and snatched at the quill. The demon hissed and lunged to swipe at him. He jumped back to save himself from being turned into ribbons. Cup fired at the demon to get her to back off his brother.

“Wait,” Cup shouted at Ava. “What the hell do you get besides a soul! She’s not working for you, right?”

Ava smirked and straightened out of crouch. “Sometimes a girl just wants a soul. If she messes up, I eat. If not, we’re good! And now you don’t have to kill her! Everyone wins!” She clapped, her claws clicking together. Cup wanted to punch her. Mugs was trying to snatch the contract away from Dimitri. The dog was surprisingly agile for someone who had multiple broken bones. Mugs would lunged at the paper, and she would pivot, using as little motion as possible to evade him. She was panting though, one ankle was swelling, and she hunched over her broken rib. Mugs was obviously trying to stop her from making her injuries worse, but also trying to get the cursed paper away from her. Ava swiped at him again. Cup shot her, which had the demon turn on him with a hiss.

Cup danced away as flames shot from her mouth and claws. The heat got close to face. “Cup!” Mugs called out.

“I’m fine! Get that damn thing!” Cup growled as Ava snapped her teeth as him. He dropped low to dodge and tumbled back, shots keeping the demon from grabbing him.

Chantzi growled, hand to head. She started to roll over.

Dimitri’s eyes shot up, and then they shot down again in panic. She pivoted one last time, her front pressing against the canyon wall to keep Mugs away. She put the quill to the paper.

“No!” Both the brothers called out and lunged forward, vainly trying to stop the beagle. Mugs reached around and snagged it, yanking it away. Dimitri yipped in surprise and chased after him, but hissed, grabbing her ribs. Cup glanced over to see Mugs’ shoulders drop in defeat. Oh no.

Ava cackled. “Yes! Ha! So the Cup Brothers are perfect in cussing everything! I win!” She laughed victoriously. Cup growled and shot at her. The demon ducked, still laughing. “It was great doing business with you,” Ava preened and opened a dark hole in the sand. The hellspawn winked, tossed her lackeys into the hole and vanished herself. Starfallen fluffy scumbag!
Dimitri fell back against the wall with a breath of exhaustion. Chantzi blinked and struggled to get up, but fell and landed on her hands and knees. She jerked her head up a moment later, eyes searching. “The bandits!” she growled in alarm.

“Cussing sunblaze the bandits!” Cup barked at her and yanked the contract from Mugs’ loose grip. Dimitri scrambled to her feet in a panic. He scanned over it quickly. Keep the secret, blah-blah-blah. Ava gets the soul, yada-yada, *until the day she dies!* Cup dropped his head back and sighed through his nose. A life long contract. There really wasn’t a way out of it, but at least she wasn’t in some forced servitude or some random twist that Ava had thrown in for kicks. Ava was young, and it seemed she was stardust at writing contracts. She didn’t bleed her debtors dry like Hat or the boss. Wait. Wasn’t that a good thing? Cup blinked. A positive aspect to Ava, who cussing knew? What a weird thought.

Dimitri snatched the paper back a moment later. Cup turned to her. “We are talking about this later. Until then, hide that.”

Her muzzle wrinkled in confusion, but she stuffed the paper into her empty holster. “Isn’t the point not talking?” she whispered.

Cup snorted and made sure the other dog wasn’t listening to them. Mugs was with Chantzi, who was sniffing over Edgar’s cut ropes. “We already know, so it’s no secret from us, and you just got involved in something way bigger than not talking.”

The dog glanced at her friend and nodded, too tired to even speak.

“Are you okay?” Mugs asked Chantzi.


“The Butcher Gang got away.” Mugs frowned. “I’m so sorry. They acted before we knew what happened.” And people thought Cup was the smoother liar between the two of them. Tsk.

The dog leveled a suspicious glare at Mugman. “How? Who hit me?”

“A rock. They had a trap set up.” Mugs sighed. “Guess they didn’t put all the explosives on the train.” He pointed to the patches Ava’s fire had burned into the ground and boulders.

Chantzi’s eyes widened. She glanced at Dimitri, who gave her a shaky ‘What can you do?’ smile. The dog’s brows went down. "I didn't smell anything," she said slowly. Then, the dog removed her hat and threw it on the ground. “Knew we shoulda looked ‘round more,” she muttered angrily.

“I’m just happy we’re all in one piece.” Mugs smiled and shrugged. “Don’t worry, you’ll get them someday.”

A smooth liar indeed.

Bendy waited with his eyes held shut, clinging to Boris and the wall. His head pounded from the shadows and the noise. He couldn’t hear anything. He was there, locked in place, waiting for the pain, fire, explosions, and whatever else came. So when it didn’t happen, he was really confused. This train crash was taking a long time. It shouldn’t be this long...right? He felt a little dizzy.

“Ya can open your eyes, demon-do-right,” Anita’s voice said shakily. She sounded far away and muffled.
Bendy peeked an eye open, half expecting to be dead. He wasn’t. He looked up to Boris who was just opening his own eyes. Felix was grinning.

“We stopped,” he said and pulled back. Felix grinned at Boris and Bendy. “We did it!”

Bendy blinked. “We did it?” Woah. He sounded weird too. So the ringing was his hearing, not the brakes?

“We did it!” Mickey cheered. Cheers went around the train compartment. Boris wrapped Bendy in a hug and hopped around. Bendy couldn’t help laughing in relief. They looked out the window to see a few nets of rope that had helped the train slow down to a stop. Bendy’s web of shadows were mixed with the ropes and wrapped around the wheels too. They shifted and pulsed like living things, more dark and solid than anything he had ever made before.

“Holy stars. We’re alive.” Oswald slumped against the wall. Felix stepped up and patted him on the shoulder.

“Nice job Oswald.” Felix smiled.

The rabbit snorted. “You can call me Ozzy after this. Hell, call me anything you want. That was absolutely insane.”

Felix laughed. Mickey laughed. Boris put Bendy down when he realized he had picked him up, apologizing the whole way. “It’s fine Boris! Who cussing cares! We’re alive!”

Holly collapsed on the ground. A slow smile scrawled across her face, and she laughed. “And we’re all safe. Thank goodness!” She sniffed, wiping away a tear.

“Oh! Holly!” Boris dropped to his knees and wrapped her in a tight hug. “Yes, we are!”

She hugged him tightly back, and Bendy thought he heard a muffled sob. Bendy looked around at everyone and just let himself absorb what was around him. Oswald, Felix, and Mickey were leaning against the wall in relief. Bendy and Holly were sitting on the floor. Anita had pulled out a cigarette and was now smoking it. She grinned at him.

And Sam was standing there and eyeing the part like it was death incarnate. The look brought Bendy crashing back down into reality. A chill went through his veins as the shadows still withered for the whiskered man’s blood. It was like just seeing the man dumped a bucket of blood in the water. Bendy felt a little numb too. Bendy moved to Mickey quickly and dismissed the shadows. The pounding in his head slowed, but a weird lightness took its place. It was suddenly hard to focus. He felt a little nauseous. Sam didn’t move. He just continued to glare. “Hey, Mick, good job with that thing. I didn’t know you were good with magic,” Bendy muttered to distract himself.

Mickey smiled and looked down at the brush. “Me neither really. It just made sense since it’s a brush.”

“Yes, so what now?” Bendy asked.

“Ya put that thing back where is belongs,” Sam growled.

“No, I don’t think so.” Bendy turned to face the sheriff. “That’s coming with us.”

“Yep!” Boris popped up from the ground.

“It don’t belong ta tha lot of ya.” The small man’s whiskers puffed up. “Those varmints stole it!”
Boris winced. “That’s rough, but we can’t give it back. Sorry.”

“It’s important for the work we are doing currently. That brush is going to help a lot of people.” Felix pushed away from the wall.

Sam glanced at Felix, his shoulders tense. They slowly started to lower. Then, he jumped forward to tackle Mickey. Mickey fell back in surprise. The brush slammed against the metal wall with a crack.

Oswald pulled the little man away and decked him. Sam growled angrily and grabbed the rabbits ears, yanking hard. “Galootin’ rabbit!” he yelled. The two tussled. Bendy was ready to jump in with Felix, when a voice caused them all to all freeze.

“Can someone explain what this is?” the famous western hero, Wylie Burp, said in a soft, strong voice. He stepped up, head looking at everyone in the engine room.

Sam and Oswald froze, Sam in the middle of biting Ozzy’s ear and Ozzy pulling Sam’s mustache and winding up another punch. Anita’s mouth dropped open, and her cigarette fell out. “G-Granda?” She swallowed and straightened when the old dog turned to look at her. “Bandits. Tried ta blow up tha train. We stopped them,” she explained in short bursts as her muzzle grew dark.

“I tol’ you, I tol’ you, Senior Mayor. De rabbit and his amigos came here to help us with de bandits!” A tiny mouse in a sombrero hopped up next to the old dog.

Bendy blinked. “What is happening right now?” His vision doubled, and he shook his head to get rid of it.

The old dog removed his hat and scratched his head thoughtfully. “That’s my question, son.” He glanced at Sam and Oswald. “What’s all this commotion about?”

Sam spat out Ozzy’s ear. “This varmit’s tha one that blown up tha bank.”

“Over a decade ago!” Oswald snapped. “I can fix that now! You’re the creep that just tackled my brother! A guy that can’t even stand right now! And I still didn’t steal anything!”

“Oh Ozzy.” Mickey sighed and shook his head disapprovingly. He looked at the brush. “Oh dear.” Bendy felt a detached fear tickle at the back of his mind.

“A-an now,” the cowboy continued shakily. “They’re tryin’ ta steal this...pricey old thing,” he finished, the frustration apparent on his face. He pointed at Mickey.

The old dog’s brow went down. “Is that so?” Sam, taking advantage of the fact that everyone’s eyes went to the mayor, leaned over and snatched the brush.

“Hey!” Mickey who had been looking down at the brush, leaned over to try and grab it back. He went too far and start to fall. Bendy had to catch him, which blocked Felix from stopping the little man. Bendy’s head spun from moving so quickly. He was feeling a little floaty. What was wrong with him?

The mayor took a step forward and put a hand on Sam’s shoulder as he got up and scrambled back. “Now, calm down there, Sam. I’m sure these fellas don’t mean no harm. Let’s just sit down ‘n have a talk,” he said reassuringly.

“Harm! Tha galootin’ idjits broke it!” Sam exclaimed, turning the brush to show the handle to the old dog. There was a long crack down the handle. It even split the familiar symbol that the other parts had. Right there, near the where the handle and the bristles met. That couldn’t be good. The parts
could be damaged? But weren’t they magic? Oh stars, what if it didn’t work anymore! Boris and Holly gasped.

“Us? You tackled Mickey and broke it yourself, nimrod!” Oswald declared.

The ol’ dog hummed thoughtfully. “Definitely need to talk.”

“I think we can do that,” Felix said tensely, his fur a little bristled. Bendy resisted the urge to growl at the little man he glared at. What if that brush was like the cog? Did it mess with people’s head too? He cussing hoped not. The train was enough today!

“But Mr. Felix!” Boris protested, probably having the same thoughts as Bendy.

“Let us explain ourselves.” Felix’ voice was gentle but firm as he looked from Boris to the mayor. They couldn’t just grab it and run. Not with Mickey in this shape and all the guns around. Bendy doubted he’d be able to run straight right now anyway.

Anita turned to talk to him, but then her eyes widened. “Talk ‘bout this later. This idjit needs to see Trish!” Bendy thought she was talking about Mickey. So, it was surprising when her hand landed on his shoulder instead.

“Uh? But I’m fine.” Bendy blinked a couple of times. They needed to get the brush back!

Then she threw him over her shoulder. “He’s gonna bleed out!”

“What!” exclaimed a bunch of people. Bendy couldn’t really tell who.

“H-hey! Put me the cuss down! Don’t cussing carry me, you crazy broad! I’m fine!” Bendy went to pull himself out of her grip when the world spun and his stomach with it. Oh cuss. Was this an ink attack? His head felt like it was full of cotton. Another panic attack? “I...said put me down,” he muttered. When did the world go black? Was it the ink? He needed his pills...but his chest wasn’t burning. He just suddenly felt so tired.

“Bendy!” Boris gasped when Bendy went limp on her shoulder. He had been sure he’d pull away, but he just-- “What happened!” He rushed up to Bendy and saw something drip to the ground. He leaned over and gasped again. Blood was running down Bendy’s leg. The knife wound! In all the panic, they’d all forgotten!

Anita jumped down from the train, yanking off her scarf. She wrapped it around Bendy’s thigh. Her grandfather followed her, a grim expression on his face. The tiny mouse’s eyes bugged out as he saw the blood.

“It’s never a calm moment with you people, is it!” Oswald smacked his forehead. Boris ignored him and followed Anita and the mayor.

“Where’s Trish?” Anita hissed, looking back where the train had come.

The tiny mouse glanced at her and then back at the desert. “Is she out dere?” he asked.

“What do you need?” Felix pushed forward around Boris and the old dog. Felix knelt down next to Anita.

“We need to staunch tha blood,” she said. “Before we do anything else. Or he’s going to bleed out.” Felix unzipped his bag and pulled out bandages and pads.
Anita grimaced. “I’m no doctor,” she muttered, but grabbed the bandages and started wrapping.

“But I know some first aid,” Felix said and took over. He unwrapped her work, took a cloth and a bottle, rinsed the wound and put two pads over it before rewrapping it with the bandages. “He’ll need stitches. This is only a patch job.”

Anita blinked and then looked up with wide eyes. In the distance there was a dusty cloud hurtling towards them.

Wiley turned. “Now what in the good earth is that?” he whined.

The group turned to see. When the cloud got a little closer they saw Trish, her shoulders hunched in incredulity, her horse underneath her. They both were being carried by the small mouse in the sombrero, who was laughing crazily as he ran them across the desert at hurtling speed.

There was a sudden yelp. Sam, who had been inching his way from the group, shook off Snowball, his finger red from her bite.

“Hey! Where do you think you’re trying to go pee-wee!” Oswald barked. Boris perked his ears and turned around.

The sheriff drew his gun. “Stay back, ya long eared galoot!” he snarled, continuing to back away.

“You think I’m lettin’ a gallon-hat mook like you run off with something like that?” Oswald didn’t back down.

“Ozzy! Be careful!” Mickey stared with wide eyes. He was clinging to the wall to stay up right.

Sam’s gun went off and the bullet whizzed just by Oswald’s cheek. “Ya’ll deal wit’ it, ya varmint, or you’ll end up with a bullet between tha eyes. I aint givin’ ya ‘nymore warning shots.” He continued to back away, reaching the edge of the saloon. With the cover of the building, he ran.

Boris ran to Felix. “Rope!” Boris raced around the train to the other side. Rope, he had a lasso. He’d never used a lasso before! He watched the circus people and movie cowboys do this. He started swinging it around. The rope took more force to keep in the air than Boris had thought. He fumbled with it. He hoped this worked. He rushed around the train and tried to spot Sam.

The small sheriff had managed to make it to the end of the back of the saloon. A row of horses waited just past the building, and from the intense look the man was giving them, he intended to grab one the moment he got there.

Boris threw the rope…and it went limp, not even getting close. Sam didn’t even seem to notice! Oswald looked like he was ready to rush the man, but the gun didn’t waver. Boris ran up, pulling the rope up behind him. Running with everything he had, Boris threw the rope again with all his might.

And then ran into it at full speed.

It tangled up his legs, causing him to trip and roll across the dusty dirt toward the small man. Boris yelped as a sharp rock hit his knee. He couldn’t tell up from down for a minute. He was sure there was swirls in his eyes. “Stop, you varmint!” Boris muttered, confused.

And Sam did. For half a second, he stopped to stare at Boris in disbelief. Then he gave a roaring laugh, turning to reach for the nearest horse.

That was when a pail full of rocks landed on his head.
The man’s whiskers went straight, his whole body rigged. Then, his legs folded, and he dropped to the ground. Boris looked up. Holly sat down at the edge of the roof with an exhausted sigh. She grinned at Boris. “Good job distracting him.” She leaned over and looked at the pail of rocks. “And Cup said these things wouldn’t be useful,” she muttered to herself. Uh?

Boris didn’t get any of that, didn’t matter! They had stopped him. Boris tried to stand up and fell over again. Instead, he inched forward far enough to reached the gun he had dropped. Boris grabbed it and pushed it further away from them.

Holly scrambled to the edge of the roof and jumped down. She landed on the other side of Sam, next to the brush. She noticed it and suddenly paused, eyes blank as she stared at it. Boris unintentionally tensed.

She leaned down to pick it up. Her fingers gently wrapped around the wood, and she straightened, looking at it as a tiny smile formed on her lips. Her arm twitched, like she was about move it.

“Holly?” Boris asked and started pulling at the ropes to untangle his legs. He didn’t like that look. He didn’t want to say she scared him, but he couldn’t claim to feel comfortable with that brush in her hands. It was an unpleasant reminder of the last time. Oswald was running toward them.

She flinched and looked up at him, eyes back in the present. She opened and closed her mouth, seemingly lost for words.

“Nice job you two! You got him!” Oswald grinned proudly and swung a fist a little.

Holly swallowed and smiled at him. She suddenly turned and shoved the brush into Boris’ hands. “Thanks-I’m-going-to-check-on-Bendy,” she said and hurried away, back towards the train.

That couldn’t mean anything good. Boris waited for voices to enter his head or a rush of power for...something. Nothing happened. Boris perked his ears. Really? Nothing? Maybe he needed to use it? But Holly hadn’t. Was she okay?

Oswald used the rope Boris had abandoned to tie up the unconscious Sam. Boris looked at the bucket Holly had used. Should he try? Mickey’s missing leg popped into his head. He eyed the crack that ran from one end of the wooden handle to the other. He lowered the brush. No. Too dangerous. He and Oswald hurried back to the others.

They had moved Bendy to a table in the saloon. Trish leaned over him with pressed lips and a needle. Felix was with her. Boris ears fell. He wasn’t sure he wanted to see what they were doing...but he didn’t want to leave Bendy either.

“Boris! Over here!” Mickey waved him over. Holly sat with him. They were sitting in a corner of the room. Oswald was with them. Boris hesitantly came toward them, throwing worried glances at Bendy.

“You got it, great!” Mickey smiled. “They’re almost done helping Bendy, so why don’t you wait with us Boris?”

Boris looked at the kind smile of his idol, and he felt something rise in his throat. Everything that had happened suddenly ran through his mind. Their kidnapping, the failed escape, the explosives, and the crash. His eyes burned. Oh no! Not in front of Mickey again! He bowed his head.

“Come here little buddy.” Oswald pulled Boris in between him and Mickey.

“Oh Boris, its okay!” Mickey hugged him tightly. “Everything is okay now. We did it. You did it!
We’re all safe, and you have another part of the ink machine!” Boris bawled. They had done it! They had gotten the piece but it had been terrifying. They hadn’t gotten out of it scott free either. The relief and guilt were crushing.

“B-b-but Bendy--an-and your leg!” Boris shook and clung to Mickey for dear life.

“Shh, it’s okay. Bendy will be okay, and I’m fine!” Mickey said. Liar. How could someone be okay like this? Boris shook his head and shivered. He thought they were all going to die, just for a moment there on the train.

“Hey now bud, deep breathes,” Oswald rubbed his back. “You people have to explain to me what all this ink machine stuff is and why this magic stick is so important. I mean, I get it, but taking it from the top would be nice.”

“Oh, that’s right! I guess we should explain!” Mickey said sheepishly.

“I take it you may want to retell you little ‘trip’ on Nightmare Night too,” Oswald said deadpan to his brother.

“Uh--Uh!” Mickey froze and then slouched. Holly flushed. “O-oh, so you know about that?”

“Mick, bro, you are good at a lot of things. Lying to me isn’t one of them.” Oswald frowned.

Holly reached out and squeezed Boris’ hand, carefully avoiding the hand with the brush. “If you want, I can explain it to him,” she gently offered. Boris nodded. The normal conversation actually helped him calm down. He still sat closely to Mick and gripped the brush with a death grip. He tried to shift his focus from the guilt of Mickey being like this to the relief that they were all alive.

Holly explained the machine and the hope for the cure. Oswald nodded. She haltingly explained what happened during Nightmare Night. Her face grew dark, and she looked at the table during that part. Mickey and Boris added details here and there. Oswald frowned and eyed Holly like she was a hard math problem that was keeping him up too late at night. She ran through the parts they had so far and what they did. “I know, but like I thought the first time, I don’t think this thing will do the trick,” Oswald concluded.

Boris’ ears fell in surprise. What?

“Ozzy.” Mickey’s voice was full of warning.

The rabbit shrugged unashamed. “Look kid.” Oswald put a hand on Boris’ shoulder. “My brother is a nice guy, so he won’t say it. But I’m more straight forward.”

“Ozzy, leave it.” Mickey’s voice became brittle. He scowled at the rabbit.

“No Mick! I won’t! He deserves to at least hear it!” Oswald glared at Mickey over Boris. Boris stared at him with wide eyes. “Now look, I’m not saying give up but.” Oswald grimaced. “Ya gotta prepared yourself too.” Boris blinked. Huh? Prepare? He knew he wasn’t a good fighter yet, but he was getting better. And preparing for the parts was difficult, since it seemed they were all so different. The situations they were finding themselves in were so vastly strange and never similar. It was practically impossible.

Boris took a deep breath and looked at Oswald. “We try to be ready to get the parts but--”

“No kid it’s--” Oswald cut himself off. His fist clenched. He shut his eyes and took a deep breath. He looked like he was in pain.
“Are you okay, Mr. Oswald?” Boris asked, worried. His ears pinned to his skull. Boris glanced to Mickey for some guidance on what to do.

“Ozzy,” Mickey protested weakly, gazing at his brother sadly.

“I’m not talking about the machine, Boris. Your brother. You need to be ready in case something happens.” Oswald looked at him grimly.

Wait. He was saying-- “No!” Boris shook his head quickly. “No! Bendy will be fine. He’s strong. We have the pills and a helpful rune. We have three parts now! We’ll build the machine, and he’ll be fine. So I don’t have to be prepared for anything!” Boris scowled and tried to pull away.

Oswald grimaced. “Look Boris!” the rabbit snapped. “It’s not because I’m being mean! Or that I don’t think you two are trying to do a great thing! Hell! If it works, berries! I’ll be at the parade, but you need to be ready if it doesn’t!”

“It will work!” Boris growled back. “What do you know, anyway!”

“I cussing know!” Oswald roared.

“Ozzy!” Mickey reached around and grabbed Oswald’s arm.

Oswald was breathing hard. He was staring at the table. He was...shaking. “S-sorry...I...I need some fresh air.” The rabbit stood up and rushed out of the room.

“Ozzy! Wait!” Mickey reached out like he could stop him. When he was gone, Mickey thumped his hand on the table.

“I-I’m sorry Mr. Mickey!” Boris stuttered weakly. He looked from the door to Mickey with wide eyes. He knew? What did he know? He didn’t mean--

“Don’t be Boris.” Mickey sighed and petted his head comfortingly.

Holly reached out and wrapped an arm around each of them, giving them a squeeze and letting go.

Boris bit his lip after a moment. He wasn’t sure he could ask what Oswald meant. It felt really personal for him to get that upset. He had a temper that kinda reminded him of his brother or Cup. “What...did he mean?” Boris mumbled quietly, shyly even. Did he really want to know?

Mickey sighed and stared at the table sadly. “He means my sister-in-law. She had ink illness. We went all over the world looking for a cure.” Boris’ ears perked. He remembered Oswald’s assistant in his magic act before he stopped a while ago. Bendy had thought she was cute. Of course.

“None of us were ready. We all thought we’d find a cure. Oswald was the surest of all of us,” Mickey murmured. Boris felt cold dread wash through him. He promised. He’d said he’d be fine. Boris knew they would get the cure. He knew it.

Mickey looked to Boris and smiled. “Don’t be mad with him. He’s trying to help in his own way.”

Boris ducked his head down. “Well, he could try some other way,” Boris mumbled. He wasn’t even going to consider a life with Bendy in it. That felt like giving up. Giving up on the machine. Giving up on their quest and helping everyone. Giving up on Bendy. Bendy had never, not once, given up on Boris. Why would he do any differently? Mickey chuckled.

When Trish finished Bendy’s stitches, she reapplied the antiseptic and rewrapped his leg. Then,
standing, she moved to the small group. The dog had a reassuring expression on her face. “I’ve been told what happened to Mickey,” she whispered. “Can I take a look?”

Mickey turned in his seat and pulled his right leg out. He wiggled the nub that was left under his knee. Boris swallowed a shiver. That just looked weird, and it was their fault...his fault that Mickey was like this. The guilt easily returned.

Trish knelt in front of Mickey, pulling back his pant leg to examine the end. She tutted and pulled a bottle out of her bag. She didn’t do much, just cleaned the end, wrapped it, and left Mickey with more antiseptic and bandages. “Wash that every day, apply the cream, and rewrap it for at least a week,” she ordered softly. “Otherwise you could risk getting infection.” She looked a little confused.

“Yeah, I have no idea either.” Mickey chuckled and scratched the back of his head. “Thanks.”

Boris looked at the brush. “Should we try to...put it back?” He held up the brush. “I mean, you got it to work for the train controls.” Before Sam had cracked it.

Trish raised a brow curiously. Holly looked uncertain. “I don’t know how magic brushes work, but I’d say it’s worth a try.” She clicked her tongue.

Boris froze. “Uh, maybe you should do it, Mickey.”

Mickey hunched his shoulders. “Me? Golly, I had no idea what I was doing at the time.”

“Neither do I!” Boris exclaimed. “But I don’t think a fourteen year old kid should magic a leg back into existence!”

Holly snorted and shook her head. “It might be better for you to do it since we know you can work it,” she agreed.

Mickey glanced at Trish. “What about you? You have the most medical knowledge. You won’t make an ankle that bends the wrong way or anything. What about you try Trish?”

Trish tilted her head. “Okay.” She held out her hand. “I don’t know much about magic though.”

“Neither do I. At least, not much.” Mickey shrugged. “I just imagined what I wanted there and waved it.” Boris offered the dog woman the brush.

The dog took it, more curiosity crossing her face. She narrowed her eyes and waved the large object at Mickey.

Nothing happened. Oh stars! They broke it! Cold dread itched at Boris’ chest.

She blinked, looking disappointed. She hummed, brows going down in concentration as she waved it again.

Still. Nothing happened. W-would it still work for the machine? What if it didn’t?

Finally, after a third wave, she sighed. “I don’t know what you did, but I can’t seem to do it.” She handed the brush to Mickey. They were all tense, none of them willing to word their thoughts.

Mickey waved the wand, a blue liquid sprouted out of it and formed into a glass of water on the table.

“Uh.” Mickey sighed, relief on his face. Boris let out a breath he didn’t realize he was holding. It worked! Thank the stars above! “You okay?” Mickey glanced at him.
Boris nodded quickly. “Let me try!” Boris took it and waved it, imagining his pipe. Nothing. Boris waved it again. “Why doesn’t it work for me or Trish?” Was it because they broke it? Wait, didn’t that Charley guy say that it only worked for some people? Boris couldn’t remember.

“I don’t know,” Mickey said.

Trish looked at Holly. “Do you want to try?” Holly quickly shook her head. Boris narrowed his eyes. Yeah, something was up...or was it just the cog coming up for her?

Trish hummed. “Well, I can get you one of my medical books,” she said to Mickey and turned to go.

“It’ll be great if you can make your leg again,” Boris said. “I wonder why it does things differently for you?”

Mickey frowned. He took it back from Boris and waved the brush again. A lime green liquid came out, and the glass just melted into nothing. The table sat in a tense silence for a minute. “So...there are two sides of this. An ‘erase’ side and a ‘paint’ side. Huh,” Mickey murmured. “Seems this crack didn’t hurt it then. That’s great!”

“Do you feel okay Mickey?” Boris asked cautiously, a new worry tickling the back of his mind.


Boris nodded. He hoped that was true. They weren’t going to go through another incident.

Trish came back with her anatomy book and spread it in front of Mickey to see. He looked it over carefully. Boris leaned over his shoulder curiously. He’d never seen a book about the body before. The picture was gross. Skin and...layers peeled back to show what was underneath. Boris pulled a face. Insides looked weird. That looked like a sausage! Gross!

It was a couple of minutes later that Cuphead and Mugman came into the saloon with the other police dog women. Cup also had Oswald with him. The black dog looked even more grumpy than usual as she strode in. She immediately went to Anita. The other dog lingered for a moment, but then limped after the first with a tired expression.

“The train’s in the station, so I hope that means no one died!” Cup said as a greeting.

“We’re doing okay.” Boris waved.

“That short whiskered man tried to steal the brush though,” Holly added.

Cup paused, a look of confusion on his. “Sam?”

“Yeah. Holly and I had to stop him. He had a gun,” Boris said.

The confusion changed to a scowl. “Oh really?” he murmured. Mugs tensed behind him.

Holly frowned at him. “He’s in one of the jail cells, so you don’t have to bother with him,” she said.

Cuphead hummed and pulled out his pack of cigarettes. Mugs tugged on his scarf and looked away.

“Fellas,” Boris said. “You can’t beat up Sam. He’s already in jail. Just leave it.”

“We didn’t say anything,” the brothers said at the same time. Boris rolled his eyes. He could practically hear the plans going through their minds.
“So did he do something to Bendy?” Mugs tilted his head toward Boris’ brother.

“No, that was Charley. He stabbed him,” Boris said. “But he’ll be okay.” They shared a look.

“Okay.” Cup slipped into the seat next to Holly. “Start at the beginning and don’t skip anything.” Mugs nodded and sat on Holly’s other side. She glanced between them.

Boris smiled. This would be funny. “Well it all started on a snowy evening in Sillyvision. I was on--”

“No! No!” Cup laughed. “You smart-aleck! Not your life story. The cussing train!” Mugs laughed too, covering his mouth with his hands. Boris grinned, proud of himself. “And it’s good to see you’re okay, H,” Cup said offhandedly.

Mugs smiled. “Yeah, we were worried.”

She blinked in surprise and then smiled widely. “Thanks. You have no idea how glad I was to see you back at that camp.”

Mugs grimaced. “If only we had been able to nab you two then.”

Holly looked at Trish and Mickey, who were still talking over the anatomy textbook. “I wish we’d been able to settle things back before all this,” she said sadly.

“Hey!” Cup snapped. “I wanna know what happened on the train! Start talking!”

Boris snorted. “Alright, alright!” He smiled. “So us, you, Mugs, Felix, Oswald, and Bendy got on a train to come out to the Far West to Heela.”

Cup growled, but there was amusement in his eyes.

Holly started to laugh, putting a hand on Boris’ arm.

“You think you’re cute, but I got news for you. You’re not.” Cup shook a finger at him with narrowed eyes.

Boris calmed down. “Okay! I’ll tell you for real this time. And I know I’m cute.” He then started for real. He went through the horse riding, the train, the bombs, the fight at the front, all the way up to the crash and Sam trying to run with the part.

Cup and Mug looked scary again, but then he told them how he and Holly had stopped Sam.

“Oh sun and moon! You dropped the cussing bucket on him!” Cup laughed.

“You should have seen it.” Oswald smirked. “Sam was out.”

Snowball had come out and was rolling around in Cup’s hair. She paused for a moment when he laughed, resting her head on a large bit of bubble, making it look like she had a fat beard. Boris had to hold back his laughter. The tiny rodent seemed to grin at him. He covered his snickers with a hand.

Holly grinned at Cup. “I had to make up for hitting you over the head with the other one.”

He shook his head. “You are insane. Absolutely insane!”

“When did she hit you with one?” Mugs blinked in confusion.
“Boris?” Bendy’s voice called. Boris shot up out of his chair and hopped over Mickey.

“Sorry!” he told Mickey and tripped to where Bendy was laying. “Bendy! You’re awake!”

Bendy looked around blearily. “What happened?”

Felix stepped up from his seat. “You passed out from blood loss.”

Bendy groaned. “Okay.”

Felix narrowed his eyes. “No. Not okay! You need to be more careful Bendy! You scared us.”

“That’s why ya don’ pull a cussing knife outta your leg until your ready ta bind it!” Anita huffed from where she was standing with the other dogs.

Bendy’s eyes widened, and he looked between Boris and Felix. “Sorry,” he murmured. He was still too pale. There were shadows under his eyes.

“C’mon Bendy. Let’s get some food in you and let you rest,” Boris suggested.

Trish was there a moment later. She hovered for a second. “Be sure to drink a lot of water too. Don’t move too much and eat lots,” she warned before returning to Mickey.

“Okay.” Bendy sat up slowly. “Ugh, what a headache.” He lifted a hand to the side of his head and grimaced.

“Here.” Felix offered him a glass of water. “She also stitched up your leg, so don’t get this wet.” Felix pointed to his bandaged leg. Bendy nodded and took the glass with a shaky hand. He only spilled a little before returning the empty glass.

“Hey man,” Cup greeted. “You look like a moonrocks.”

“Gee, thanks,” Bendy said deadpanned. “I nearly bled to death. How has your evening been?”

“Was nearly blown up, but pretty good all things considered. Losing two idiots is a mark on my record though.” Cup chuckled. Bendy snorted. Boris went to get the food.

Eventually, Boris heard Anita blow up when Chantzi told her that they’d lost the sailor and spider in a trap that the Butcher Gang had left behind. Then, Wiley showed up and talked with each of the group, listening very patiently and only asking questions occasionally. Eventually, the matter of the brush was brought up.

Gently, the old dog asked them to explain the situation. Boris, Mickey, and Felix took turns running through what happened on the train. Anita threw in a few words here and there about what had happened with the gang and the brush.

Finally, the old dog let out a long sigh. “Now that’s a real dog-eat-dog situation,” he said, his wrinkled eyelids fluttering. He glanced at the brush. Boris followed his line of sight. The brush, though large in size, didn’t seem menacing like the other two parts had been. There was no dread or creepy feeling hanging over it. Sure, it was dangerous, but it wasn’t...malicious. It was simply a dangerous tool. If it weren’t for the magic, Boris would even be able to see it as ‘normal’ and a bit plain.

Wiley leveled them all with a piercing look. “You understand how dangerous that thing is?”

Felix spoke up. “Yes. We understand it better than most, I dare say.” They did? Of course they did!
They had dealt with this madness how many times at this point?

The old dog nodded. He turned his head towards Anita. “What do you think?”

She blinked and gulped nervously, shoulders up. She looked at the three of them and took a moment to consider the question. Then, a hint of her usual confidence came back in her smile. “They’re a buncha stubborn yakadoodles. But I’d trust ‘em with it more than some damn bureaucrat.”

Wiley nodded, put his hands on his knees, and stood up. “That’s it, then.” With that, the matter was closed.

Bendy ate like he had on the streets, manners out the door. The food was gone under two minutes. It was like the good days when it was a race between him and Bendy to see who finished first. Felix frowned but didn’t say anything. Oswald and Holly helped Mickey limp over to see how he was doing.

The sun was starting to set, and the group was talking about going back to the hotel. Bendy coughed as Boris helped him stand. “Bendy?” Bendy clutched Boris’ arm.

“We need to go now!” Bendy hissed as his face twisted in pain. Boris’ heart plummeted and veins froze with ice.

“The back!” Boris said. Bendy raced to the back of the building.

“We’ll meet you at the hotel!” Boris shouted as he went after his brother.

“Boris? Bendy?” Oswald looked at them confused. Cup, Mugs, and Mickey looked somber. Felix made a step to follow, but Boris shook his head. Holly stared after them in worry. Anita and the other three were busy looking over a map, but when Bendy and Boris rushed away the deputy sheriff looked up with a confused expression on her face.

Bendy was out the door and on the street quickly. He raced between building, a hand over his mouth. Boris panted as his followed his brother. They reached another narrow space between two buildings. There were crates and rubbish. “Bendy wait!” Boris panted.

Bendy’s leg suddenly gave out. He tumbled and rolled into a barrel with a thud. Ink splattered on the dusty ground. “Bendy!” Boris skidded on the dirt, ignoring the sting on his knees as he reached Bendy. He pulled his brother up into his lap and turned him to face up. Bendy gagged and turned his head to spit up ink. Boris kept his face calm and reached for Bendy’s wrist. The rune was already glowing. “Bendy! Did you already take the pill? Bendy?”

Bendy bit his lip and withered in Boris’ grasp, his arms fastened around his chest. Ink started to drip from Bendy’s head and limbs. Bendy tried to muffle a scream. Bendy’s tail lashed against the ground, flicking ink. Boris’ heart pounded. “Bendy! You’re going to be fine. I know it. Try to breathe,” Boris said as calmly as he could. Bendy’s back lurched, and Bendy let out a shriek before turning away and coughing up more ink. The ink ran down his face. Boris tried to wipe it away again and again, but it kept coming. Bendy’s shrieks ripped at Boris’ heart, but he kept talking calmly. He would get through this. He always did.

“It’s okay, bro. You’re doing fine. You’ll get over this, and then we’ll be back at the hotel and in warm beds,” Boris told him. Was his breathing getting more shallow? Why wasn’t the ink stopping? It had never gone past five minutes! Bendy’s horns were losing shape. “Bendy! C’mon! We have to catch up with the others! They’ll be worried about us!” Boris told him, brushing more ink from Bendy’s face, ignoring the soaked stickiness on his pants and shirt. Bendy let out a horse whimper.
He lifted a shaky hand. Boris grasped it in his.

“B-Boris, I-I can’t,” Bendy whispered and threw up more ink. No more! How could there be any more! The puddle around them was too big as it was!

“Yes, you can! You’re strong, Bendy! You promised you’d stay with me!” Boris told you. “You promised to be my brother!” Boris reminded him.

“I’m sorry!” He panted. “I’m sorry!” His grip tightened. “I’m scared. I can’t feel it!”

Boris’ was shivering. Wasn’t feeling? Wasn’t feeling what! “What do you mean Bendy!”

He didn’t seem to hear him. “Boris!” he cried out, his face streaked with tears and ink.


“It’s okay Boris,” Bendy whispered hoarsely. Boris smiled and wagged his tail. Finally! That was the worst attack yet. It just didn’t seem to end. Why was that? How much worse--No, Boris wouldn’t think about it.

“Good,” Boris told him. Heavens. He didn’t have anything to clean them up with. His bag was probably at the hotel. Bendy would need a shower more than a washcloth anyway. They both would. His goggles were practically gone in the ink. Those were going to be a pain to clean. “Let’s just stay here a moment, and then we’ll go back to the hotel.” Boris tried to wipe the ink away from Bendy’s face again, but his soaked gloves only smeared it. Bendy hummed weakly. Boris sighed and scooted back against the building wall behind the barrels. The sky was darkening. Twilight. The stars would be showing up soon.

Boris didn’t really keep track of time. He saw a couple stars appear. The sky darkened. He shifted and woke Bendy up. “Let’s clean you up.” Thank heavens, his horns were back to normal, and the goggles were visible. Once again, the ink seemed to reverse a bit after his attack.

Bendy mumbled and let Boris help stand him up. He swayed a lot. Boris really wished Bendy would let him carry him, but he knew how that would go. Even in this state, Bendy would fight him. He took Bendy’s arm and put it over his shoulder as best as he could and started walking. He pretty much carried Bendy with the illusion that Bendy was walking. They trailed ink behind them.

It was only a couple blocks until the hotel building. They passed a couple people that asked if they could help. Boris thanked them and turned them down as he kept going. The lights of the hotel were bright and welcoming. The ink on his legs and clothes made moving feel stiff with his matted fur.

He almost fell through the doorway in relief.

People waited at the door for them. Boris ears perked at the sight.

“Boris! Bendy!” Felix gasped.

“We’re fine.” Bendy tried to blink the ink out of his eyes. Felix grimaced.

“Bendy,” Mugs muttered quietly. Cup was there too, watching in silent worry. Holly came forward and gave them each a quick, gentle hug. The ink didn’t seem to bother her. Boris noticed Anita
standing at the back, arms folded as she watched them come in.

“We need to clean up,” Boris mumbled.

The group let them through quickly, but he could feel their eyes on them all the way up the stairs.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys! This week we got an absolutely terrifying drawing of our new demon, Ava.

![Ava Drawing](image)

It was drawn by oneroguefalcon!
An Evening with Drinks

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Welcome again ladies and gentlemen to another chapter of Inky Mystery,” Mic announces proudly. “This evening Cuphead as a lot to think about and Mugs has a few things to say. What are these brothers up to?”

Chapter Notes

Hello my lovely readers!
I hope your week went well. I’m still in the middle of school but those of you on summer break, I hope you are having fun. Thank you all for the comments, art, and questions. I hope to get around to answering all of them. Thank you for being patient with me and I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Cup watched the two disappear from view. He let out a sigh through his nose. His hand wrapped around his box of smokes. Mugs gave him a pointed look from across the room. Like that was his cussing problem! They still had to take the cussing parts! Starfallen, sunblazing, righteous brother! Cup looked away from him. Stupid ink illness! Stupid pup with his stupid cussing big eyes and his stupid brother acting all cussing limp. Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!

He scanned the rest of the group. Felix had gone to help Boris. Mugs had cussing followed! Anita was talking to Holly. The other dog cops had stayed at the station house. Although, Trish had treated Dimitri and sent her home. Wherever that was.

They still needed to talk to her. He also wanted to drop by good ol’ Yosemite Sam, if he got the chance. The shrimp was supposed to be after Bugs Bunny, a debtor that was famous and had bailed on his contract. He had been slipping collectors left and right. Forget that, what the hell was a little weasel like Sam doing here instead of after the rabbit? And he was sheriff? When had that happened? He had been after the cussing part. Cuphead didn’t like this at all. It was a pile of stardust, and he was determined to get to the bottom of it. First though, how to find the dog debtor? He eyed Anita. Would he be able to get the location out of her, or would the deputy be suspicious of him?

Ugh. He needed a smoke. He was all tense. Cup walked past them and to the front porch. He pulled out his pack and put a cigarette between his lips. He slipped the box back into his pocket and lit his finger. A couple quick breathes, and he let out a slow exhale, smoke curling up into the cold desert air. Better. Not good, but better.

“Ya know, smokin’s bad for your health,” a young female voice said from above.

“Bite me,” was his automatic response. He looked over at the owner of the voice.
Dimitri sat on the roof of the hotel, one floral print boot swinging. Bandages covered her neck and arms. Her left foot was in a cast. She had a small ring puzzle in her hands she was fiddling with. Dimitri gave him a small smile. “Funny. That’s what ‘Nita told me too.” How the hell did she get up there?

Cup raised an eyebrow. “Didn’t she send you home?” Lucky him. He didn’t have to hunt her down now.

The dog shrugged, her expression guarded as she moved the puzzle. “Too shifty to go home. Figured I might as well wait around and enjoy the full moon.”

Cup hummed. “Mind if I join you?”

She nodded, swinging her legs again. Cup looked for an easy way up. The hotel was a pretty straight up and down building, but there was an old dried out drain pipe going up one corner. Whatever. Good enough.

Cup sauntered over to it and pulled on it to see if it could hold for the few seconds he’d need it. It seemed to be steady. He pulled and hooked his shoe in before hoisting himself up. A few steps and he was on the roof. She stilled and lifted her head slightly, watching him from the edge of her vision. One hand left the puzzle and rested beside her on the concrete, conveniently right next to her gun. Ah. Good instincts. She had hope then. If she didn’t act stupid. He raised a brow, smirked, and stuffed his hands into his pockets.

He walked over and sat down next to her, leaving a good space between them. He let one leg hang over the edge and brought his other leg up. He let out another breath of smoke before turning to her. “So, how are you feeling?” He dared to pull out a hand to hold his cigarette. He tapped the ash away on the ledge.

She watched him closely, but blinked at his question, her face scrunching in confusion. She gave a frown that implied she wondered if that was a trick question. When he didn’t say anything more, she shrugged. “I dunno. Happy to be alive, I guess.”

He hummed noncommittally. What the hell was he supposed to say? Most new debtors he’d been around were scum, criminals, and rats. He rarely saw the good and desperate. That had only been when he had been out collecting, and it was a load of stardust. Those ones were at the end of their ropes, who acted more like cornered animals than people.

She giggled suddenly. “Nah. That’s wrong. Surprised. That’s how I’m feeling.”

“Oh?” Cuphead tilted his head toward her and took another sweet breath of his apparently ‘unhealthy’ smoke. He turned back out to the open air to let the smoke go. “Why would you be surprised?”

She gave a snort, but it was hoarse. “What do you think, fire finger? I was ready to die.”

“Oh.” Cup muttered, a bit surprised. What was he supposed to say to that? He had grown numb to the risks unless they got that close. It was rare. He did nearly get burned and clawed to death today, but now everything was back to normal...Maybe he should take that as a sign of how messed up he really was. “Good thing that you didn’t,” he said lamely. Stars. That was terrible. He sighed. “Sorry. That was terrible.” He ran a hand through his hair. He really didn’t feel like putting on the charming act though. This dog would see right through it. She had heard everything, after all.

The dog raised a brow at him. “I’m sure you’re very concerned with my mental health,” she said
sarcastically, leaning back.

He...deserved that. Cup snorted. “Your mental health? Mine is so cussing far out the window, it doesn’t even realize it’s falling.” He shook his head.

She opened her mouth like she was going to ask him something, but then she closed it uncertainly.

“You got something to say spit it out,” Cup told her. “I ain’t gonna do nothin’ to you. You can even call me the worst names you want.”

She gave him a cheeky smile. “I know. Your friend’s rooms are right underneath us, ya know.”

Cup rolled his eyes. “Not that! I don’t go around being a schmuck cause I wanna.” He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “I just--It’s not like I--Ugh. What the hell am I even tryin’ to explain here?” That he was a decent guy? Ha! That couldn’t be further from the truth.

“Language,” the dog said automatically. Cup raised a brow in a silent mocking question. “There are kids in this town,” was all she said in answer, raising her brow back at him.

He couldn’t hold back the chuckle. “Seriously?” he asked. “You know all this stardust,” she glared at him, “on me. And of all the things you could tell me off on, it’s my language you correct?” He snickered.

The dog gave a fake smile. “If you wanna sit tight, I can tell you exactly what sort of a low-down scum you are;” she said lightly. He snickered. He thought she was a pushover at first, but this dog was actually a bit of a spitfire. He shrugged.

“You said that there were things we needed to talk about,” she prompted, setting her puzzle aside in between them.

Cup nodded and calmed down a bit. “Yeah. Some things ya need to know now that you’re a debtor. Demons, rules, help, other debtors, and so on.”

She took a shaky breath, fake smile wavering. “Yeah?”

Cup stared at her. Deadpan. “What’s with the face? You gonna panic on me now?”

The dog blinked and gave a short laugh. “Mister, to panic on you now, I’d have to have stopped back in the canyon.”

Cup nodded. “That’s fair.” He pinched his smoke between his fingers. “Okay. First off, this isn’t the end of your life. You have the cu–easiest contract I’ve ever seen. As long as you are smart, you won’t get dragged down easily. You can still live your normal life. You ain’t gonna be stuck like me or my brother.” Her brow went down curiously.

“What does that mean for you two? And does that mean she won’t come back?” she asked quietly.

Oh boy. Those were some loaded questions. Cup took a deep breath of his cig and let it out slowly. “For Mugs and I? It’s a bit more complicated. We’re in deep. Puppets on a string.” He clenched his still pocketed hand. “At least until we get our debt paid.” He sighed. “But you be ready. She’ll come back, and she’ll be asking for favors.”

The dog’s face darkened. “What sorta favors?”

“Knowing Ava, hiding bodies is a real possibility,” Cup said. “Stashing or moving questionable
items or boxes. Maybe helping another debtor. Lying for her. She’s a young upstart, so her plans shouldn’t be too intricate.” He hoped.

She hunched down and leaned back. “Well, that’s going to be a real problem, now isn’t it?” she said tensely. “What'll she do you if I tell her no?”


Her eyes widened. “Hell? But that’s...Isn’t taking someone there illegal?” Her shoulders fell. “Unless she’s a rogue.” Her brows went down. “And that’s a wide range of potentiality.”

“It is, if you are an innocent person.” Cup sighed out another breath of smoke. “But you’re a debtor now. You don’t have that protection anymore. Mostly, whatever is in your contract and what the treaty requires of the demons.” Cup glanced at her. Her frown had deepened. “And yours says she can’t kill you as long as you keep a secret. Be careful though. There are loopholes to that. Someone else could kill you, and she won’t interfere. She could leave you to die somewhere, but I think that’ll be too direct. And your family or friends have no safeguards in your contract.”

She nodded gravely. “I’ve realized that.”

Cup snorted. She looked so serious, and it was a little silly in flowery boots and a ribbon around her neck. “I wouldn’t be too worried. They have more safety around them than you do. The angels won’t let Ava just get away with anything. As long as none of them sign anything from her, they should be alright.”

That made her expression soften a bit. She nodded. “You know her. How would you say is the best way to handle her?”

Cup hummed. Ava. He didn’t really know her well, but he knew enough. “I think you can get away with saying no sometimes. As long as you hold up your end of the original deal, you are somewhat safe. But if she’s in a rotten mood, don’t argue with her. Hell is not a fun place to be dragged to. And if you push her, she will find a loophole to exploit.” He frowned. “So you might want to think carefully about what you consider ‘illegal’ and ‘passable’ now.” Dimitri’s nodded, looking a bit sick. Cup cringed, feeling partly responsible. “She practically owns you now. That’s what being a debtor means. I should warn you that demons don’t care about Surface laws, either. She may not even know something is illegal.” What could help her? She seemed clever. “I suggest you look over the Surface treaty laws and Upper laws for the demons. That way you can ‘warn’ Ava about the risks.” He used air quotes. “If you make it sound like you are trying to help her, then she shouldn’t be too cruel with you.” He smiled. Hopefully. Maybe.

Dimitri’s pressed lips told him she didn’t really believe him on that part. But she nodded again. “So, if I try to persuade her, she still wants me to hurt somebody, and then I say no, she could take me to hell?” She reached down and picked up her puzzle again.

“Yes,” Cup stated. “And yes that hell.”

The puzzle clinked. “And then?”

Cup felt his face twist in disgust and anger. What could he say? Were there even words horrible enough? He shook his head. “Horrors you can’t imagine,” he confessed quietly.

She paused. “You’ve been there.”

Cuphead looked up at the moon. Memories clawed at his mind. The screaming, the laughter, the fire, pain, skeletons, and demons. The terror. “Yeah,” he finally said quietly. “A few times.” The longest
had been that six months he couldn’t remember. He didn’t want to remember. He took a deep breath of his cigarette and put it out on the roof.

Something like pity crossed her face and disappeared. “Well, that’s that then,” she whispered. “Is there anything else I should know?” she asked.

Was there? Cup hummed thoughtfully. “If she ever tries to suggest rewriting the contract or changing it, say no. You have the easiest contract in history. Forget whatever her offers are. She can’t change it without your consent. Don’t ever give it.”

She shook her head. “That sounds like a trick anyways,” she said with a half smile.

Cuphead nodded. “Oh! And other debtors! When other debtors are around, you can ask about any traveling news. It won’t be hard to recognize them. Most are shady folks, asking to get to one place or another or looking for someone that isn’t obviously wanted. Ask how much they owe, and if they answer ‘I’m working on it’, it’s probably one of us,” Cup told her. “And don’t ask about what their debt is or why they have a contract. It’s rude, and some have personal reasons. If they decide to talk, that’s up to them. Be careful though, a lot of debtors are schmucks. You’re probably one of the best.”

She nodded. “Thanks.”

Cup shrugged. “Sure. Sorry you got tangled up in this st--trouble.”

That made her smile. But then it fell. She shook her head, looking blankly down on the town. “It was just plain bad luck. I followed that monkey and got caught in a rock slide he created. By the time I dug myself out, my horse was...” her frown deepened, “gone, and my ankle was busted. I was going back to see what had happened.”

Cup glanced at her. “And then you saw all that.”

She nodded. “I thought I was fine, and then she…” She swallowed and put her hands together as they started to shake. Her teeth clenched stubbornly. She looked at him again with that suspicion.

“They can be terrifying huh?” Cup muttered. He tried to remember what it was like when he first saw the Devil then, compared it to when he fought him. Hat when he was being charming and when he was angry.

She remained silent for a moment. “Is that demon your traveling with fighting with her over that brush?”

Cup nearly choked. He laughed and coughed. When he was able to clear his throat with a couple pats to his chest, he answered her. “I guess you could say that, but Bendy isn’t anything like Ava. He’ll use that thing to help a lot of people.” Hell, it was easy to forget that Bendy was a demon. Except for the few scares once in a while, he was a normal enough pipsqueak.

“That illness thing ya’ll were talking about?” She tilted her head, ribbon fluttering in the wind.

“Yeah,” Cup admitted. “Him and Boris are gonna try to build a machine that’ll make a cure.”

“Those same parts that the Devil wants?” she asked quietly, eyes cold.

Cup blinked. Fear itched at his heart. No. She couldn’t say anything now. It was fine. “Yeah,” he admitted quietly.

“You’re a real schmuck, you know that?” she said in a low voice.
Cup groaned and dropped his head back. “So my brother tells me.” It wasn’t like he wanted to take the parts away from Bendy. He glared up at the stars. Starfallen cuss. “It’s a real problem that we’ll have to do something about eventually.” Woah Cup. Careful. She doesn’t have to keep whatever he said here a secret. If he admitted that he was even considering betraying the Devil, he could be overturning everything he was trying to set up.

She glanced at him, brows going down. “What does that mean?”

Cup cringed. Aw cuss. He’d probably already said too much. But now that he was thinking about the plan...He reached into his coat pocket and pulled out the book. “Look, I don’t have a secret-keeping-contract on me, and honestly, I don’t have a reason to trust you. If I say too much, you could really stick a wrench in my plans. Nothing personal.” The book was old and the binding was so worn that all the letters were gone. He then reached into another pocket and pulled out a scrap of paper. He opened the book, flipped to a spot that had a torn edge and put the paper there. The dog glanced curiously at it. Cup shut it and put the book back in the inner pocket, opposite the contracts he always carried. “This is just too important.”

She clicked her tongue. She seemed to measure him with her eyes. She pressed her mouth together and turned away.

And this was why he didn’t make friends with people that knew the truth. That wall all the other debtors had up around him and his brother because of what they did. Because they were the Devil’s dogs. Stars, he didn’t even realize how much he cussing hated it until now with this small beagle woman. He’d gotten used to how open the crew and house was with them. When the hell had that happened?

Cup sighed. “Stars. Now the cold shoulder,” he muttered.

She took in a deep breath and let it out, looking back at him.

“I get it.” He looked away. “I cu—I get it. But, well.” What was he even trying to say? She watched him quietly. “Forget it. You’re a new debtor. Things are tense right now. Any of those other debtors give you st—problems, just tell ‘em you’re friends with the Cups. That’ll get them to leave you alone mostly, alright? That’s the best I got for you.” He didn’t usually stick his neck out like this, but this woman wasn’t in deep, and she shouldn’t be dragged down by others.

Her face fell, softening. “Why are you trying to help me?”

Cup sighed and brushed his hair out of his eye. “I don’t know! Maybe I feel a little responsible. You were just there, trying to help the others. Now you don’t own your own soul. There were a lot of things I coulda done differently.” He shrugged. She blinked, looking lost for words. “Does it really matter as long as you get some help?” He cringed. “I mean, our name’s a bit infamous so...” He was really digging himself a hole here. He was usually good at ‘business,’ but again, that was with schmucks not little country dogs with ribbons around their necks.

Her long ears moved a little as she turned to look at him. “It does matter,” she said firmly. “Almost as much as the offer.” She paused. “And thank you.”

“Don’t.” He shook his head. “You shouldn’t be thanking me for any of this.” He glanced at her.

She gave a small chuckle. “You got that right. But my ma brought me up to show gratitude when someone gives me a good turn, no matter the reason. So, I stick to it.”

He shook his head and rolled his eyes. Oh brother.
She only smirked. “One last question. What do you know about the Butcher Gang?”

Cup tilted his head and looked at her.

The smirk had dropped. “Those three could be responsible for the murder of an entire search party from here. Secret or no, it’s my job to keep the people of Heela City safe.”

“They won’t be here anymore, so you don’t have to worry about Heela anymore.” Cup sighed. “My guess is that Ava took them for punishment. But then again, maybe there’s something in their contract that means she has to save them?” He shrugged again, uncertain. “You can bet that she’s punishing them either way.” He looked at her. “And you can give up on arresting them when you see them again. If you see them again. They’re your fellow debtors under the same demon. Chances are, Ava would make you let them go, one way or another,” he warned. “Best to let it go and hope they never come back here.” He leaned back on his arms and frowned. It was stardust dealing with fellow debtors under the same demon, and the Devil had loads.

She leaned back, fists clenched. “And what about Sam? He tried to run off with that brush. Is he involved in this too?” she asked, looking at him sideways.

Cup growled and straightened up. Speaking of schmuck fellow debtors. “That scum is actually one of the Devil’s debtors, and there’s something goin’ on here. I need to figure it out.” What the hell was he doing here? As a sheriff no less. What the hell was the Devil’s game? He thought the boss didn’t know where the parts were, but now...

Her brows went up in shock. “Sammy works for the Devil?” she repeated. She shook her head slowly. “Always thought it was weird how he became sheriff. Anita was just about to replace the old one last year, ‘n then the county just stuck him in.” She shook her head hard. “I thought it was because they didn’t want a lady sheriff.”

Cup shook his head. It was too convenient. “He’s a famous loose screw among the debtors.” Cup forced a chuckle. “See, he’s in a position called a collector. His job is to grab contracts from debtors that flee or break their contracts. He was sent to get one contract.” Cup smirked. “And he has never gotten it. Another debtor, a really sly fella.” Cup was still secretly rooting for the guy. He had some real guts.

She scrunched her mouth at him. “It’s Bugs Bunny, isn’t it?” Cup grinned proudly.

“He’s been dodging the Devil and the collectors for years.” He was famous. Cup had always been worried that he and Mugs would get the job, but the rabbit never got that high on the Devil’s need-to-do list. Thank the stars. That reminded him. “Don’t go breaking your contract or else the collectors with come for your soul contract,” Cuphead said. He paused. “Then again, I don’t think Ava has any collectors, so she might just come for you herself.” Dimitri shivered as he said it, shaking her head. Ava really needed to get her contracts figured out...then again, if that meant she was going to stay lenient to the debtors, she shouldn’t.

“Anything else I should watch out for?”

Was there anything else? Cup hummed as he thought. “Ava has a twin brother that’s a water demon. Azazel. He seems charming and pleasant. Don’t ever trust him. Ever.”

“He could show up around her too, then,” she said with a frown.

“Yes, they are both allowed on the Surface and sometimes ask for favors from each other and their debtors. He is the one you’ll have to be careful around, if he ever shows. Try not to get his
attention.”

She blew out a tired breath and nodded. “I’ll keep my wits about me then.” She snorted. “Well, duh. I’ll be around demons.”

“Cuphead?” Mugs voice called out. Cup perked up. He heard Mugs step onto the porch.

“On the roof bro.” Cup called down to him. There was a poof, and Mugs appeared standing next to him on the roof. Dimitri’s mouth widened in wonder.

“Hey Cuphead.” Mugs kicked out a leg and plopped down next to him. “Hey dog girl.” He smiled at her...but not him. Ah cuss. What now?

She paused, but then gave him a smile. “Hey poofy dish,” she said.

Mugs blinked before he started to laugh. “What are you two doing out here?”

She shrugged at him. “Your brother here was just setting me straight about how things work.”

“Ah, you aren’t scaring her, are you Cup?” Mugs elbowed him.

“Of course not!” Cup snipped at Mugs and scooted away from him, which brought him a little closer to her.

She tensed, but shook her head. “I’m not sure you’re qualified to answer that, Mr. Cup.” She shifted. “And ‘less you think there’s anything else, I’m hitting the hay,” she said.

“Okay. Please forgive my brother for his crude behavior and-or words. He tries to help, but he is really bad at it. Do you need any help?” Mugs shifted, as if he was going to get up to help her. The hell?

“What the hell do you think I said!” Cup snapped. Mugs gave him a deadpan look. Smart-aleck no good brother!

“Nah, If I want to keep in shape, I need to just deal with it.” She continued to smile at Mugs. “Thanks, though.”

Using her arms, she pushed herself off the edge of the roof. Twisting around in the air, she caught the edge with her hands, muscles bulging. Her whole body tensed, and she grunted painfully for a second. Then she proceeded to climb down the drain pipe with just her arms, feet dangling. When she reached the bottom, she carefully put her good foot on the ground and grabbed a pair of crutches he hadn’t noticed leaning against the wall. Holy cuss. Cup raised a brow, impressed. She looked up at Cuphead. “I forgive you for your scary looks and crude mouth.” She winked.

Cup’s face heated. “Hey! I don’t have to be nice! You watch yourself!”

Mugs clapped him on the shoulder. “Aww, you made him blush.”

“MUGMAN!” Cup twisted to grab Mugs in a headlock. Mugs laughed and fought back.

Dimitri put the crutch under her arm, smirking. “Don’t worry, cupman. Chasing my tail is part of the morning routine.” With that, she hobbled away, swinging with each step forward.

Cup couldn’t snap at her with his arms full of fighting brother. When she was a little further away, Mugs yanked away. His playful demeanor dropped away into a frown. Cup mirrored the frown. “What?”
“Cuphead. What the hell are you doing?” Mugs narrowed his eyes at him.

“Whadda ya mean Mugs?” Cuphead raised a brow.

Mugs scowled. “Whadda I mean!” He threw his arms out. “You cussing tossed Bendy under a starfallen bus, Cup!” Cup blinked at the language and anger. He was ticked. “You almost killed that girl today!” Mugs pointed at the figure of Dimitri disappearing into the shadows. “I thought we were turning over a new leaf! What the hell are you doing!” Mugs demanded. “It’s like you haven’t changed at all!”

“Hey!” Cup barked. “Watch it!”

“No, you watch it!” Mugs said. “Do you even realize the danger you’re putting Bendy in? What if Ava goes after him to mess with you!”

“Then, Hat will stop her,” Cup said.

Mugs scoffed. “She isn’t going to listen to Hat!”

“And Hat isn’t going to back down. The boss will have to do something about them,” Cup said.

Mugs jaw dropped. “The boss! You’re getting the boss involved with Bendy!”

“He already is, Mugman!” Cup snapped. Mugs glared at him. “He knows us, doesn’t he! We were supposed to kill Bendy not that long ago! He’s already involved!” Mugs clenched his fist and grit his teeth. Oh stars, were they really going to cussing fight here? Everyone would hear a brawl, and Cup didn’t have any good lie ready to explain this stardust away. “If the boss is already busy, then some fighting higher demons will keep him off our backs.”

Mugs’ paused. “Our backs?”

Cup relaxed, just a margin. “If you wanna save these idiots and come out on top, we’ll have to be careful. If there’s a way to help them and save our skins, we’ll probably need help, and we ain’t gonna get it if the boss is breathing over our shoulders.”

Mugs’ eyes widen. “We?” Hope shined in his eyes.

“Now, don’t go jumpin’ the gun!” Cup growled. “I ain’t promisin’ you nothin’! I’m just looking into it to see if it’s possible! You and me are still my top priority!”

Mugs sniffed and tossed an arm over his shoulder. “Aw! C’mon Cuppy! Admit you like them! Their our friends!”

Cup snorted. “Never.” He lifted his chin stubbornly.

“You were really worried about Bendy and the rest. I know you were. You can’t lie to me.” Mugs grinned. Cup looked away in annoyance.

“You’ll admit it someday. I know you will,” Mug said happily. At least he was forgiven for the Ava thing. “I’m still not happy about Dimitri though.” He pulled away.

Cup sighed. “I had to get close enough to grab her. That cussing demon is too quick. It was the only thing I could think to do.”

Mugs gave him a skeptical look. “Really? You weren’t planning on shooting her?”
Cup scowled. “Stars, Mugsy! I have to do what the boss demands--No one else! I wasn’t gonna let Ava just get away with whatever! That’s a load of moonrocks! I wasn’t gonna kill for that nutcase!” Mugs kept the skeptical look for a moment longer before sighing.

“I don’t know if I completely believe you, but it turned out alright enough.” He shrugged. He pulled his knees up and dropped his elbows on them. “Just do me a favor, and don’t scare me like that again Cuppy,” he murmured quietly. That stung a little more than Cup was willing to admit.

“Yeah? Well how ‘bout you trust me next time?” Cup muttered back and looked away. “I am trying after all.” He lifted a hand to brush his hair back and conveniently hide his face for a moment.

“Sorry,” Mugs breathed. “I know you are.” Oh really? Was that it then? Fine.

“Oh, and guess what?” Cup looked back at him. Mugs’ face had softened again. He raised a brow. Cup pulled out the book and opened it to the page. “Ta-da.”

Mugs’ jaw dropped. He straightened up. “Wh-Wait--When did you--How did you--Where did you--”

“When we found their trashed room.” Cup smirked. Mugs took the book and looked at the page.

“What are we going to do with it?” Mugs asked, looking at Cup, sounding curious, but looking worried. “You are going to...uh hand it--”

“Hell no!” Cup snatched it back. “Are you kidding me? After all the moonrocks we’ve been through? Cuss. No. I’m cussing keeping it. This is our safety net, Mugs. We might have a cussing chance.”

Mugs frowned but slowly nodded. “You sure? Don’t you think Bendy and them might need it more than us?”

Cup snorted. “Why? They have that map. They’re doing fine so far.”

“We’ve all nearly died multiple times!” Mugs exclaimed in derision.

Cup chuckled. “But we haven’t!” He stuffed it back in its pocket. “It’s fine Mugsy, and if it ever comes to it, I don’t know. Maybe we’ll share it. But for now, it’s our secret. Got it?”

Mugs sighed in defeat. “Fine.”

“Besides, this thing has caused too most trouble to start with, and with it ‘gone,’ there hasn’t been...any of that insanity since,” Cup pointed out. Mugs shrugged, but some of his good mood returned.

“Now, we have something to go do,” Cup told him. One last thing that was really bugging him. Mugs tugged on his scarf. “Like what?”

“Sam.” Cup scowled. Mugs’ eyes widened, then he sobered.

“What are you going to do?” Mugs asked him warily.

“I have a few questions for him. C’mon.” Cup got up. “No one is waiting for us right?”

“I don’t think so. Felix went to talk to Mickey and Oswald after Bendy and Boris turned in for the night. It looked like Holly was writing in her room,” Mugs said and rolled his shoulder as he stood
“Good.” Cup jumped off the roof and onto the dirt road. Mugs hopped off after him. They started down the road at an easy pace. It wasn’t too late, so there were a few people out and about.

“Did you sneak out the other night?” Mugs suddenly asked. Cup’s eye twitched. Starfallen cussing hell.

“No,” Cup said.

“I know you’re lying.” Mugs frowned.

Cup groaned and rolled his eyes. Cussing tree princess spilling the beans.

“That’s when you and Holly dealt with the bucket of rocks, right? You took her with you and not me?” Mugs asked. Did he sound hurt?

Cup shrugged. “I actually just caught her there. I didn’t take her.”

Mugs frowned. “Cup.”

“What?” Cup glared.

“Why didn’t you wake me up?” Mugs glared back.

“Cause things have been weird,” Cup muttered and looked forward. Because Mugs apparently didn’t trust him. His brother was quiet for a long moment.

“You mean our fight,” Mugs said. Cup pushed his hands deeper into his pockets. Mugs sighed. “Cup...We may go after different ends to this whole mess, but I don’t think we have to worry until we have all the parts.” So Mugs had come to the same conclusion. It wasn’t a fix though, just like Cup’s distraction wasn’t a fix. Mugs seemed to wait for him to say something. He didn’t know what he could say. “Have I really lost your trust?”

“No,” Cup said automatically. He meant it too. Mugs would have to do more than argue to break Cup’s trust in him. Something not shared obviously. Damn, that bugged him.

Mugs was quiet again for a long moment. He sighed. “Okay, let’s just stop beating about the bush. Can I still trust you?” Mugs asked bluntly. “You asked me too, but really. Can I?” Cup blinked and turned to Mugs in surprise. Mugs tugged on his scarf uncomfortably. “I mean, you’re my brother. I love you. I’ve been with you all my life, Cuppy. I always wanna help you anyway I can, but...” He grimaced. “Now, I keep worrying that you are going to do something. It’s...hard to relax around you now. I’m afraid of leaving you alone.” Cup felt his heart twist at the pained glance Mugs gave him. “I hate this. I want to trust that you won’t try to pull a fast one on me.”

Cup stared and shook his head. “I won’t.” He surprised himself, because he meant it. “I’m waiting for us to get them all too. I won’t up and disappear on you. Promise bro. If...if it comes to us fighting, I won’t run from you.” He felt a dread sink into his bones just thinking about it. “Besides, these parts are so dangerous, and if there are people like Ava after them, we don’t have time to be at each other’s throats.” He just hoped he could fix all of this somehow.

Mugs smiled. “Thanks Cuphead.”

“Sure Mugs,” Cup said. They reached the jailhouse. Cup paused. “And just to note, I hate fighting with you too.”
“Aww, Cuppy!” Mugs gushed.

“Shut it!” Cup snapped. “Don’t make a big deal outta it. Stars!” Mugs ducked and turned away. Was he laughing at him? He was. Cussing brother. Cup pointedly ignored him and went around the building. He came to one of the high bar windows. There was a barrel next to it. Cup hopped up and peeked in. No Sam. He jumped down. He went to the next window. He had nothing to stand on here, so he hopped and grabbed the bars. He pulled himself up and looked. Another empty one. He did it two more times until he finally spotted the little man. Luckily, his cell was out of direct view of the desk that Cup was sure housed a guard.

He dropped down and looked at Mugs. Mugs shook his head with a scowl. Cup smirked. “Either you poof in there, or I cut the bars.”

Mugs rolled his eyes and planted a hand on Cup’s shoulder. There was a feeling of being yanked, and suddenly he and Mugs were in Sam’s cell.

“Let me outta here! Let me outta here!” Sam was jumping wildly in front of the bars, his voice growling angrily as he jerked at the metal. His back was to them. “Get me a mouthpiece, see! I want a Hapus Corpeus!”

“It’s Habeus Corpus, Sam. And ya shoulda thoughta that before ya ran off wit’ that brush wit’ no explanation.” Anita’s voice came from the office area. “Now, you’re just gonna have ta wait ‘til tha county internal affairs investigators git here.”

Cup clicked his tongue quietly. “You done goofed, little man,” he whispered. Mugs pulled his scarf up to his nose, hiding half of his expression. Cup smirked dangerously and pulled a hand from his pocket.

The little man jumped, whirling. “Blue-eyed toadies!” he exclaimed.

“Sam, can ya please jus’ be quiet? For at least for five minutes?” Anita sighed.

“Yeah Sam, zip it,” Cup whispered.

The cowboy gulped, pressing against the bars as his whiskers twitched. “What are tha two a ya doin’ here?” he whispered back nervously.

Cup narrowed his eyes. “That’s my cussing question, nimrod.”

“Tha boss gone ‘n sent me here,” the tiny cowboy said defensively. That was what Cup had feared.

“Why?” Cup hissed, narrowing his eyes at the tiny thief.

Sam sneered at him. “Tha boss wanted tha galootin’ brush. Last year he sent me here ‘n tol’ me ta jus’ keep low and watch them ruins outside of town. He said not ta bother ta try an’ go inta them, cause I’d just git myself killed. But if ‘nyone went in ‘n brought somethin’ back out, ta take it from them.”

His head bobbed up and down. “An’ that’s what I done. I sat here and watched and watched. ‘N then, them Butcher people showed up. I stopped them at tha front a tha ruins, but that damn demon nearly shaved my whiskers wit’ her claws. ‘F not, I’d have tha galootin’ thing weeks ago.”

“A year?” Mugs murmured. He shared a concerned look with Cup. What the hell was this? The boss had known. Or at least suspected? Cup thought they had to stick to Bendy and Boris because they could read the cussing map. But if the boss already had schmucks planted everywhere, then what the
hell was he having them do here? If the hellspawn already knew where the parts were, why the hell was he waiting? What the hell did this all mean!

He should have been suspicious when Cala had that starfallen cog in her cussing head! Stars! He was an idiot! He could see the same alarmed confusion reflected in Mugs’ eyes. What was the Devil really doing? Good sunblazing stars, even those frog brothers were in New Orleans. Did...he have people at all the locations the parts were at? Cup felt like a hole open up in his chest.

“What were you supposed to do with the moonrocks you’d get?” Cup turned back to Sam. No time to panic now. He had to get as much information as possible. He needed to keep a cool head.

“Give it ta him,” the cowboy said with a shrug. Of course! Why would it be anything else? Useless scumbag!

“Well, we have it now. Job’s over,” Cup muttered.

The cowboy muttered darkly, glaring. Something about them always getting the credit, along with the string of nonsense words that always followed one of his outbursts.

Cup folded his arms. A year. A little shorter than when the boss put them on that owl. And Cala had been at the cliffs for years...the frogs in New Orleans, how long had they been there? He didn’t remember.

Why not just have them cussing get it! Sam was an idiot, but he was a tough schmuck. Even Cup would admit that. What the hell? What about the other two parts? What about the cussing machine itself? Who was waiting for them? Who was there?

“Alrighty Sammy-boy, you might have a chance to get off the hook with me.” Cup pointed an unlit finger at him. The cowboy watched his finger warily. “Tell me everything. What do you cussing know about that damn brush and anything you got on the Butcher Gang.” He smirked. “Do well, and I just might not blast you into next week.”

The cowboy’s eyes flicked from his finger for a second. He nodded. “Them idjits stole from a empty bank.” Sam snickered. “Stole that cussin’ train, messed up stealing a coach, ‘n accidentally let a heard a cows loose. Didn’t even manage to keep ‘em.” He shook his head. “They’ve been this close having their hides skinned by the law every time.” Sam pinched his fingers together. “I woulda loved ta skin their hides myself, but their demon always got ‘n tha way.”

Cup narrowed his eyes. Most demons didn’t like to get down in the dirty work with their debtors. Either Ava was different, or she really did have something in that contract that meant she had to save them. He’d have to see how the demon acted to Dimitri. How involved Ava would be with her.

Sam shrugged. “Once they got the starfallen brush, they started ta get nasty though. Took out a way bigger gang we’d been havin’ trouble with. They prolly wiped out a party tha my deputy was stupid ‘nough ta send out too.” He shrugged. “Never found no bodies though.”

Cuphead frowned. So they were idiots. Great! He already knew that! Sounds like they gave Sam a run for his money. Cup grit his teeth. Something wasn’t right here. There was more to this mess than just cussing magical parts or the machine. If it was just that, the Devil would have had his debtors grab them already. Was it because Cala failed to return? Was he more cautious because of her? But why? He didn’t care about his debtors!...But he did care about the parts. What in the world was the Devil’s goal?

He wanted all of the machine parts. What was going on here? Cuphead didn’t get it. Why was he
waiting? He was just going in circles here!

Cup huffed. He eyed Sam. Sam glared back. He was half tempted to shoot him anyway. “Cup,” Mugs whispered. Cup sighed and pocketed his hand.

“You get to live. At least, it won’t be me. We’ll see what the boss does wit’ ya after this pile of stardust.” Cup smirked. “And he hasn’t been in a good mood for a while.”

Sam started to sweat. He pulled off his hat and scratched his head. “R-Really?”

Cup slowly raised an eyebrow. “Good luck, cowboy.” Mugs put his hand on Cup’s shoulder again to leave.

Sam started forward, the hand with his hat coming down. “Ya wouldn’ mind helpin spring ‘ol Sammy before those other coppers git here, would ya?” he asked, eyes blinking with respect.

Cup snorted. Mugs paused. Cup tilted his head down to look at Sam condescendingly. “Well, look at the brass on you. First ya try to steal from me, then ya have the guts to ask for my help?” Cup sneered. “Give me one good reason.”

Sam’s face twisted angrily. “I wasn’ steal from you, ya varmit! And ya cussin’ know it! If’n I have ta face tha boss and ‘is wrath, I’mma tellin’ him that I’d be givin’ him the starfallen thing if it weren’t for tha bunch o’ ya showin up! I near took tha damn thing’s acid in tha face!” he growled. “He can’t spect me ta handle two demons and tha lot a ya maself!”

Cup had to bite back a laugh. Yeah, he had to give it to Sam. Saying it like that, the task did sound intimidating. Except Bendy was a pushover when it came to being a demon. As long as Cup stayed out of range of that super strength, Bendy would never win a fight against him.

Cuss! They need to crack down on that pipsqueak’s training! Uuugh! “Think he’s gonna care as long as one of his debtors has it?” Cup crossed his arms. “How ‘bout instead of failin’ to threaten me, you try somethin’ else. Otherwise Mugs and I are gone.”

Sam’s eyes flicked as he tried to think quickly. “I’ll owe ya a favor!” he offered. “An’ ya know ‘ol Sam’s a good gun.”

Cup almost clicked his tongue, but stopped before he alerted the cop. “Yeah right,” he whispered. “I don’t need a sharp shooting idiot.”

Sam growled softly. “Tha way I see it, tha two a ya have a habit a gettin’ in trouble. An extra pair a hands is always good help when tha fire’s lickin’ at yar heels. And ya know Sammy can handle any stitch-a-ation.”

“Except two demons and all of us,” Mugs muttered flatly.

Sam glared at him. “I still woulda gotten that brush ‘f tha damn girl hadn’t dropped tha pail on ma head.”

Cup thought about it for a minute. Sam was an idiot, but his tenacity was legendary. “Fine.”

“What?” Mugs hissed quietly.

Sam grinned.

“Mugs?” Cup winked. Seriously? How fragile was Mugs’ trust in him? Mugs snapped his mouth
shut and glared at him. He clenched Cup’s shoulder almost painfully before poofing him and Cup out. Back on the street, Mugs shoved him away.

“Are you crazy!” Mugs snapped at him. “That guy had a gun on Boris!”

“And so did we at one point!” Cup snapped back. “But the more people that owe and help us, the better position we are in if…” Cup cut himself off.

Mugs furrowed his brows. “If what?”

“If something goes wrong,” Cup said. If they turned against the Devil, they’d need all the favors they could get…If his searching turned up flat as hell.

Mugs stared at him for a long moment. Cup could only guess at what he was thinking. He finally sigh and poofed away again. A moment later, he was back with Sam.

The tiny cowboy put his hat back on, nodding at them. “Thank ye kindly.” With that, he disappeared into an ally. Cup and Mugs watched him go silently.

“I think this is a mistake,” Mugs said. Cup didn’t answer him. He turned and headed back to the hotel. When had he just started making plans against the boss? When had he decided to do that? Had he even decided or just automatically done it? No, no, he’d take advantage of a favor even if he wasn’t considering it. Just a maybe. That was all. It wasn’t like he was panicking or anything with this new part in the Bbros’ hands or anything.

He grabbed his box of smokes and pulled one out to enjoy on the way back. He was crazy if he actually thought he’d betray the boss and get away with it. With where they were in his circle? Ha…

“Cuppy! Hello!”

Seriously, it was ridiculous. Him? One of the boss’ best hunters, just turn on a dime for a pipsqueak demon and his big eyed pup! Ha! No! This was for Mugs. Mugs needed all the help he could get if things did turn like he planned.

“Cup? Anyone in there?”

But Cup couldn’t just leave Mugs out to dry. If these things were so big that the boss had spent years trying to get at these parts, years guarding and spying around them, why wouldn’t it wipe his and Mugs’ debts if they did just...take them?

“Cuphead?”

This was the big ledge. Something fishy was going on. The boss had to be desperate. Right? Maybe he should test it.

“Cuphead!”

They were already on thin ice though. So, he’d have to be careful. What could he do? How could he be sure these parts were the ace he finally needed to get out of this? How could they escape the Devil without betraying everything?

*Holy cuss, Mugman was getting in his head!*

“CUPHEAD!”

Cup jumped and looked to Mugs. “What!”
“You passed the hotel.” Mugs pointed behind them. “You were thinking really hard. What about?” Cuss, he was right. Cup turned around and marched to the building. “Nothin’ important.”

“Was it that nurse?” Mugs asked.

What the-- “No! What the hell, Mugman!” Cuphead barked. Mugs laughed as Cup put out his smoke, and they entered the building.

Chapter End Notes

More Ava art!!! This one was drawn by Lucyloober. :D Ava is cute and deadly.
Celebration!

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls! Welcome to another chapter of the Inky Mystery." Mic waved a hand out proudly. "Today is a day to celebrate! The town is saved, the part is secured, everyone is safe!" Mic sighed. "Finally. I need a vacation as much as they do."

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! Happy summer for those of you that get to enjoy it!
Glad that the madness is done with. The action is over. Everything is safe and calm now...or is it? =w=

Imma gonna just stick a second-hand-embarrassment warning here. Heh.
Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Oswald woke up to knocking on the door. He blinked blurrily. What time was it? There was sunlight in the window, and Mickey was sitting up in his bed. Mickey turned a smile to him. “You awake, Ozzy?”

Oswald groaned and pulled the pillow over his head.

The knock came again, a little more loudly.

“Come in!” Mickey called. Oswald groaned under his pillow. What was he doing? He usually would get up and answer it. Yelling like that was, rude according to the goodie mouse shoes.

“Good morning Mickey, Oswald. I hope I didn’t wake you.” Felix’ voice drifted in from the doorway. Felix. He had a new respect for the cat. Soft spoken and kind. He had a tough side too. The toon had been steely yesterday. He was definitely the adventurer from his books. Oswald could see it now.

“Oswald needed to wake up anyway.” Mickey waved off Felix’ concern. Thanks Mick, ya traitor.

Suddenly, there was a ruckus, a cacophony of voices from somewhere. Oswald pulled the pillow off his face. Now what? He sat up and glared at the door. Felix scratched the back of his head shyly.

“The mayor and well...a lot of people want to see us,” Felix said.

“What for?” Oswald rubbed his eye and stretched.

Felix turned away from him. “Uh, well, I think it’s to thank us.”
Oswald and Mickey shared a look. Mickey smiled. “Sounds nice. We’ll be with you in a minute.” Felix nodded and left. Oswald rolled out of bed and popped his back. He let out a big yawn. He went into the small washroom. “Um, Ozzy?”

Oswald grabbed his toothbrush and started brushing. Ugh, morning breath. His fur was a mess. “C’mon Mickey. Our adoring crowd awaits,” Oswald said around his toothbrush.

“Sure, but could ya help me get to the washroom?” Mickey’s sheepish voice answered him. Oswald’s ears perked. Help him? What did—Oh! Ohohohoh! He had forgotten! Cuss and curses! Starfallen hell! Oswald nearly choked on his brush before he spat and put it down to fetch Mickey. The mouse had pulled himself up using the frame of the bed. The bandage on his other leg had come a little loose. Mickey smiled when he saw his frazzled brother.

“Sorry Mick.” Oswald’s ears folded.

Mickey shook his head. “No. It’s fine, Ozzy. I’m still trying to get used to it too.”

“Do we have to get used to it?” Oswald asked as he stepped up to Mickey and took his brother’s arm over his shoulders.

“Well, hopefully I can figure out how to make a new one.” Mickey smiled again.

“Why not just try it? If it doesn’t work, erase and try again? It’s like a giant eraser, right?” Oswald asked. They got in the room, and Oswald helped Mickey lean on the edge of the tub.

Mickey winced. “No, not completely. I don’t want to redo it. It needs to be a one and done thing.”

Oswald got Mickey his toothbrush and a tub of paste. “Was it painful?” He picked up his own brush again and started attacking his teeth. Mickey was quiet for a long moment.

“It was. It was like my leg was being pulled apart by tweezers,” Mickey muttered. Oswald paused in his brushing. A concern came to him. He wasn’t sure how to word it though.

“Hey Mick, can I ask you something?” Oswald asked.

“You just did.” Mickey chuckled.

Oswald rolled his eyes but didn’t hide the smile. He spat in the sink and filled a glass of water. He then helped Mickey to the sink. “Do you trust them?”

Mickey gurgled water and spat. “Trust who?”

“This group,” Oswald clarified.

Mickey furrowed his brows. “Yes, you don’t?”

Oswald frowned. “Well, it’s just that these parts seem to be more trouble than they’re worth.”

Mickey straightened up. His good humor sobered into something more serious. “Ozzy, you know what they think those things will do, right?” he asked gently, trying to hold the disappointment back.

Oswald scowled. “I know! But if there was one that caused that horrible night, and now this other one took your leg, then I’m not sure how they can help in a cure,” the rabbit snapped. Mickey sat back down and propped his stump leg up to undo the bandages.

“A scalpel cuts Oswald.” Mickey shrugged.
“No! No no! This was not a scalpel.” Oswald waved a finger at his younger brother. “A scalpel doesn’t nearly destroy an entire city.”

Mickey sighed. “So what are you thinking, Oswald?”

“Well...they do have a demon with them,” Oswald suggested. Mickey pulled a disapproving face. Oswald lifted his hands to stop him. “Now, hold on! Before you go singing the guy’s praises, let me just explain what I’m thinking.” Mickey stopped his work and crossed his arms expectantly. “Okay, so these things are big magic, right? They can do a lot of crazy things with those parts. If he’s a demon, what is stopping him from going on a rampage with them? Maybe attack the angel’s city or something. I mean, that would make a lot of sense.”

“And you think Felix would actually help with that?” Mickey raised his brows.

“Maybe he’s lying to all of them,” Oswald suggested.

“He has the illness!” Mickey argued with a deep frown.

“Oh, like a demon couldn’t fake that!” Oswald rolled his eyes.

“Ozzy!” Mickey snapped. “Bendy and Boris are good people that don’t need any more grief!”

“I’m not planning to. I’m just being cautious,” Oswald said. “It just seems weird to me.”

Mickey shook his head and went back to his leg. Oswald brushed his fur in silence. “Do you need any help with that?”

“You could hand me the new bandages,” Mickey said without looking up. Oswald did so without a word. He left the room to get changed. “I’m also not mad at you. I know how you can be, Ozzy.”

Oswald frowned. “What does that mean?” Mickey only laughed. Oswald turned away and dug in his bag for a clean shirt.

They finished getting ready and headed out into the lobby. There was a crowd outside of the building. Oswald could see them through the large windows. There was a wave of noise that crashed into the lobby from the front door. Bendy pulled Boris in and slammed the door behind him. The others were there panting in the lobby. They were dressed in exercise clothes.

“Stars and moon! That was insane!” Bendy huffed, leaning against the door.

“What’s going on?” Mickey asked.

“Newsies! Cussing newsies!” Cuphead barked.

“We were surrounded.” Mugman wiped his brow.

The doors opened, letting in the loud clamor again. Anita closed it behind her. “Ya make it sound as if you’re being attacked,” she chuckled.

“We were!” Cuphead snapped.

“They just asked what happened yesterday,” Boris said, his tongue lolled out of his mouth as he panted. “It wasn’t too bad.”

“Oh? Compared to what?” Cuphead straightened out and ran a hand through his hair.
“Compared to when Boris and I were criminals and framed for murder,” Bendy said deadpan.

“They call us heroes now,” Boris said with a smile.

“Oh, and we know how well that went last time.” Cuphead rolled his eyes.

“I think someone said something about a party?” Mugman wrapped one arm around another and stretched.

“Whatever. Training is over for today. There’s no way we’ll get anything done with that crowd out there.” Cuphead crossed his arms and scowled.

“Then, I’m taking a shower and packing,” Bendy grumbled.

“Sounds good,” Mugman agreed. The four headed up and disappeared. Mickey and Oswald shared a look before Oswald helped his brother into a chair. Mickey was smiling. It was like when they first got that show gig, and now they can’t go a day without an autograph or twenty.

Holly went to the window and looked, her little pet on her shoulder. “Wow,” she whispered. She turned to head back upstairs, but the small animal hopped off and stayed, staring starstruck at all the people. It reminded Oswald of his kids. He hoped they were okay. He hoped they’d be able to get on a train to get home soon. He hoped Donald’s nephews hadn’t corrupted them, but that was asking too much.

The group returned quickly, changed, and packed. The cop dog, Anita had disappeared, Trish replacing her. Apparently the tiny sheriff had disappeared from his cell overnight. She and Chantzi had gone to try and hunt him down. Trish had them stop in the lobby to give a few statements and testimonies on the events of the other day. Then Felix talked about them dealing with the media outside. He had Mickey and Oswald stand up front, Bendy in the farthest back, and the others with him. Something about the image for their group? Oswald wasn’t sure what they were going for, but this would definitely tie these fellas to the circus and the circus to them. Seemed Ozzy wasn’t going to escape this ink machine nonsense. Fabulous. Just thinking about not helping this group had Mickey giving him a look. Uuuugh.

Anyway, Mickey and Felix handled most of the questions. There was shock, horror, and sympathy over Mickey’s leg...Of course. Oswald hid his grimace. They were going to have one hell of a time explaining this to Minnie, the crew, and the kids. Oh wait! What if he magics it back! Then what were they going to do! Oh stars, the news was its own circus. They would have to figure something out.

After they were able to feed the vultures, they headed to the center of town. Seemed all the locals were celebrating.

That tiny mouse, Speedy Gonzales, owned the bar as well as the grocery store and was giving out free drinks as celebration.

“Hey rabbit! Didn’t we have a drinking contest planned?” Cuphead called out and lifted two drinks. Oh stars, yes! Oswald grinned excitedly.

“Ozzy.” Mickey sighed, giving him a pointed look.

“Oh c’mon, Mick! It’s a party!” Oswald said.

Mickey smiled. “Alright. Don’t complain to me about a hangover. And don’t try kissing anyone.” Oswald’s face heated with fuzzy half-memories.
“Berries! Hey Bendy! Get your tail over here!” The cupman waved the demon over. “You too! Get a seat!”

Oswald and Mickey approached a circular table. Cuphead already had three beers out. He grinned at them mischievously and sat down. Oswald helped Mickey into a chair and took his own seat. Bendy took another.

“So, before we start, what are the stakes?” Bendy asked, eyeing Cuphead suspiciously.

“Money?” he offered.

“That’s dull. Let’s do something fun,” Oswald suggested mischievously.

“Like what?” Cuphead frowned.

Oswald smirked. “Penalty for the losers.”

“A penalty?” Bendy blinked, his tail flicking.

Oswald nodded. “Yeah, something good.”

“Like having to do what the winner says for a day?” Cuphead guessed with a raised brow.

“Maybe.” Oswald hummed.

Bendy snorted. “I’d make you not curse for a day, maybe get rid of your hair.”

Cuphead glared at him. “Yeah? How about we stick you in a kid’s footie pajamas? You’ll finally have some clothes in your size.”

Bendy flashed his fangs in a sneer. “Why you--”

“Hey!” Oswald snapped his fingers. “Now, that isn’t a bad idea.”

“What!” Bendy barked, whirling his glare on Oswald.

“Losers wear what the winner dictates for a day.” Oswald grins. “They also pick the day they wear the clothes.” The other two thought about it. Boris, Holly, Mugman, and Felix watched on behind them.

“Sounds good to me,” Bendy agreed.

“Deal,” Cuphead agreed. He leaned over the table with his elbow. “Last one standing.”

Oswald looked to Mickey. “You joining?”

Mickey raised a brow. “I have enough to deal with. I don’t want you dressing me on top of everything.”

“Mind keeping track of the drinks then?” Oswald smiled. Mickey rolled his eyes but agreed.

Holly, Mugman, and Felix also declined joining. Boris looked exasperated as they took hold of their glasses.

“Ready.” Cuphead smirked.

“Set,” Bendy muttered.
“Go.” Oswald lifted his drink and chugged.

He may have underestimated the other two. Cup was fast. He almost inhaled it. Bendy was closer to Oswald’s speed. The first drink gone, they went to the second, Cuphead leading. It stayed like this for a couple drinks. But speed wasn’t the goal. It was endurance.

It didn’t take Oswald long to lose track of the number of drinks they consumed. He was only aware of the buzz in his head, the warmth in his face and ears, and the annoying smirk on the dish guy.

“Ya know, I never really liked you,” Cuphead pointed at him. He took a long drink.

“Oh yeah? The feeling is mutual,” Oswald slurred.

“You always are a selfish schmuck. It’s always ‘bout you and your mess.” Cuphead waved at him, almost spilling his drink.

“And you aren’t da same?” Oswald challenged.

“I’m on this thin’ fer da--”

“Cuphead.” Mugman snapped a warning.

“Alright, alright!” Cuphead waved him off. “But I mean I didn’ haf to be here!”

Bendy snorted. “Yeah right! Y-y-y-you were beggin’ ta join. If it’s such a problem, jush le-leave!” Bendy waved him away like he was a fly, nearly spilling his drink.

“You don’t mean that, Bendy. You’d be sad if they left,” Boris called out from somewhere. Oswald tried to find him, but the crowd was turning a bit blurry and swimming. Why were people swimming?

“Ha! I’d be happyzz.” Bendy lifted his drink and finished it.

“You wouldn’ get through a day without Mugs an’ I.” Cuphead snickered.

“Nonononononono.” Bendy hiccuped. “Dat’s da other way ‘round. Yous would be lost wid out bro and me!” Bendy declared proudly.

“Well, I think Mick and I woulda been better off not knowin’ ya,” Oswald said and finished his glass.

“Ozzy, please don’t fight.” Mickey sighed with resignation.

“No, no, shhh!” Oswald lifted a finger and reached for his next two drinks. Wait no, one? Two. No one.

“Do people always act like this when they’re drunk?” Holly turned towards Felix.

Boris answered. “Oh no. It gets much worse.”

“Is Bendy a fighter?” Mugman asked.

“No. He jumps between being a crying and laughing drunk.” Boris rolled his eyes.

“Hey! I don’ cry!” Bendy protested.
“Oh? Does de demon get all de feels when he’s got de fire in de blood?” a mouse laughed from behind the bar.

Cuphead burst with laughter and slammed his hand on the table. Bendy scowled. “Weedle bitty Bendy wan’ a weedle bottle.”

Bendy tossed his glass at Cuphead. It was hard to tell, but Oswald thought he missed.

“Hey!” Cuphead snapped. “Dat’s cheatin’! You’re out!”

”Nuh-uh!” Bendy argued.

“Bendy, you can’t fight.” Boris sighed.

“I’m not!” Bendy argued. “My glass just wanted to fly.”

“Liar,” Oswald muttered and finished another.

“I’m sti-still in,” Bendy grabbed a full one.

“No! Ref!” Cuphead turned to Mickey. Oswald’s brother looked surprised then amused. “Tell him he’s out!”

Mickey opened his mouth, but Bendy fell back in his chair with a bang before the mouse could say anything.

“Bendy!” Boris gasped.

Oswald blinked and looked over. “He’s gone.”

“What?” Cuphead stared at the spot Bendy was at. There was giggling from the ground.

“Now da earth is laughin’,” Oswald said. The wolf went to the earth and disappeared from sight. “Guess hell dought it was funny an’ took him back.” Oswald laughed at his joke.

Cuphead scowled. “Dat can’ be. Bends never been.” He shook his head. “No. He can’ go! I wan’d ta put ‘im in footie pajams!”

“Nope.” Oswald popped the ‘p’ and took another drink. “He’s gone forever.”

“Bendy, are you okay? You’re laughing, so I’m going to say yes. Did you hit your head? Get off the ground. You’re getting covered in dust.” Boris sighed.

“He caaaaaaaaaaan’t,” Cuphead whined.

“Why? Demons live iiiiiin hell!” Oswald did jazz hands. It made his hands blur in a funny way.

“Nnnoooooo! He has ta staaaaay! He’s my frieeeeeend damnit,” Cuphead kept whining.

“Aaaaw, Cuppy!” Bendy suddenly popped up and leaned on him. “Yous a good fwiend!”

“Oh no.” Boris covered his face with his hand but was peeking an eye between his fingers and smiling. Mugs was struggling to breath with all the laughing he was doing. That looked silly. What was so funny?

“Eeeeh, get off! You’re gross!” Cuphead shrugged but didn’t remove the demon.
“Nnoooo! Fwiends forever!” Bendy cheered.

“Is he crying?” Holly asked in horrified fascination.

“No!” Bendy snapped with watery eyes.


“Bends no. You’re crazy.” Cuphead held his elbow out, and Bendy only leaned more on him. The demon pouted.

“Fine. I go. Whoz needs ya anywayzz? But I d-dumpt ya non da otherways ‘round.” Bendy swayed but had to hang on to him.

Cup rolled his eyes so hard he nearly fell out of his seat. Oh wait, that could have been Oswald’s vision. There was something dark over one of his eyes. What? Oh…

It was his ear. He chuckled and brushed it behind him. Silly ears. Silly silly silly. What happened? They were hugging now. Fighting? Oswald wasn’t sure anymore. Oh. There went Cupface’s drink.

Mickey patted him on the shoulder. “Ozzy. I think you won. Those two are done.”

Huh? He looked back. The mug and wolf were helping them off the floor. “What happened?”

Mickey chuckled and shook his head. “Bendy slipped. Don’t worry about it, Ozzy. Let’s just get you three something closer to sober.”

“But I won?”

“You won,” Mickey confirmed. “You drank the most, and you haven’t fallin’ out of your seat either.”

“Snazzy.” Oswald bounced a little happy. Oh look, a drink. He should, since he was celebrating.


Oswald frowned. “Killjoy.” The mouse laughed. Oswald didn’t know what was funny. Hey, where’d those other two go?

Meh. Didn’t matter. He should get a date while he was here. There were a bunch a cuties here, after all. Yeah. The music was fun. Why not? They were all here to have fun. He looked around at the swimming sea. Oh wait, no. They were dancers. No. Maybe. He chuckled. Oh man. He was so gone.

He got up and found a post to lean on next to a cutie. She looked familiar. Or did she? He wasn’t sure. She was cute either way. She looked happy too. That was great. Happy dames were great. “Hey, ya havin’ fun?”

She blinked at him and smiled. “Oh...yeah. It looks like you had a lot of fun. I can’t believe you’re still upright, Ozzy.”

Ozzy. She knew his nickname. Huh. He blinked as a memory tried to come forward, but he lost it with her smile. He snorted. “Oh yesh, out drank a sultan. Shaved da circus doin’ it. Schmeck wanna us ta stay ‘gaist our wills and even ta take some o’ da girls for his.” Oswald sneered at the grease face that appeared behind his eyelids.
She gave him a placating pat on the shoulder. “Yes, you’re very brave. You sure you don’t want to sit down?”

“’M fine. I can swim.” Oswald smiled.

She wrinkled her nose in confusion, still smiling. “Huh?” That was a cute smile, and her button nose only added to it. Wondered if he could steal a kiss. That memory tugged at the back of his mind, but he shooed it away.

He waved a hand at the sea of swimmers. “’T’s a wild shea, but I manage.” He smiled and leaned a little lower.

Her mouth wavered as she tried to keep from laughing. “You are so drunk.”

“And you are cute.” Then, Oswald kissed her. Before he could really enjoy it though, he was yanked away by his shirt. The girl let out a squawk and tumbled backwards.

“An’ just what’s you t’ink you’re up to!” Oh, it was glassman again.

Oswald smiled and shrugged. “Havin’ fun.”

“Not wid prinsh ya ain’t!” he grumbled. Wow. He was strong. Oswald half tried to get him to let go. No good. He was trapped. His feet were almost off the ground completely.

“Princess? She’s a princess? Oh!” Oswald tried to look behind him but didn’t quite manage it. “Shorry your highness!” She was still on the ground, staring at both of them, eyebrow twitching, mouth open in incredulity.

“Don’ ya talk ta ’er neither!” Cup shook him.

“Cup, knock it off!” The other glass called out. Where was he?

“Hey! Hey.” Oh, the demon again. “Yous marryin’ ‘r somethin’?”

“What?” Oswald dropped his ears. Married?

She turned to the demon. “What?”

“What!” Glassface barked at him. “Hells no! He’sh never touchin’ her again!”

“But da kished. Twue love demands mawwiage!” Bendy half demanded, half cheered with a wide grin.

She slapped a hand over her face. “Oh stars above, I’m surrounded by a group of drunks.” She got up.

Cup looked at her, then Oswald. “Den I’ll kill him,” he said deadpan. Uh oh. That sounded too matter of fact. Glass man might mean it. Well, this rabbit could put up a fight...if the sea would stop rolling so much.

Bendy jumped up and hung off the arm Cup was using to hold Oswald. “Noooo! No killin’! You promished!”

“Oh stars. Bendy.” The wolf kid sighed.

The girl jumped up and joined him, grabbing the cup man’s other arm. “Mugman, do something!”
“Look, I wasn’t gonna marry her.” Oswald lifted his hands in surrender. “I jusht wanna cutie for da party!”

She turned towards him, and there was a bit of flint in the look she gave him. “Oswald, you drunk idiot. Wake up!” Then she slapped him across the face. Cup dropped him and started laughing. Ouch. He rubbed his cheek. Bendy pouted, on his own two feet again. He looked so sad.


“You killed da love Cup,” Bendy whined. “You’re a meanie.”

“Good! Love ish dead anyway!” Cup answered.

“Nooooo! I wanna girl. I can’ die alone! Date! I needsh a date!” Bendy protested.

“Okay bro. That’s enough public embarrassment for one month.” Oswald glanced back to see the wolf ushering the demon away.

“Boris! You be my girl!” Bendy demanded, poking the wolf in the cheek.

Boris sighed and steered the demon away. “Yeah, yeah. Fine, just go over there, so I can get some water in ya.”

The mug one stepped up to the cup one and put a hand on his shoulder. “Besides fights, I’m so glad you ain’t an embarrassing drunk, Cuppy.”

“I’m da best.” Cup lifted his nose. Oswald snorted. The glass man turned a glare on him. Mugs chuckled.

“Oswald, come here,” Mickey ordered. Oswald pouted but did as his brother ordered. He slunk back to his seat next to his crabby brother. The mouse pushed a glass at him. “You aren’t leaving my side until you’re sober, you troublemaker.”

Oswald pouted. “Killjoy.”

“Love you too, Ozzy. You can apologize to Holly when you’re sober.” Mickey sighed. “At least she won’t call the police on you.” Oswald’s ears fell. Was it really so wrong to want a date? To have a cute gal on his arm? To hear a chirping laugh and feel soft fur and a gentle pur that vibrated through his chest when he hugged her close.

“Oh Ozzy, don’t cry. She’s understanding. I’m sure she’ll forgive you.” Mick patted his shoulder. Apologize? How could he? She was gone. Forever. She’d never hear it. He was alone. “Come here, Ozzy.” Mick wrapped him in a tight hug.

Oswald kinda lost track of time at that point. He didn’t know how long it took for his brother to sober him up, but food was being served and the sun was still up. His head hurt a little. His eyes ached in a familiar way, but Mickey was good on getting him water and sticking with him. It took him some time to remember that the mouse couldn’t exactly get up himself.

If everything else didn’t sober him up, that reminder sure did. Cussing hell.

The group moved to the saloon to get some food.
Oswald went to get a table for Mickey to sit at, a big round one was big enough for all of them.

“What do you want Mick?” Oswald asked. It was strange to do so much for his brother. Usually Mickey was running around for him or everyone else.

“Just something simple would be great.” Mick smiled. Oswald nodded. The rest were already up and ordering. Oswald passed the Bbros as they went to sit with Mickey. Bendy still pouting about his loss, whether it was the drinking or girls, Oswald wasn’t sure. Mugman wasn’t far behind them.

Felix, Holly, Trish, and Cuphead were at the counter.

Oswald got to the counter. “Two plates. Whatever the special is. A bowl of vegetables, if you have it, and any kinda cheese.”

“Comeen right up.” Oswald blinked as a mouse in a short sombrero jumped up next to the cat bartender. It wasn’t the one from before. This one had a longer nose, wore a chef’s apron, and had a droopy melancholic expression.

“So, Felix, when we getting outta here?” Cuphead glanced at the cat. He took the time to give Oswald a glare over Felix’s head. Holly just had a chagrined expression on her face as she propped her head on her hand. Oh stars. He was an idiot. Okay, so Mickey might have a point about him drinking.

The cat shrugged. “I think we can leave anytime now. So the next train? I’ll check what the schedule is,” Felix said.

The dog leaned back. “The train passes outta town ‘round four.” she said helpfully.

“Stars. We have ta wait ‘til then?” Cuphead muttered flatly.

“Hey, how’s the hangover?” Oswald smirked.

Cuphead scowled at him. “Shut it, rabbit. Try anythin’, an’ I’ll skin ya and sell those ‘lucky rabbit feet’ of yours. You gonna be okay, H?” Cuphead turned to the little miss.

She smiled at him. “Oh, other than a little hurt pride, I’m fine,” she said with a deadpan expression. Oswald winced. A bit of amusement entered her eyes. “It’s fine, Ozzy.”

“No, it really isn’t.” Oswald cringed. “Sorry for that. I, uh…” still pine after a dead woman. Yeah, no, he wasn’t saying that. “I drive Mick nuts and have gotten in trouble before. I shoulda known better by now, but get me buzzed and suddenly everyone is a dreamboat to me.” He shrugged and crossed his arms. “Guess the ego can’t let me imagine anyone saying ‘no’ to me.” He rolled his eyes. “I deserved that smack.”

She clicked her tongue. “It was pretty satisfying,” she admitted with a smile.

“Glad you were able to at least get something outta that,” Oswald chuckled.

“I should punch ya then. I’d be pretty cussing satisfied then.” Cup eyed him.

“So, what are you to her anyway? A boyfriend?” Oswald asked.

“Cuss no!” Cup said bristling.

“No,” Holly said with confusion at the same time.

The angry fella stomped off toward the table without another word, his face dark. Oh? Then, maybe
she was the crush the demon was egging him on about.

Heh. He was a sore loser either way. That made him so much fun to mess with.

“You’re getting that dangerous look in your eyes again, Oswald,” Holly commented with a frown. Oswald glanced over to her with as much innocence as an angel. Silently asking her, ‘who, me?’

She sipped her fizz wizz. “Why do I even try?” She sighed.

“You shouldn’t egg him on, Oswald. He’s already had a rough few days.” Felix shook his head.

“I’m sure this news story is really stressful for him.” Uh? News story? Wasn’t it just his love life? Or lack thereof?

Oswald raised his brows and leaned on the bar counter. “Why’s that?”

Felix sighed and rested on arm on the counter top and cradled his head. “The last time he was in the papers, he was cornered and beaten.”

Oswald’s brows flew up. “What? He’s the cup hero?” Oswald glanced back. “He was called a hero right? That was him?”

“Yes, yes.” Felix sighed and waved it away. Guess fame to him was like fame to Oswald and Mickey, something to earn, but then something you had to live with.

“So that healing shiner…”

“Yes.” Felix nodded. “It was from that.”

Oswald furrowed his brows, his large ears dropping. What did that mean? “Who gets scuffed for doing good?”

“People who think he knows things when he gets in the news,” Holly said, waiting for her order. “Either that, or it’s just his personal charm.”

“Well, he is quite charming.” Oswald chuckled. Felix’ shoulders fell. “What is it?”

The cat looked up to Oswald with big eyes. Oswald felt his chest tighten. She used to look at him like that when she was troubled and needed comfort. “It’s just that I’ve never worked with a group quite like this before. It’s different. I’m worried for them.” He glanced at the table. “For a number of reasons.”

Oswald turned away and took a moment to clear his head and calm his aching heart. Was it ever going to get easier? “That’s a family for you. A constant worry,” he said in a strained voice.

Felix smiled. It seemed a bit tired though. “I guess. Never married or had kids of my own.”

“It’s a madhouse,” Oswald retorted, then had a second thought. He crossed his arms. “Well, my house is a bit unique, though.” Thinking of the kids warmed him. He wanted to go home and hug them all.

“Your children are adorable,” Holly commented. “I wish I could keep their names straight.” She frowned. “I think I talked with one, and she was really sweet, but I can’t remember her... Wait, I think I can remember it. Frizzy?” Her frown deepened. “No, that’s not it.”

“Frilly? Freddy? One of my f’s? I think I’m the only one that can. Mickey and the others do pretty well, but there are four hundred and twenty of ‘em. Most can’t even tell them apart.” Oswald
smirked. “It’ll be easier when they get older. They’ll become more individual in their looks and such.” Oswald shrugged.

“Sounds like a madhouse.” Felix smiled. “What are you going to do when they get bigger?”

“Hopefully, own a mansion by then?” Oswald said, then frowned. “But with Mick like this, I’m not exactly sure what’s going to happen.”

“I’m sorry, Oswald.” Felix put a hand on his shoulder. “Has there been any luck with the brush?”

“He hasn’t tried it quite yet.” Oswald sighed.

“It’ll be okay. I’ll help where I can,” Felix promised.

Oswald looked over at him and smiled. “Really? How would you do that?” Oswald asked curiously.

Felix’ face darkened in a flush, and he pulled his hand back. His eyes widened. “O-oh, I’m not sure. I-I might be able to look into the magical artifacts I’m aware of. Ask a few co-colleagues of mine.” Felix hunched his shoulders and looked away. He was sure acting shy all of the sudden. Where did all the bravado go? “Ma-maybe help with those darling children.” This was oddly familiar, and not because this was how Felix was when they first met. Though, it was. It was probably Oswald’s head just playing tricks on him. He had sobered up, hadn’t he?

Holly tapped her chin and hummed.

“That would be wonderful. The kids really love you, Felix. They’d be thrilled,” Oswald said warmly. He had to kill the ‘new mom’ rumor they had going, though. Heavens, his kids were going to be the death of him. Felix nodded. “And Mickey would appreciate it.” Hell, the whole house would. Those nephews of Donald’s were a handful. A famous adventure might be able to tame them for a couple of hours.

“Well, hopefully it turns out to be unneeded, and Mickey can get his leg back.” Felix waved his hand like he was sweeping invisible crumbs away.

“I hope so too,” Oswald said. “But the door is always open for a visit.”

That seemed to fluster him more. Oh. Flustered. Wait. No. He was just excited to see the kids. He was great with them after all. Right? Oswald leaned over curiously. He knew that flustered blush though. He had seen it a number of times on another cat. But Felix wasn’t the same as her, even if they looked very similar. Painfully similar. Oswald really needed to stop doing that to Felix. It wasn’t fair to his friend. And they were friends now. After all of this? No doubt.

“Sure, that’d be fa-fantastic. I’d love to,” Felix mumbled, staring at the counter. The thought bugged Oswald. It tickled at his memories and his aching heart. He knew that look.

Maybe, he could check? Would that be so bad? Would it be a mistake? It would help him get rid of this uncomfortable nagging in his mind. He would be able to separate Felix from the memory of Ortensia more if he shook away those kinds of projections onto the author. “I’d love to see you there too,” Oswald said softly.

Felix jumped out of his seat and mumbled something Oswald didn’t understand before speeding to the table where everyone else was seating. His face looked like it was on the verge of exploding. Oswald stayed still, eyes wide as he absorbed what just happened. How Felix had reacted. Until he felt heat in his ears and face. No way.
Well...that was unexpected. Funny he hadn’t noticed before. Then again...he hadn’t really been paying close attention on much of anything until Mickey had that low night. And he thought it was in his head. Projections...So. What was he going to do about it now? Sure, this made his daydreams about Ortensia a worse problem, but his issues aside, this was a big thing for Felix. Right? If Oswald was right. What was Oswald going to do? He glanced at the table. Probably nothing? Not unless Felix brought it up himself. He should think about it though. He owed it to the cat adventurer to be that considerate. Oswald slowly sat up and hummed. He had to keep it together in public. He was fine. Easy going rabbit. Nothing to see here. Oh stars Felix, how long had he been like this? Since they came out here? No, before that. That meal with his friend? When they first met?

Holly turned back from watching the cat go. “Was...that what I think it was?” she whispered. Oh cuss! She saw all of that! Oh no! Cussing no!

“Hey, little lady,” Oswald said slowly, calmly. Oh boy. If something like this got out, Felix would be in big trouble. Hell, he might be too. But, he’d dealt with worse. He didn’t want to drag his family into that kind of media hell though. Scary things happened to people with those kind of feelings. It was a cruel world they lived in, after all, one where a fella got beat for being called a hero.

She looked at him. “You saw it too? It’s not just me?” This just meant he had to be right though. It wasn’t just him. Oh stars.

Oswald looked at her with hard eyes. He didn’t really know her or what she was about, but she really cared and seemed good. He hoped so. “If you consider him a friend, I suggest you forget what you just saw. It’s none of your business, and honestly, it’s not mine either, unless he makes it mine.” Because that’s what it was. His feelings, thus his business. Keep it together Ozzy. This wasn’t an issue until it was. Felix was smart. If it became an issue, they could talk.

She stared at Oswald. Her brow scrunched as her eyes flitted towards Felix.

Oswald frowned. “You do realize you could ruin him if you do say anything, right?” he pressed quietly. Forget whatever this means. That was risky stuff there. Hell, this could be something that threatened his life!

Her face darkened. “I wouldn’t ever do anything to hurt Mr. Felix!” she snapped angrily.

Oswald lifted his ears. “Good. Then, we are in agreement. This goes to our graves unless he says otherwise.” And Oswald would need to think on this very carefully. At least he had been able to keep his cool...Mostly.

Her face dropped as she considered this. She nodded silently. The tiny animal on her shoulder looked at him and then her and meeped in confusion. Thank the stars. A distraction.

“Is it a plant or an animal? I mean, do you feed it or water it?” Oswald stared at the little creature curiously. Now was a good time to change topics after all.

She looked up. “Um, both? She drinks a lot more water than most creatures her size. She doesn’t eat that often. Maybe...twice a week? Mostly bugs.” She picked up the tiny thing, holding her up for him to see. “And lately she’s been losing a lot of her bristles. I’m not sure why.” She pressed back a bit of the wriggling creatures dandelion tufts. “These little lumps have been showing up. So, I sort of know how she works, but she continually surprises me.”

He blinked. “Well, uh, Daisy and Minnie know a lot about plants. Not sure about the animal part.” He shrugged. “She’s sure odd.” Oswald lifted a finger for the little animal to examine. A plant animal. Best not let the triplets see it. Ever. Or Scrooge. Stars, he hadn’t warned Mick yet.
The tiny creature sniffed his finger tentatively, opening its mouth and gently nibbling a little at the tip. Without warning, it leapt onto his hand and scurried up his arm, continuing to sniff and nibble. It went right up his shoulder and onto his head where it ‘meeped’ triumphantly. Then, it noticed his ears. It blinked several times and got up on it’s back paws, using the front to push at his left ear. “Meeeeeep,” it said in wonder when his ear bent. She plopped back down, then got up and pushed it again. “Meeeeeep!”

Holly snorted as she watched. “She really likes your ears.”

Oswald snorted. “Yeah, I noticed.” Her paws tickled his ear each time she pushed it. She was as light as a feather.

“Hey! Long ears! You gonna stand there all day!” Oswald glanced over to see that the table was set for a game of cards. Drinks and food were already on the table. Oops. He got distracted. “What about you, tree princess?”

Oswald chuckled. They got their food and enjoyed their meal. The table was relaxed, everyone was in higher spirits. After food, they went back to the streets. Boris pulled a clarinet from his bag and started playing. A couple of the locals saw and joined him with guitars and other instruments. Bendy started asking girls to dance and, before Oswald knew it, the two had pulled the whole street together in a ring of dancing and laughing again. It was all swell. Speedy Gonzales introduced his family to Oswald and Mickey. The droopy mouse at the bar was his cousin, and he had two brothers, Jose and Pedro. Mickey and Oswald both promised to bring the circus to them as soon as the next tour started as a thank you for all their help. They were great hosts and impressively organized and hospitable.

The only shadows over the whole thing were Mickey stuck in a chair; smiling, but in a somewhat strained way; and Felix, who avoided Oswald’s eye contact like the plague. Time whizzed by. Everyone was dragged into the music and dancing, so he hardly noticed when he was being pulled away to the hotel until they got through the front door. Bendy was out of breath. Oswald didn’t think the demon left the dance circle once. Had the population tripled or something? It felt like there were tons more people than before. They got their bags. Mickey carefully hid the brush away. The deputy helped escort them to the train where they had a, heh, ‘heroes send off’ with waving citizens, tossed flowers, and people trying to hand them gifts. Wow. It was almost like they had done a show here or something. The news about yesterday must have traveled like wildfire. Then, they were pulling away with the whistle of the train calling them on the long track home.

Finally home.

Chapter End Notes

And more amazing art!

This first one was drawn by ebonyjester! :D The Butcher Gang would be proud.
These next two were drawn by bunnilov3r1738. They are SO ADORABLE. XD
"Welcome ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls to another chapter of Inky Mystery," Mic announced. "The trip home is a relieving feeling to the crew. Mickey tries his hand at using brush and there is a surprise on the tracks for everyone."

Hello readers!
Happy weekend, or whenever you are reading this! I'm so excited for the future and the things I have planned. We are getting so close to so many great things! XD I hope I can stay on top of everything. Sorry if I'm slow on answering questions and the like, there's a lot going on for me now. But there will always be a chapter at least! Have an awesome week and enjoy!

Bendy groaned as he laid down in the bed.

“You overdid it,” Boris stated as he pulled out his toothbrush.

“Yeah,” Bendy admitted. He grinned at the wolf. “It was berries.”

Boris rolled his eyes. “How’s your leg?”

On fire. “It’s fine, bro. Stop worrying.” Bendy put his hands behind his head and relaxed. Everything ached. His stitches hurt, he was exhausted, and he still had a headache after losing that cussing drinking contest.

Boris snorted. “Yeah right. I’ll stop worrying when you stop acting reckless.”

Bendy chuckled. “Me?”

“Yes you.” Boris smiled. He brushed his teeth and silence sat between them. Bendy felt himself starting to drift off when Boris asked him a question and snapped him awake again.

“What?” Bendy asked.

“Are you really fine, Bendy?” Boris asked again. He turned to Bendy with wide eyes and down ears.

Bendy furrowed his brows. “Yeah bro. I’m a little tired and sore, but I feel alright. Why? Is something up?” Bendy shifted to sit up.

Boris plopped down next to him and pulled his gloves off before lacing his hands together and
resting his arms on his knees. “I don’t know. I just feel...I don’t know.” He dropped his head and started at the floor.

Bendy’s confusion shifted to concern. “Boris?” He reached a hand to put on his brother’s shoulder.

Boris tilted his head toward Bendy but didn’t look up. “Mickey’s been hurt. Holly and I were kidnapped. You were hurt. We almost lost the part…” He shook his head. “And you’ve had the worst attack I’ve seen so far! You’re so tense too, and you won’t tell me why!”

Bendy bit his lip. Ah cuss.

“Is it me? Do you think I can’t handle it?” Boris looked up finally, his eyes hurt and worried. “I know getting taken was a mistake, but I’m training to fight better and--”

“Hey! Hey!” Bendy took Boris’ muzzle in his hands. Boris fell quiet and stared at him with huge sad puppy eyes. “Bro, you know I think the world of you! Of course it isn’t you! It’s me. I have a lot on my plate right now.” Bendy sighed. “And I didn’t really want to talk about it because it’s...” He sighed again. Why was this cussing stuff so cussing hard to talk about? “I had a panic attack when we found out you were gone.”

Boris ears perked. “A panic attack,” he murmured in Bendy’s hands.

Bendy nodded. “At first I thought it was an ink attack, but Felix explained it to me and helped me through it.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Boris asked, his ears falling again.

Bendy pursed his lips. “I’m tired of being the weak link, the sick one, the one everyone needs to help.” He grit his teeth. “I’m so cussing done with all of it.”

Boris huffed. “I’ve never thought of you as weak, bro.”

Bendy smiled. “And that’s one of the many reasons I love ya Boris.” Boris’ tail gave a weak wag. Bendy’s smile slipped. “You also know none of this is your fault, right? You got the part and saved the day. What happened to Mickey and me was out of your control. Okay?”

Boris pouted. Bendy squished his furry cheeks. “Okaaaay?”

“Mhkay,” Boris mumbled.

Bendy grinned. “Good! Now who’s my happy widdle wolfie?”

“Pft.” The wolf held back his laugh. Boris’ ears twitched. “Here I am,” he mumbled.

Bendy nuzzled him. “I can’t hear you,” he sang cheerfully.

“Here I am!” Boris chuckled, his tail wagging this time.

“There you are!” Bendy grinned and threw his hands out.

Boris rolled his eyes. “I can’t believe that still works on me,” he muttered, still smiling.

“Hey, those puppy eyes still work on me.” Bendy shrugged and leaned back on his arms. “I’m glad we talked though. We don’t keep secrets from each other.”

“Never,” Boris agreed. “No matter how hard it is, we always have each other's back.”
Bendy nodded. “And when we fall down--”

“We get up and keep going,” Boris said.

“We’ll get through this, bro. We’ll build this cussing machine, cure the illness, and head home. We’ll figure out this demon stuff and how to help Mickey if things don’t work out too,” Bendy promised.

“Yeah.” Boris nodded. “And then we’ll start on that house by the lake.”

The house...They didn’t have a job to get back to. Hell, he doubted that they’d have an apartment, and all their stuff had probably been hauled to the cussing dump after they had left. It had been trashed after all. Cussing hell. They were technically back to the back alley! Now that Bendy really thought about it, this was the first time he considered their situation after the machine was finished. Really considered it.

“You’re right, Boris. Then, we’ll start on the lake house.” Bendy smiled. “But we better get to sleep now.”

“Night Bendy.” Boris changed quickly and jumped into the bed above.

“Night bro.” Bendy turned out the lights.

What was he going to do when the adventure was over? He’d have to find work again. Would anyone back in Sillyvision hire him after all this? What would they think of the news he was in? Would anyone even give him the time of day? He was sure Sasha would. Sasha was the best. Stars, they needed to write her again. She would kill them if she heard about the train in Heela City, and they didn’t send her a letter.

Cuss. Would they have to sleep in the alleys again? He bet Sasha wouldn’t stand for that. Ugh. The mechanic shop was charcoal. He missed it. Working on cars, solving the problems, tools in hand, oil stains on clothes, the smell of grease, metal, sweat, and dirt. Having a car purr after he’d worked on it. Bendy smiled.

How long had it been since he really had thought about the normal worries? It was so strange to actually miss it. He’d rather worry about bills and feeding his bro than becoming a monster or losing a magical cursed piece of junk.

He shut his eyes and took a deep breath. Sillyvision felt so far away. So much had happened.

Gold eyes flashed in front of him. Bendy snapped his eyes open and nearly cursed out loud. He looked around the room before laying down again. Stupid cursed eyes! How many nightmares had they been in now? Bendy had lost count. Top it with nightmares of melting and killing everyone, and sleeping hadn’t become his favorite pastime. He reached under his pillow and pulled out the demon language book. He cracked the thing open and started reading it. The dark didn’t bother him.

He was surprised the things he had been able to figure out so far. Demon language was really different from the rune stuff Holly and Felix were used to and different from normal English. Felix had been looking at it with him and gave him a few tricks to understand it. How the subject of sentences was placed, the tense it was in, the verbs, and so on. The language was one thing. It somehow clicked for him. The culture though, was the snag.

Demons were brutal. Death was common and peace was fragile. Hat wasn’t kidding when he said wits and strength were the way to respect. Everything was strength or death. Respect those above you, but also use them to climb higher. It was a weird balance between respect and backstabbing.
Demons were weird. The more Bendy read, the more he appreciated that he was on the Surface. He was going to talk to Hat about those papers. He didn’t want another incident like with Anita. He couldn’t risk it.

...Why hadn’t Sillyvision known about it? They would have turned him in a long time ago if they had known. And why not Toon Town when they were on trial? Bendy furrowed his brows. Wait a minute. Sillyvision was one thing, but Toon Town was a big city. Alice was there, along with a number of fallen angels. That city had to know about the papers...Why had no one asked before Anita?

Something was fishy.

The next day, there was a surprise waiting for Bendy. He wasn’t ready for it. None of the questers and their friends were. The train stopped and the last people Bendy thought would appear walked onto the train.

“Hey! It’s you guys!” a very familiar voice exclaimed. Bendy’s eye twitched. It couldn’t be.

“What are you all doing out here? Oh! Look! Mickey Mouse!” another said. Oh stars it was, wasn’t it?

“OOooooOOOOooh Bendy-boo! My dear mailman! Did you miss me?” a high-pitched voice squealed as thin gloved hands wrapped around his neck.

Bendy shot up out of his seat and whirled around, dropping his book. “Dot!” he snapped. She giggled as he wrenched away.

“Bendy-boo?” Cuphead snickered.

Bendy tossed him a warning glance before turning back to the Warners. “What the hell are you three doing here?”

“Aaaw, we’ve missed you too buddy.” Wakko grinned, tongue sticking out of the side of his mouth. He twisted his sweater sleeves in his hands.

“Didn’t you notice? It’s Warnerburg, pal! We’re heading back your way!” Yakko tapped his chest with his thumb.

“Finished causing havoc for the person trying to steal your inheritance?” Holly asked, closing her journal.

All three groaned and dropped their bags. Their guardian, Dr. Scratchansniff, hissed and pulled his foot out from under a suitcase, hopping in place in pain.

“I’ll take that as a no,” Holly said, wincing for the doctor as she turned towards them.

“Oh no!” Yakko lifted a hand. “We got that mess figured out.”

“It was just a pain,” Wakko drawled. “He wouldn’t stop talking.”

“I was ready to toss him outta window,” Dot huffed.

“Dey vere almos’ arrested t’ree times for mizzcoduct.” The doctor frowned at them and adjusted his glasses. Bendy would expect no less from those three.
She hummed. “Whoever was doing it must have been either really confident or really thick to bother
the three of you,” she commented.

The three shared a look. “Oh. We know what kind of person we were dealin’ with.” Wakko smiled.

“But enough about us! What about you?” Yakko leaned on the back of Bendy’s empty chair.
“Looks like ya have a story, unless you don’t have a leg to stand on.” Yakko looked over to Mickey.
Why did Bendy feel like those three already knew what was up?

Wakko plopped into Bendy’s empty seat, and Dot wrapped her arms around Bendy’s arm. “Yeah!
What’s the news? You heroic mailman, you?” Dot purred. Bendy fought to shake her off. She
laughed. Cuss little leech!

“Heroic?” Boris asked. “How do you know that?”

Dr. Scartchansniff sighed and pulled out a newspaper. “Becaws, you a’e in de papers again.”

**HEROES SAVE TOWN FROM TRAIN CATASTROPHE!**

The picture underneath was of the stopped train and the one with Felix, Mickey, and Oswald in front
of the crowd of reporters.

“Well, that didn’t take long,” Oswald muttered under his breath. Well...Bendy better get to work on
that letter. He wouldn’t put it past Sasha to suddenly show up at Oddswell’s house.

“So, what really happened?” Yakko asked, cutting to the quick of it.

“It was a part—*would you let go of me!*” Bendy snapped. Dot giggled and flitted away back to her
brothers. She perched on the arm of the chair and crossed her legs.

“Well no duh.” Cuphead sneered.

“And what did you people do to Toon Town! We left, and then we hear about a Nightmare Party?”
Dot asked.

“Nightmare Night sis,” Yakko corrected.

“I can’t believe we missed Jack!” Wakko lamented. “He always lets me toss bones to Zero.”

“You meanz de Halloveen people?” Dr. Scratchansniff shivered. “Vorst night to ever exist.” Bendy
blinked. Wait, what? They what?

“Aaaw, come on Scratchy! You like Sally!” Dot leaned back to look at the man. He huffed and
turned away.

“She’s da only vone dat makez sense!” He shook his head. “I’ll go zet up my room. Don’t cause
trouble!”

The Warners watched him leave and turned back to the table. Yakko lifted a hand to the side of his
mouth and tossed his other hand, thumb out, over his shoulder. “It’s like he hardly *knows* us.” Yakko
Even Boris and Mugman were laughing!

“So fill us in! Catch us up! Share! We have hours of travel,” Yakko pressed.

So the others filled them in. They had to go way back, from before Nightmare Night and up to the
present.

Wakko whistled. “That’s quite a time.”

“So, were you all ‘Wicked Witch of the West cackling’ or more of a ‘Maleficent walks into the room like a queen’ kinda evil?” Dot asked.

Holly stared blankly at her. “Uh?”

“Dot!” Bendy snapped.

“What? I think she’d look snazzy in long black, but it matters how she carried herself.” Dot crossed her arms.

“She’s not evil Dot,” Boris argued disapprovingly.

Dot snorted. “Well, not now.”

“Sides sis, they said she rode around on the cog.” Wakko smirked. “I’d put that in ‘Wicked Witch of the West’ territory.”

“Warners.” Felix spoke up. The three turned to him curiously. “Please.”

They shared a knowing look and shrugged. “Okay.” They said together.

Holly shook her head. “What a wonder. It’s hard to take even Nightmare Night seriously around you three.”


“Taking anything seriously with them around is almost impossible.” Bendy pinched the bridge between his eyes and rescued his book from the ground.

“We know,” they chimed together proudly.

“It drives Tap nuts,” Yakko said.


Holly narrowed her eyes at him. “It’s another of those things you refuse to explain, isn’t it?” she almost whined.

“Explanations are boring.” Dot sighed. “And it’s not nearly as fun not being able to see her reactions anymore.” She leaned against the back of the shared chair and pouted.

“Aw, don’t worry sis. We’ll get it all back someday. Right Wakko?” Yakko turned to the middle Warner.

Wakko tilted his head to the side then nodded quickly.

“So what are you going to make them wear?” Dot suddenly leaned over to Oswald grinning. Oswald raised a brow at her before turning amused light eyes on Bendy and Cuphead. What the hell was with that look?

“I have ideas,” Oswald mused. Bendy did not like that look. What was he imagining?

“Hey! I know something fun! Pull out the thingamajig,” Yakko said with a gleam in his eyes.

“It’s not some toy!” Bendy snapped at him.

“Please Ben-love,” Dot cooed. “We’re professionals.”

Cup ducked away. He was laughing so hard a flush spread across his face. Cussing schmuck.

“Don’t call me that, and the only professional you three are is insane,” Bendy told Dot. He jabbed a finger in Cuphead’s direction. “And you are really pushing your luck there, pal!” Cup could only wave a hand at him weakly and wipe a tear from the corner of his eye.

“I think we better move this conversation to somewhere more private,” Felix suggested with a smile. Bendy looked around to see a couple of people in the dining car peeking at them from their tables. “Especially until we get moving again,” Felix pointed out. Oh yeah. Warnerburg was where his bag had been stolen. Cussing stars. Theft was the last thing Bendy wanted to deal with today.

They got to one of the private compartments. As soon as the door was closed, the Warners were back at it even in the tight space.

“So show us!” Yakko exclaimed.

“Show us! Show us! Show us!” the other two sang.

“Stars, where’s the off switch?” Cup muttered covering the sides of his head.

“There isn’t one.” Bendy frowned.

Mickey turned to Bendy questioningly. “Should I?”

“It’s fine,” Bendy confirmed. “I’m sure if they wanted to steal it, they would have.”

Mickey turned wary eyes on them.

“We would.” Wakko confirmed with a smile. “So what is it?”

Mickey sighed and reached into his bag. He pulled out the brush.

“It’s a paint brush!” Dot threw her hands up happily.

“What?” Yakko chuckled. “Is it used to paint the town red?”

“Huh?” Boris and Mugs asked together.

“With magic?” Holly said, confused.

“Knock it off,” Oswald snapped. “That thing has already caused a lot of problems.”

“And now it’s gonna fix one,” Yakko said. “So you paintin’ the thing on or what?”

Bendy pinched the bridge between his eyes again. He was going to kill them.

“Yakko, that’s not something you should joke about,” Holly said, frowning at him.
All three paused, their smiles slipping a little. “It isn’t?” They shared a confused look.

Cuphead rolled his eyes. “They ain’t gonna get it, tree princess. These zanies can pull themselves apart and put themselves back together like puzzle pieces.”

“Really?” Boris asked with wide eyes.

Dot grabbed her ears and pulled one, her head spinning like a yo-yo. She pulled her other ear and her head spun the other way. She couldn’t have a neck. Even though Bendy could see it, there was no logic to it. Wakko pulled off his tail, straightened it out, and leaned on it like a cane. Bendy felt his eye twitch just remembering the times when he had his own tail pulled. Boris watched in amazed silence.

Holly raised a brow at Cuphead. “I know how zanies work, Cuphead. But you’re mistaken if you think they can’t get it.”

Felix sighed and patted Holly’s shoulder. “Give us a minute, will you all?” He stood up. “Warners, may we talk?” he asked. The Warners stopped their insanity (sadly only temporarily) and followed the cat outside.

Bendy watched them leave with furrowed brows. What was all that about?

“I don’t mind, really.” Mickey smiled.

Oswald scowled. “Well I do.” He crossed his arms.

Mickey chuckled. “Ozzy.”

“I’m surprised they listen to Felix. Do they have a history with each other or something?” Mugs asked looking at Boris expectantly.

Boris blinked in surprise. “Uh, um, I don’t...think so?” He glanced at Bendy. “Right?”

Bendy shrugged. “I haven’t ever seen anyone get those three under control.”

“Strange.” Holly looked at the door.

Felix knew the Warners? He’d never thought about it. How had they met, if it was true? Why did the three nutcases listen to him of all people? Well, Felix was amazing. He couldn’t blame them for looking up to him.

Cup narrowed his eyes at the door calculatingly.

“Have something to share Cup?” Bendy asked. The cupman glanced at him.

“Nah,” he said and slouched down.

“You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to Mickey,” Bendy told the mouse. “Sorry they’re so pushy.”

Mickey smiled and shrugged. “It’s okay. I need to try anyway. I know what I’m trying to do. It’s just how I’m going to do it.” He twisted his hands around the handle of the brush.

“Nervous?” Boris asked.

“Was that police dog able to help you?” Holly asked.
“Quite a bit.” Mickey nodded. “But I can only read and study so much though. It’s time to take action.”

“We have your back Mick,” Oswald promised. Mickey nodded.

Suddenly, Dot was in Mickey’s lap, her arms around his neck. Mickey jumped in surprise. “I’m so sorry!” she wailed. “We had no idea!”

Wakko and Yakko came in from the door. “Mr. Mickey, uuuuuuuuuuuuh, I’m really sorry,” Yakko said sheepishly.

“We didn’t know how it was.” Wakko twisted his foot into the carpet, hands behind his back. Bendy and the rest of the room stared at the siblings dumbstruck. Felix came back in and sat back down next to Bendy.

“What did you do?” Bendy whispered to the cat author.

“Just explained everything in terms they’d understand,” Felix said nonchalantly.

Bendy wasn’t sure what to make of that. He stared at the cat in wonder. It took some time for the Warners to be wrangled into seats. Mickey had to calm them down, assure them that they were fine. Bendy had to pry Dot off him at least three times. Finally, everything was set for Mickey to try. He shared a look with Oswald before lifting the brush.

Everyone held their breath as Mickey waved the brush. The tip lit blue, a brush of liquid came out on Mickey’s empty leg. It glowed, dripped to the floor and--!

Vanished.

Everyone stared.

“Uh,” Mickey said.

“You sure you did it right Mick?” Oswald asked. “How’re you feeling?”

“It tingles, but that’s it.” He shook his head and looked at the brush in confusion.

A dark silence fell. Boris looked like he was on the verge of tears.

“Is it workin’ right?” Cup asked.

Mickey flicked it and a glass of water appeared in his hand in a splash of blue. “It seems so.”

“Try makin’ a different livin’ thing. Like an animal or something.” Dot suggested. “Like a pony.”

“Maybe something smaller,” Bendy suggested.

Mickey nodded and waved the brush, a wave of blue and...nothing. It was just a spat of sparks and blue.

The silence came back. Oh no…

“Maybe someone else has to do it?” Wakko nabbed it. Bendy tensed as he waved it. Nothing happened. Wakko frowned. “Do ya have to hold it some special way?”

“Hey! Give it back!” Oswald snapped.
“It seems to only be working for Mickey,” Holly said quietly. And not fully working either.

“Let me try,” Yakko snatched it. He lifted his chin, tapped it like it was some conductor’s wand and waved it with a flourish. Boris whimpered and covered his eyes.

“How about we don’t wave the dangerous magic at people!” Cup snapped when nothing happened.

“My turn! My turn!” Dot appeared on her brother’s shoulder and snatched it.


Suddenly green liquid shot out. “Cussing—” Bendy cursed. Cuphead fired a shot. It hit the liquid and both disappeared.

Mugs jumped up and snatched the brush, glaring at the Warners.

“It’s not a cussing toy!” Cup snapped a similar heated glare in his eyes. “You three could have killed someone.”

Yakko and Dot sat up but looked guilty at the floor.

“Well, I think that’s enough excitement for one day,” Felix said with a stern look to the Warners.

“Here Mickey.” Mugs offered the brush back to the mouse. Holly’s eyes followed the brush as it passed in front of her.

“I’m so sorry, Mr. Mickey!” Boris wailed. “We all thought it would work!” He went and hugged his idol.

“It’s okay Boris.” Mickey patted the wolf’s back. Bendy pursed his lips. “It’s okay.” It really wasn’t though.

Why hadn’t it worked? It could erase everything but only create certain things? What the hell kinda power was that? They had to be doing something wrong. Right? Was it the crack in the handle? They had damaged the magic? Bendy’s eyes traveled over the forlorn faces of the group. Cup looked like he was ready to hit something. Mugs looked glassy eyed himself. Holly got up and went for a walk. Felix watched Mickey and Boris with sorrowful eyes. He would glance at Oswald every once in a while. The rabbit looked torn up, but he kept his grief silent and turned to look out the window. Mickey himself seemed a bit sad, but he somehow looked to be taking it the best. Bendy lowered his head.

In the train racing toward the place many of them were now calling home, the group of companions were coming to the slow realization that some things wouldn’t be the same. Would never be the same. Both obvious and hidden, all of them had gone through change. For better or worse.

The track was set, the destination chosen, but the journey was far from predictable, destiny had its own plans.

“I can’t take it anymore!” Yakko exclaimed.
“Shut it. We still have a full day before we get to Toon Town,” Bendy grumbled from his book. After the rather tense realization that Mickey wouldn’t ever walk on his own two feet again, the group had become quiet, and the atmosphere a bit suffocating. Several tried to keep things in higher spirits, including Mickey himself. But not even the Warners could lighten the mood.

That had been yesterday. Besides Boris, Bendy wasn’t really feeling up to see everyone else. He had opted to be alone most of the day, locking himself away with his books and studies as an excuse. It had worked besides an occasional check in from Boris or Felix. Then, the cussing Warners had found him.

“Oh c’mon! You have to be bored too,” Wakko said.

“Too busy to be bored,” Bendy turned the page. They wouldn’t leave.

“Hey, I know! Let’s prank someone!” Dot offered.

“Yeah!” the other two agreed. Bendy sighed.

“What are you three nutcases prattling about?” Bendy lowered the book and looked up.

“Who should we prank?” Wakko asked.

“How about the grumpy rabbit?” Dot suggested.

“But Felix asked us to leave him and the mouse alone,” Yakko disagreed. A prank? Were they serious? Could they not go one day without causing trouble?

“Then, what about Felix?” Wakko asked.

“That bag would be a problem,” Dot mused. They were serious. Stars above. Bendy grumbled and looked back at the language book. It was slower going than he wanted, but he was getting there. The more culture he learned, the less he wanted to be involved in it. He was almost sick of the etiquette book, and he hadn’t touched the history book yet.

“The Cup brothers?” Dot smiled. “We do need to even the score with them after all.”

“That’s right! It’s one to one now, isn’t it!” Yakko snapped his fingers.

“Nah, that magic headcanon thing was a cheat.” Dot waved a hand dismissively.

“And I had an attack! That fight needs a rematch!” Wakko nodded with Dot.

“Alright, so wadda we want to do?” Yakko smirked with a hand to his chin thoughtfully. The other two hummed and started to think. Bendy raised a brow. Prank Cuphead?

“You lot are pranking Cuphead?” Bendy asked.


Bendy smiled. Oh. This was going to be good. “I might have some ideas.”

“WHAT THE HELL!”

Bendy cackled as Cuphead’s voice echoed throughout the train. The Warners laughed with him as the Cup brother’s door crashed open. Oh stars! Cuphead’s hair!
Tears came to Bendy’s eyes as Cup charged out of the room, Mugs on his heels, bubbles spilling out of the room behind them.

“What happened?” Felix and Oswald came around the corner, Boris and Holly close behind them, the doctor at the end. The group paused at the sight of the Cup brothers.

Oswald burst with laughter and pointed, tears already springing to his eyes. The Warners were practically rolling across the floor. Bendy wasn’t doing much better.

The brother’s heads were puffs of bubbly afros. There were pen doodles on their faces. Cup looked like a clown with round eyes and a drawn on smile and with a tic-tac-toe game on his uninjured cheek. He was also wearing huge shoes, baggy pants held up with straps over a polka dot shirt with frill sleeves. Mugs was drawn up to look more like a poodle with cloth ears and a fake tail that ended in poofs and a shaded nose. He had a dog collar with a bell to finish the look.

Besides their heads, they were covered in bubbles. Felix covered his mouth. “Oh my.” He sounded like he was trying to hold back his chuckles. Holly didn’t bother, she burst into laughter, holding her stomach as she stared at the Cup brothers. Boris’ shoulders were shaking.

Cup turned a deathly glare on Bendy and the Warners. “You little schmucks did this! Filling our cussing room with starfallen bubbles!”

“Oh no, not again.” Dr. Scratchensniff sighed and covered his face with his hands.

“Hey, w-who you callin’ small!” Bendy could barely speak past his laughing fit.

“It’s your fault for napping in the middle of the day pal.” Yakko shrugged.

Dot pulled out a large camera from behind her back. “Smile!” she said before hitting the button. A flash blinded a growling cupman. Mugs’ shoulders were shaking.

“I’m gonna cussing kill you!” Cup raged.

“Oh c’mon Cup! That was a good one.” Mugs snickered.

“Yeah man,” Bendy panted. “You need to clown around more.” The Warners lost it again.

“I have to have a copy of that,” Oswald told Dot. The girl winked and tucked the camera away again.

Holly tried to breath through her laughter. She raised a hand. “Me too, Dot!”

Cup turned his deathly glare on Oswald. “I will end you, long ears. If you think for one second--”

“Wow Mugs, you have hair!” Boris snickered and faked patting the bubbles on Mugs head.

“Hair nothin’! These schmucks got bubbles an’ soap in our heads, damnit!” Cup snapped, distracted from threatening Oswald more.

“Hey, you’re right, Boris! I got hair!” Mugs posed, tossing a hand behind his head and the other at his waist. “I look snazzy!”

“Oh stars!” Boris’ laughter rang out.

“It looks great on you, Mugs,” Holly agreed.
“Mugs!” Cup looked at his brother in disgusted betrayal.

“Oh c’mon Cup! Have some fun! Besides.” Mugs glanced at Bendy mischievously. “This means war.”

Bendy came up short with that look. Uh?

“Is that a challenge?” Yakko rubbed his hands together.

“I will make you lot cussing pay!” Cup swore.

“Is there a problem?” A train worker came around the corner. “Excuse me,” he told the doctor and got to the front.

“No, simply a prank,” Felix told him reassuringly. The man sniffed and looked over the Cups then the rest of them.

“Yes, I see that. Please, consider the other passengers,” he told the Cup brothers. Mugs smiled apologetically. Cup looked like he was about to punch him.

“We will. Thank you,” Mugs told him quickly.

Prank over, Bendy and the Warners helped clean up the room. Boris and Mugs had fun messing with the bubbles, giving the pup his own hair do. Even Oswald tried his hand at a bubble bread. It was great fun. Bendy didn’t even realize how badly he needed it until now.
As White As Snow

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

Mic blew his nose on a handkerchief. "W-welcome ladies and gentlemen to Inky Mystery," Mic sniffed. "Oh stars." He turned away from the microphone for a moment. He cleared his throat. "The crew returns to Toon Town. It seems winter has finally arrived." Mic's lip trembled. "Now if you'll excuse me, I have a movie to go watch that in no way relates to anything!"

Chapter Notes

Oops! Sorry Mic! Uh...feel better soon.
Hi guys!
The Warners are back! And boy am I mad at them! I sent them of on some important behind the scenes story stuff and they bail on my story! They run off to other people's stories! Bb&Cb's blog on tumblr, other fics, and by golly they even went off to do a reboot! Their own show! Coming back next year! They ditched me! And now that things have calmed down they came back! What am I? Chopped liver? A backup? Something to do between work? These Warners! At least they got done what they needed to for the story before going AWOL. Stars.

Okay rant over. You all can go enjoy the chapter.

Snow drifted down over the quiet city. The dark clouds hung low over towering buildings, homes, and businesses. The cold air was oppressive and heavy. The city was slowly blanketed in the icy white embrace. The silence of the grey walls seemed ominous to the returning group of adventures. Tracks of prints hinted at the presence of others, but besides those climbing off the train, the city seemed empty.

Cuphead glanced around the street and hugged his coat closer to himself. Seemed winter had come a bit early.

“Cussing brr!” Bendy shivered and hugged himself.

“Are you sure you'll both be alright?” Felix was asking Oswald and Mickey.

“We'll figure it out,” Mickey promised. “Keep that thing safe.” Mickey winked.

“And thanks for calling us a taxi,” Oswald said. “We'll be in contact.”

The cat nodded. “We'll come visit as soon as we can.”

“Thanks for coming to save me.” Mickey smiled.
“Sorry we got you involved,” Boris murmured. Mickey shook his head and petted him.

“It’s fine, Boris. I’m happy that you got another part,” Mickey said. Cup noticed the rabbit’s eye twitched. Hm. Boris wagged his tail. The taxi came and the circus pair climbed in. It was that crazy short dog again. But for once, he was driving slowly, carefully even. Cup narrowed his eyes. It only added to the eeriness of the city.

“Let’s move!” Bendy said. “The sooner we get home, the warmer we’ll be!”

“Do you not have a coat Bendy?” Felix asked.

Bendy smirked. “Not on me.”

Boris also was hugging himself. Idiots weren’t ready for the winter. “One minute.” Felix unzipped his bag and dug around its confines. Holly watched him in fascination. “I know I have a couple--ah! Here we are!” He pulled out three coats of varying sizes. “Boris, Bendy, Holly, here.” He offered the coats. “I’m not sure if the sizes are right, but it’s better than nothing.”

Holly blinked in surprise. Taking a coat, she smiled at Felix. “Thanks.”

Boris and Bendy took the others. The one on Bendy was too big, making him look even smaller.

“Guess we better start walking,” Mugs said. “The snow will only get deeper.”

“Can’t you do that weird scene change whatever?” Bendy asked Dot. Dot shook her head quickly.

“Oh no! Not with so many!” Dot gasped and then slid up to the demon. “Unless you want it to be just you and me,” she purred. Cup bit his lip to hold in his amusement. Bendy grimaced and shoved her away.

“That’s too bad,” Boris said, pulling his backpack on again.

Holly looked down the street. “Have you noticed how terribly...quiet it is?” she asked the others in a low voice.

“Yeah, it’s weird.” Boris perked his ears as he turned his head. “It’s this quiet on snowy days at home, but I didn’t think it’d do this in a city.”

“It ain’t normal,” Cup stated. Holly nodded in agreement. “Somethin’s up.”

Cup shared a wary glance with Mugs before pushing out into the cold. Cup’s feet crunched the snow as he walked down the sidewalk. Mugs crunching at his side, he could hear the others behind him. They were trying to guess what was going on. Cup was looking for a newsstand. He found one, but it was closed. Cussing swell.

They went a couple of blocks before a couple of people appeared, walking in the same direction they were going. Felix hurried and passed Cup up. “Excuse me!” Felix called out. They paused and glanced back. A tall wiry man and a very round woman. They were both wearing black. “Sorry to bother, but do you mind telling us what’s going on?”

“By golly! It’s Felix the Cat!” the woman gasped.

“Stars! You’re right!” the man exclaimed in a scratchy voice.

“Yes, it’s nice to meet you. Can you tell us what’s going on?” Felix repeated patiently.
“Goodness! You haven’t heard! Today’s the funeral mate!” the woman said.

“Very gracious of ‘im to have it open to us publics,” the man said.

“Ya best hurry! I ‘ear it’s already crowded big,” the woman added. A funeral? For who? The woman looked over at the rest of the group. Her eyes landed on Bendy and the Warners. Her smile twitched. “We best hurry ourselves!” The woman grabbed the man, and they scurried away before Felix to ask more. Cup blinked. The hell?

They shared concerned looks before continuing toward the house. The cold was biting, as they walked further into the city, more people appeared the further they went. Some in black, others not. Whoever died must have been a big deal. It seemed half the city was in mourning. They reached Baker Street. Good thing too. Mugs was rubbing his arms and shivering.

Just then, Snowball perked from inside Holly’s coat pocket. She gave a sharp squeak. Before Holly even finished looking down at her, the tiny rodent leaped from her pocket, shooting down the road. The girl got a look of panic and waved quickly at them as she ran down the street. “Catch up with you later!”

Cup shrugged and ushered his brother up the steps. They opened the door to the warmth inside. Just as Cup was going to let out a sigh of comfort and relief, he looked around the room. Black and flowers and strangers. People he didn’t know. Oh cussing hell.

“Cuphead! Mugman! You’re back!” Granny came up, her face fur stained with tear tracks. “Bendy, Boris, Felix!” the old gopher looked beyond them. “Thank heavens you’re okay! Were you able to get Mickey?”

“Granny!” Boris gasped. “What’s going on!”

“Yes, Mrs. Gopher. Mickey is heading home with his brother now,” Felix said. His eyes scanned the full front room and study. “Are we interrupting?”

“What’s going on?” Bendy asked, pushing himself to the front. Murmurings were now drifting through the rooms of strangers.

“Boys! Felix! Welcome back,” Dr. Oddswell came from another room. He was in a suit instead of his regular stained white lab coat. “You made it in time.”

“In time?” Mugs frowned worryingly. “For what?” Cup swallowed. This wasn’t good.

“The funeral.” Ah cuss. He hated being right.

Cup looked over to see that handsome fella that was over here often. Charming. He was also in black and standing a bit too straight. Too stiff. Too perfect. Six little men stood around him. Sneezy’s brothers. Charming approached Bendy and shook his hand. “I’m glad you all could make it. I know you’re all busy, but it means the world to me that her friends were able to come.”

“Oh cuss. You don’t mean--” Cup winced from Mugs sharp elbow in his side.

Bendy visibly paled. “O-oh?” he muttered. Charming moved on to shake everyone else’s hands. Cup was as stiff as a board.

“The service is going to start soon. We were all about to head over to the church. We would love for you all to seat with the families. Snow was so happy with you all in the house. She considered you as family too. You all were so kind and welcoming to her after all,” Charming said. The dwarves
nodded.

Oh stars. Oh cussing stars. Oh starfallen cussing stardust!

“N-no.” Boris shook his head. His voice cracked.

Bendy twitched at the wolf’s voice and turned to him. “Boris,” he murmured quietly. Boris’ ears were pinned to his head, his eyes were huge. He kept shaking his head.

“Sh-she was doing fine when we left. She was doing better than—” A dry sob shook his skinny form. “And what about Sneezy? Wh-what happened to him?”

“No!” Boris shook his head violently.

“C’mon Boris.” Bendy took his brother’s arm. “Excuse us.” The demon said quickly and dragged the pup up the stairs. Cup and Mugs watched them go with worried eyes.

“I’m sorry,” Charming apologized. “I thought you were all aware. The news has traveled so quickly, and the funeral is open to the public as Snow requested.” He deflated.

“She didn’t want to keep out her loving fans and supporters.” Granny eyes teared up again, and she pulled out a handkerchief to dab at the tears. “She was always so focused on helping and supporting others.”

“How much time do we have to get ready?” Felix asked quietly. His face downcast.

“I have to go now, but I’m sure you have fifteen or twenty minutes,” Charming said. The cat nodded.

“Come, we can talk in my office in private after you all change,” Oddswell said.

“Change?” Cup asked.

“Ms. Hood?” Oddswell looked over his shoulder. Cup followed his line of sight. Red was standing at the foot of the stairs. Her black dress hung around her like a shroud. Cup spotted Alice and Cala down the hall. Alice gave them a pitying glance. Cala gave them a weak wave. She looked like she wanted to rush up to them. All three women looked pale and drawn. “This way gentlemen.” Red gestured for the stairs. “We had suits ordered for you since none of us knew if you would be able to attend.” They followed her up the stairs and down the hall. Cup could hear Boris’ weeping on the other side of their door.

“Is there anything else we should know?” Cuphead asked the assistant.

The beauty continued quietly for a moment before sighing. “Finley is also bedridden from a bad attack at the moment. Sammy is staying with him. The doctor believes he will recover…and we have a new tenant.” Red’s voice stayed matter-of-fact, but her shoulders stiffened. Was it because she didn’t think the fox would recover, or that she didn’t like the new tenant? Cup didn’t really have time to ponder this. Her next words erased it from his mind. “And Xedo is here for work. So be civil.”

Cup lifted his chin and frowned. Cussing journalist. They were brought into the side study that used to hold the machine parts. There was a closet that had a line of bags on hooks. Red reached in and pulled out one of them. The name **Felix** was on the tag.
“Oh, you didn’t have to--”

“It’s what Snow would have wanted.” She gave him the bag and gestured to the others. “I will take these two to the boys and see if they will be willing to attend.” Red took two bags out and left the room without another word. They stood in silence for one heavy moment.

“Well, these suits aren’t going to wear themselves,” Felix said quietly.

“This is cussing stardust,” Cup growled. He didn’t want to go. He didn’t deserve to go. What the cuss was Snow White to him? She had been this big star. A famous actress with fans and influence. Sneezy was a quiet but respectable fella. What the hell was the point for a guy like him to go?

A bag thumped into him. Cup blinked out of his thoughts. Mugs held it against him, an expectant look in his eyes. “We better hurry,” Mugs said. Cup reluctantly took it.

“See you boys in a few.” Felix left.

Cup watched the door, feeling more lost and out of sorts than he had in a long time. He and Mugs got dressed in silence. What could either of them say at this moment? Snow White and Sneezy were dead. Just like that. What the hell happened? Cuphead rolled his eyes. He cussing knew what happened. But it didn’t make sense. Snow hadn’t been as bad as Bendy is. At least...Cuphead glanced at Mugman. He didn’t think she was. Mugs finished buttoning up the shirt and was struggling with the tie. He stuck his tongue out as he fiddled with it. Cup rolled his eyes and started on his...or tried. Were these things supposed to be that complicated?

A knock came to their door. “Just a minute,” Cup answered. He tossed the useless thing aside. Mugs sighed and dropped his too. “Here.” Cup tossed him the coat. “Put that on.” Mugs did as he was told. Cup grabbed his scarf and wrapped it around his brother’s neck. “There.” Mugs smiled.

Cup opted to leave the top button of his dress shirt undone. He looked mournfully at his coat before grabbing the suit coat. It was only a couple hours...but the house was full of strangers. He shrugged on the dress coat, a little loose on him, but not a bad fit. He reached into his beloved coat’s pockets and pulled out his smokes, the book, and the contracts. There was an inner pen pocket that would be good enough for those damn things. He caught Mugs watching him. Cup shrugged. They went to the door. Red was there. She nodded and gestured for them to head back downstairs.

They got to the doc’s office. There Felix, Bendy, and a teary-eyed Boris were already waiting. They were all dressed up and stuff. Alice, Cala, Red, and a few people that Cup didn’t know were there. And that starfallen fox. Oddswell was behind his desk. “Thank you for coming. We have to be quick. Mr. Tiptail.”

Xedo nodded and stepped forward. “I’m here to inform you of the delicate situation you are about to walk into.”

“Delicate? Isn’t this just a funeral?” Cup asked. Xedo glanced at him. If there was any hard feelings the fox had toward the Cupbros, he didn’t show it.

“Ms. White was a famous actress. Thus, her death is being well covered by the news. On top of that, it wasn’t public knowledge that she was sick,” the fox schmuck continued.

“She never told?” Bendy asked. He was looking sharp in clothes that fit him nicely, but it was weird to see him without his goggles.

“She intended to,” the doc spoke up. “She was trying to find the right time to speak up without it becoming a scandal.”
“A scandal?” Mugs frowned.

The doctor nodded. “Before, the problem was the questionable existence of the disease, and after that, the news was riveted with the Bbros. Dozens of people were trying to cash in on the fame by claiming they were sick or knew about it the whole time. You remember the madness.” Oddswell glanced to Bendy and Boris.

“You mean when there was that huge crowd in front of the house?” Boris asked with his ears down.

“Precisely,” Oddswell nodded.

“Then, she was trying to work around the news of her engagement to Charming.” Xedo hopped back in. “She didn’t want to the two stories to meld. She refused to let the disease blanket such a happy event.” He dropped his head. “She withdrew from work shortly after that.”

“But what happened?” Bendy stressed.

“People were still contacting her for parts. They were getting pushy,” Xedo said. “Add to that, she was trying to help Finley get his first break and plan her wedding and…” The fox’ ears dropped, and he looked to the doctor.

“The stress worsened her condition.” The doc’s tongue flicked out a couple of times. The tip of his tail twitched. “In the end, that’s what did it.”

“And Sneezy?” one of the strangers asked.

“The loss of Snow was too much for him,” Oddswell claimed. “There was nothing I could do.” And the reptile really hated to admit it. At least that’s what it appeared to Cup. His demeanor and tone was cool, but those twitches and tongue was his tell.

“Is Finley really going to be okay?” Boris murmured with hunched shoulders.

“Yes. It was close, but he will recover,” Dr. Oddswell said. Cup frowned. Yeah, ‘recover’ but not really. One didn’t ‘recover’ from ink illness. He just didn’t kick it this time.

Cussing stars. Cup’s chest constricted at the thought.

“Now,” Xedo cut in again. “Other papers are jumping at the chance to make this a big scandal, since very few knew of her sickness. They want a big reason to why it was a secret. They would love to tie anyone of you in this room into a mess. Don’t give them the chance. No matter what they ask.”

He was giving them a warning. Cup raised his brows in surprise. Didn’t mean he’d forgive the schmuck.

“That’s low,” Bendy grumbled, his eyes flashed red. A couple of the pansies shifted away from him.

“Tsk.”

“I agree.” Alice nodded. “But we have do our best. Today is a day to celebrate the great life that Snow White and Sneezy led. To keep and honor their memory.”

The room agreed. Cup wanted nothing more than to leave.

“Good, then we better get going.” Dr. Oddswell rose from his seat and led the group out. Cup again had the sense of being lost as he was ushered in with a mixed group and to a church. It was huge,
grand, and intimidating. The crowd went on for blocks. A sea of black in a white silent world of ice.

The crowd in front of the church was a herd of cameras, news journalist asking questions, and people with signs. Most were supportive. *Snow will always be my hero.* And cheesy stardust like that.

Cup tuned out the questions and just followed Bendy’s spiky head. They ended up in a room that was too grand for words. It was tall, taller than the rooms in the college. The stain glass, though, didn’t hold the magic of the mural in the college. Thank the cussing stars for that. There were rows of people all facing this wall of flowers and pictures. Two coffins stood in front of the display. There was a circle of animals around them, sitting and weeping. Cup blinked. What? He spotted a small white poof sitting on the head of a deer. The thing was shaking. Where was Holly?

Cup’s heart twisted. What was he doing here? They were shuffled into the second row, behind the dwarves and what Cup could only guess was family. Boris sat down next to Granny, Bendy next to him, and then it was Cup, Mugs, Cala, Alice, Red, the doctor, Felix and the fox and his brother. The freaky bird wasn’t here.

Charming stepped up and thanked everyone for attending. Cuphead tried to pay attention, he really did. But he kept looking at the sad animals. He hardly noticed when Charming was replaced with the dwarves. Cup was watching the mournful Snowball. She was curled up in a ball, only her tiny nose sticking out from behind her feet.

Was the girl in the crowd? She had gone to chase after the critter. Cup wasn’t sure. Bendy was tense and pale. The doc said stress was Snow’s downfall? How much more could Bendy take until this was his scene? The guy had suffered a cussing panic attack for star’s sake! He had to be at some kind of limit, right?

To Cup’s surprise, he felt legitimate despair at the thought of losing Bendy like this. Like a sudden slap to the face. It was like back at the cliffs fighting Cala. Cup had been surprised by how much he had worried.

He was shocked again with just how much he had come to cussing care. How had these two come to matter so much? Sure, he gave Bendy a hard time, and Bendy dished it out just as much as he got, but he was his friend. Hell, the guy had been laughing just yesterday over a stupid prank. When was the last time Cup had felt carefree like that? It’d started up with these fellas.

There wasn’t even anymore sarcasm to the thought anymore. The pipsqueak really was his friend. He wasn’t just willing to train Bendy, fight alongside him, or cut deals with other demons because it was the mission right now. Cup really did want to help the demon. He wanted to help his friend.

Funny how this cussing dawned on him at a cussing funeral.

Cup slid a glance at Mugs. His brother was glassy-eyed as he listened to the speakers. To his annoyance, Cup understood what Mugs wanted to do. He got it. And he hated it.

Cup faced forward again. It was some beautiful woman that Cup didn’t know but seemed familiar. Light hair and full lips, and big eyes full of tears. Maybe another actress.

Could he sit through this funeral and know he was condemning a number of people to the same fate?

If it wasn’t their funeral next, it would his and Mugs. He still wasn’t sure what to do.

He had promised they’d get home as free men someday. To see Elder Kettle and apologize for all of
this. To find the islanders and help as much as they could when they were free. To reclaim their home from the boss. To cussing do something to make up for all they had done as his damn dogs!

But the price for that freedom was so steep now. It had gradually been building over the years.

He looked at the two that had thrown a wrench into everything. Boris was hugging Granny, the two listening tearfully. Bendy sat with his arms crossed, his brows knit and eyes dull.

Cup didn’t want to be here.

He looked at the coffins again. At Snowball. At the mourning animals. It was all suffocating.

Charming moved up again and spoke of his time with Snow, how he fell for her and how lucky he was to know her, talking about her hopes and dreams and how he would work hard to accomplish a few of them. Cup cringed. He really shouldn’t be there. He was a wolf among the sheep. A traitor. He was here to destroy so many hopes and end so many dreams.

Cup didn’t know how much longer it lasted or who came up to speak next. He was lost to the world around him. It seemed to never end, but finally, the pallbearers moved. The people stood as the coffins were taken down the aisle. The contracts in Cup’s pocket never felt heavier.

Bendy sighed as he rested his head on his hands at the dining room table. They had all finally left. How late was it? Who cussing cared?

Most of the house had gone to bed. They were all so tired with keeping face in front of the public. Tired of all the visitors and mourners, the supporters. The girls had left last. Alice with a worried glance to everyone. Holly looking as drained as that first week after Nightmare Night. She had spent the whole day with Finley and Sammy. The fox hadn’t been taking this well. He was exhausted, but here he was leaning over a cussing book because he didn’t want to sleep. He didn’t want to deal with the nightmares and the tension. He had so much to do, so it was fine. He didn’t need to sleep tonight.

“You’re going to kill yourself doing that.” Bendy jumped out of his seat and whipped his head around.

Angelo was sitting in a chair a couple of places away from him. The dripping angel waved and smiled.

“Angelo.” Bendy let out a shaky breath. “Give a guy some warning.” He sunk back into his chair.

The inky angel frowned. “Oh sorry, I’ll scuff the floor or pull a chair out next time. Maybe knock on the table.” He took a hand and pressed it through the table. “Oh wait, I can’t.”

Bendy frowned and turned back to the book. He didn’t really have the energy to deal with him. “Whatever. So what are you doing here? Another warning? Or are you here to just ‘mom’ me?”

Angelo snorted. “You’ve had it rough the last few days. You need to sleep.”

Bendy rolled his eyes. “Mom me it is then.”

“You and that Cuphead are really stubborn.” The angel shook his head.

“Did you talk to Snow?” Bendy asked, already tired of the other’s presence.

“No. It was as much as a surprise to me. I followed you, after all,” Angelo said.
Bendy straightened up. “You what? I thought you had to stay in the cussing house or something!”

Angelo raised his brows. “I don’t remember saying anything like that. What? You thought I died in this house or something? Or at the observatory? Please. Most of these buildings weren’t around back when I was alive.”

“So the area?” Bendy guessed.

“The city, but I can go anywhere I want to. I don’t tie myself down like that.” Angelo flicked his fingers dismissively and lifted his chin.

“No, your limit is to the ink illness.” Bendy scowled.

Angelo’s smug smirk dropped into an annoyed scowl. “Okay, okay, but seriously. Sleep. You nearly died twice out there from blood loss or whatever that was and then an attack. The attacks get worse if you are physically weak, and exhaustion is definitely a part of that.”

Bendy sighed. “I have to finish an assignment before I see Hat again.”

“Ah, yes. Your demon master.” Angelo leaned back and laced his fingers behind his head.

“Instructor,” Bendy corrected.

“Regardless. You need sleep.”

“Easy for you to say,” Bendy grumbled.

“Those nightmares are still a problem? Have you ever thought of meditation or some calming tea perhaps?”

Bendy shut his eyes and rubbed his temples. Maybe if he wished hard enough, the schmuck would go away. He opened his eyes and shouted in surprise. Angelo’s face was on the book. He was grinning mischievously. “Boo,” he said through his fangs.

“You are not cussing funny!” Bendy hissed.

“Oh! Red eyes! Is that supposed to scare me? It doesn’t really work on dead people pal.” He stood up, his lower half still in the table.

“Bendy, you really need to start paying attention.” Angelo chuckled. “This place is still under watch, after all.”

“Under watch? From who?” Bendy asked. Angelo shook his head and shrugged. Bendy scowled. “Some good you turned out to be.”

“Oh I dunno. I kinda like him.” Angelo stepped out of the table and adjusted his tie.

“Ah I dunno. I kinda like him.” Angelo nodded.

Wakko grinned, tongue sticking out of his mouth. Bendy answered before he could. “He’s a zany. He does weird stardust like that.” Angelo stepped out of the table and adjusted his tie.

“Ah. Right. It’s nice to meet you Wakko,” Angelo nodded.

“Same.” Wakko lifted a hand.
“Sorry, ghosts don’t sha—”

“Aw, don’t be shy pal!” Wakko grabbed his hand and shook it vigorously.

Bendy’s jaw dropped. Angelo’s jaw dropped. Neither one knew what to do or say. Wakko pulled his hand back. “You should wash your hands some time. They’re a bit sticky.” Wakko looked at the ink on his hand.

Angelo was looking at his hand like he was questioning if it was real. “You just touched me.”

“How the cuss did you touch a ghost?” Bendy demanded.

Wakko blinked, his grin slipping as he wiped his hands on his pajamas’ legs. “A ghost? Where?” He looked around. Bendy smacked his forehead.

“Angelo! He’s a ghost!” Bendy waved a hand at the still stunned angel.

“Him?” Wakko pointed to Angelo with the same confused frown.

“Yes, him! Who else?” Bendy threw his hands up. “Nevermind! Forget it!”

Wakko leaned forward and covered his mouth so Bendy couldn’t see his lips. But the demon could still easily hear him. “You’re really a ghost?”

“How did you do that?” Angelo asked still baffled.

“How are you a ghost?” Wakko asked back, tilting his head in confusion.

“Give up Angelo. The guy never answers.” Bendy grabbed his book and snapped it shut. There was no way he was going to get any studying done.

“You heading to bed finally?” Angelo asked.

“No point trying to stay here,” Bendy admitted defeat.

“I think Boris would be happier if you did,” Wakko added. “He’s been a bit down in the dumps.”

“Oh, I wonder why,” Bendy snapped. “What are you doing down here anyway?”

Wakko grinned. “Midnight snack.”

Bendy rolled his eyes. Of course. “Don’t empty out the fridge. Red will kill you in the morning if you do.” Wakko saluted and then waved as Bendy trudged up the stairs.

“Seriously. How did you do that?” Angelo asked as he followed after Wakko. Bendy rolled his eyes.

Peace. That’s all he wanted. Was that so hard? Every time he thought they took a step forward it was two steps back. Thanks to all the visitors, they hadn’t been able to stash the brush away either. Bendy wasn’t exactly thrilled to have a powerful magical object in his room. But at least the thing hadn’t shown any malice. Thank the stars. They were determined to barely use it, regardless. No one wanted a repeat of Nightmare Night.

Oh cuss. Wait. If Wakko saw Angelo, that cussing meant the schmuck was real and not his head messing with him! Bendy paused on the top stair. He glanced back down the staircase with wide eyes.
What the hell did that mean?

He shook his head. Tomorrow. He wasn’t dealing with it now. Tomorrow. He had too much on his plate, and a fallen angel ghost was low on the very long list of Bendy’s worries.

He went back to his and Boris’ room and shut the door quietly behind him. Boris was snoozing away, a lump under his clovers. Bendy placed his homework on the desk and eyed his bed.

He didn’t want nightmares.

He didn’t want to see Boris in danger, Holly as evil, Cup as insane, Wilson as that dead twisted corpse, everyone dead, or those cussing yellow eyes!

He was so done with it. Bendy sighed. He rolled onto the covers and stared up at the ceiling. He laid there, thinking about the last few weeks, everything they’d been through, the funeral. It was going to be weird without Snow White’s cheerful smile and sweet voice. He was going to miss her and Sneezy. Bendy had tried his best to not feel guilty. This was how ink illness was. This was why he and Boris were doing the best they could. He didn’t have control of when the map showed a part. He couldn’t save everyone. He was going as fast as he could.

And it still wasn’t cussing fast enough. The worn look on Finley’s face today said enough.

At some point, Bendy drifted off to sleep. Predictably, the nightmares started. Wilson yelling at him to beware. Cuphead shooting Mugs, Boris, and him. Holly laughing as she stood on the cog. Those yellow eyes killing him as the monster shrieked for him to die.

Bendy sat up with a gasp.

“Bendy, are you okay?” Boris was up. The horizon outside was hinting toward sunrise. Bendy groaned. He never wanted to see the crack of dawn again. He fell back and dragged his pillow over his face.

“Come on Bendy. Cup and Mugs are probably up already.” Boris nudged his leg. Bendy peeked at the wolf. He was already in his exercise clothes. Cussing training.

“Tell them I died and go on without me.” Bendy pulled the pillow over his face again. He heard Boris sigh. “You know they won’t let you get away with that. We only went training with them once since we left, and that was interrupted by all those people.”

“Not my fault we were stuck on a train and then in jail,” Bendy grumbled and turned his back on Boris. Maybe he could get an hour without a nightmare. Just an hour. That’s all he wanted.

“Bendy!” Boris whined. “What about Mr. Hat! They’ll get in trouble! C’mon!” Boris said. Bendy didn’t respond. They could take care of themselves, and Hat wouldn’t do anything too extreme. He heard his brother sigh. Suddenly there was a yank on his tail. Bendy sat up.

“Oi!” he barked and glared at the wolf. Boris was frowning at him, Bendy’s spiked tail in his hand.

“Don’t bother with the red eyes. You don’t scare me,” Boris said. His eyes were glowing? He didn’t even notice. “Now move. They are doing a lot to help you.” Bendy swallowed what he thought they could do with their help and pulled his tail free of the wolf with a scowl.

“Fine,” he snipped. He scooted out of bed and sluggishly got ready. Boris dragged him downstairs to see the impatient cups waiting in their morning best. Coats on and ready. Oh cuss, it was also snowy
out there. Yuck.

“T ook you two long enough!” Cuphead grumbled. Bendy didn’t grace that with an answer. They went out the door and started the morning run. The icy air stung Bendy’s cheeks and eyes as they went. His throat burned with the chilling air. He pulled his goggles on to stop from tearing up.

“C’m on spikes! You’re lagging.” Cup turned around and jogged backwards. “We have to go faster since you were late, and we have a schedule.” It was a load of stardust. Their legs were longer. Bendy grit his teeth and pushed himself to go faster. The morning was freezing; the traffic was light; though Bendy wasn’t sure if that was due to the cold, the unholy hour of morning, or if all the roads had been fixed yet. There was a lot of stopped construction under tarps.

Mugs led them on their path past businesses, parks, and neighborhoods. Anyone they passed paused and watched them go. Bendy was starting to get used to this attention. Some were pitying, some were curious, and some were guarded. The news was about yesterday, of course. Bendy spotted a paper that was a picture in the graveyard. Charming in the foreground and the questers and dwarves in the line behind him. He was getting used to that too. His picture on public display.

But losing friends would never be normal. He didn’t want it to be. Yesterday had been terrible. He hated it. He really hated it. He wished that cussing map just showed them where all the parts were at once. Time was against them. He panted as they rounded another corner.

Just as Bendy was sure he wouldn’t be able to take another step, they were back on Bakers Street. Thank the stars. He wondered if he was going to get sick. Ugh.

“Alright, we’re warmed up. To the backyard. Today is self defense.” Mugs panted, walking around the house. Boris dutifully followed. Bendy scowled but did the same. Self defense turned out to be the Cupbros knocking Bendy and Boris on their tails for an hour. It wouldn’t have been so bad if Cup would keep his cussing trap closed. Bendy tried to argue his strength was enough, but Cup brought up that other demons and angels were just as strong, and he needed technique. Stupid dish and his stupid logic.

And everything was winding down for them to head in when his chest gave an awful lurch. He raced inside with a hand over his mouth. The one great thing about living in a house full of the sick and a doctor, no one wasted time panicking or asking questions. He wasn’t completely sure how he ended up in one of the doc’s rooms, but he was as the pain threatened to drown him and rip him apart. Like last time, despite the rune and pills, he went blind and numb. He could still hear his own screams and coughs, but his limbs and the bed under him were gone. He was in a black void of burning liquid fire. Just when he was too tired to scream again, the pain receded slowly.

What had been an eternity for him turned out to be ten minutes. Still, the doc and Red seemed more concerned and frazzled than he had ever seen them. Boris was the one that seemed calm and collected. Oddswell had a clipboard and asked Boris a number of questions that Bendy didn’t really pay attention to. He was too focused on breathing and his aching body.

Eventually, they went to shower. Bendy shifted and bit back a curse. Bendy’s leg was killing him. Stitches. Ah. He had forgotten, and since Boris and the rest hadn’t said anything, they must have too. He checked in the bathroom after Boris was done. The bandages were stained. Cussing great. Two ripped stitches. Bendy sighed. His luck was just going down the drain, wasn’t it?

Who was he kidding? It’d been in the sewers ever since he ran into that owl on the street! He chuckled his shirt around the room in frustration. To hell with it all. He jumped in the shower and let the hot water cascade down him. He cleaned and wrapped his leg after the almost too hot shower, got dressed, and went downstairs.
Most of the house was up now. Granny and Red had set the table. Oddswell was already there. The cups too. Boris took his seat, and Bendy slid in next to him. Limp? No. Pain and soreness? Obviously.

Finley and Sammy weren’t far behind them. Fin stretched and waved a greeting. He pointedly ignored the concerned glances of the others and determinedly acted like it was any other morning. Thankfully, none of them commented.


“What the cuss are you doing here?” Bendy snipped. Jerry froze at the bottom of the stairs.

“Bendy, you know why he’s here,” Oddswell said.

“But he got you and Red tossed in the slammer.” Bendy glared at the weaselly man. Jerry went pale and gulped.

“S-something I deeply re-regret,” Jerry stuttered. Red rolled her eyes. “It was an accident.” Yeah, because he was trying to get Boris and him tossed in!


“That is true, but his condition has taken a turn for the worst,” the doctor said.

“And Dr. Oddswell is the best when managing ink illness,” Jerry said and scuttled to a chair next to Granny. The schmuck was wearing one of Holly’s bracelets under the sleeve of his loose button up and dress slacks.

“So you crawled back after no other doctor could help,” Bendy said, deadpan and picked up his fork.

Jerry scowled. “Well, you’re not wrong,” he grumbled. Sammy and Finley shared a confused look. He cleared his throat. “But my wife and I have made a good donation to the doctor to help in anyway we can for this cure he is working on.” So, they had bought a way back in? The doc would have probably taken him anyway despite the past just because he was sick. Idiot. But money was money, and the house need funds to do what they did.

“The ink machine you mean,” Dr. Oddswell said from behind his newspaper.

“...Yes,” Jerry said in a strained voice. “The ink machine.”

It was like the sleaze was choking on the words. Cuphead watched them with an entertained gleam in his eyes. Jerry cleared his throat and took a drink of coffee.

“Look, I know I made a mistake in the past. I didn’t have any faith and was scared. I hope we can all move past it and look to a brighter future. A lot has happened the past few months,” Jerry said. “You two are becoming quite famous.” Tell him something he didn’t know.

Boris shared a look with Bendy. Yeah. No. They weren’t trusting him with anything. When neither of them responded to him, he continued. “Ah, well, yes. Um, so how is that machine coming along anyway?”

“Oh, so now it’s important to you,” Bendy said flatly. “Well, when it’s done, we’ll be sure to let you
The fear coming off the schmuck was sweet and tantalizing. Bendy stuffed a large bite of omelette in his mouth, forcing himself to not think about it.

“Look, I’m sick too.” Jerry narrowed his eyes. “I think I deserve to know if the cure is close to coming or not. If I can do anything to help—”

“And how exactly are you going to help, huh? You gonna climb mountains? Jump down a cavern? Risk your life?” Bendy challenged. “Or maybe clean this house, run all the errands that need to be done? Help Sammy and Felix get ingredients and pills to where they need to go?”

Jerry’s eyes widened. “I was thinking more along the lines of paying and funding you. Things can move along quickly with a little financial support.”

“Pay?” Mugs muttered. Finley wrinkled his snout distastefully.

Jerry glanced at the cups. His lip and nose twitched. Had this rat almost sneered? “Yes, I understand getting the parts is...difficult. I certainly don’t have the skill set required to gather them. On the other hand, there’s building it. If we got more people involved or paid the right companies, then we could surely—”

“Mr. Verrim, I already explained to you that the parts are a delicate matter and that only the people already involved are the ones I trust to complete this work.” Dr. Oddswell cut him off.

“No disrespect doctor, but if these people are climbing mountains and so on for the parts, then wouldn’t it make sense to have another team to actually build it while they were away? Sure, it won’t be complete. But at least we can assemble some of it. I have looked and found some very capable engineers that would be more than happy to—”

“Bendy is the best,” Boris snapped. Bendy raised a brow. It was rare for people to get under his bro’s skin.

“Yeah,” Finley agreed.

Jerry gave Boris a deadpan glance. “Look, I understand that you two have done a lot and that you were good mechanics in your little cozy town, but this is a lot more important than an old junker car. This is going to be a delicate process for a life saving cure. You can’t have mess ups. We don’t have time for that. It’s not like changing the oil. I think some adult engineers might be more qualified for this.”

Did...did he just call Bendy a kid? Bendy narrowed his eyes. An unqualified child? This sleaze?

“Are you cussing kidding me right now?” Cuphead muttered, looking Jerry up and down like it was an ugly piece of art in the museum. He didn’t seem to believe Jerry had said what he said.

“Language.” Jerry frowned at him. “And why would I? Why do you trust these children to build it?” Cuphead scowled. Finley crossed his arms. Even Sammy looked a bit annoyed, even though he was trying to eat and not look up from his plate.

“Because they’re extremely capable young men, Mr. Verrim.” Dr. Oddswell spoke up again. “They have proven themselves time and again. Besides, I wouldn’t trust any engineer with the parts. I am more than convinced they would mishandle them. It hardly matters anyway.”

would they mishandle them? And why would it hardly matter? Martha made sure that they are only the best!

Dr. Oddswell sighed exasperatedly. Bendy agreed full heartedly with the lizard. Jerry was being a cussing pain. “Mr. Verrim, the parts are not just parts but run along a vein of magic we can hardly comprehend. Old magic. It is imperative that these parts are treated with the utmost respect and caution. We have seen what happens when that caution is lax.”

Bendy tensed. He wasn’t going to tell this rat about Nightmare Night, was he? That’d get Holly in the slammer for sure! This rat already proved that he didn’t mind throwing them under the cussing bus!

Jerry scoffed. “Ouch!” He jumped in his seat.

“Manners.” Granny frowned at him and withdrew her cane. Bendy smirked. Granny was the best. Jerry scowled looking from Bendy to Granny.

“Your scoffing proves my very point, Mr. Verrim. I have a few people that take magic seriously in my circle of acquaintances, and it’s thanks to them that we have gotten this far. If we invited these professionals that believe they already know all they need to know, then they would also scoff at the dangers of magic and mishandle these parts.” Dr. Oddswell narrowed his large buggy eyes. “And don’t forget, Mr. Verrim, that magic is also now part of your treatment too.”

Jerry frowned down at the Joy bracelet like it was a bothersome child.

“And as to why it doesn’t matter anyway. It’s rather simple. We won’t be building the machine. We’ll have to find it,” Dr. Oddswell said.

“Find it?” Jerry blinked. Bendy glanced at the doctor.

“Whadda ya mean find it, doc?” Finley asked. “Isn’t it ancient?”

Oddswell nodded. “It is, but what other choice do we have? None of us has the knowledge or blueprints for the original ink machine. It’s a culmination of magic and machinery beyond anything we are capable of today. Our only hope is to find it and repair it.” Bendy’s shoulders drooped. He was right. They didn’t have any of the plans for it except that cussing list of the parts. They’d have to figure out how to fit the magical parts back in. But first, they’d have to find it. Bendy just prayed that the thing was still mostly in one piece.

“But magic is dangerous! And if it is so far out of our reach, how can you trust it to a wolf kid and a demon!” Jerry demanded. “Have they ever seen the inside of a classroom before! Do they have the right training?”

“Hey!” Finley barked. Sammy was stopping him from getting up with a hand on the fox’s shoulder. Mugs and Cup didn’t seem very far from deck the scum either.

Ouch!” Jerry jumped up and glared at Granny. “What! I can’t be the only one here that thinks that! It’s insane!”

“These boys have risked life and limb to get those parts and make the cure to save us Jerry! I expect you to only address these young men with the highest of respect!” Granny snapped.

Jerry scowled. “But he’s a--”

“He’s a hero,” Red spoke up. “Even if he’s a demon. He sure has done more than you ever had.
Even Finley and Sammy help out around here.”

“And what have you done but laze about and complain!” Granny snapped.

Jerry jerked his chin up. He looked between Red and Granny. “I didn’t realize you needed help with the...domestic work. I had thought you were both very capable.” He sighed. Hold the phone. Had he just said what Bendy thought he did? From Red’s glare, Bendy couldn’t be wrong. “I’ll talk to you more about this later, doctor.” Jerry grabbed his plate and left.

There was a beat of heavy silence at the table. Cup finally broke it. “What was that scum’s cussing problem?”

“He’s a bigoted, entitled, sleazy little--”

“Ms. Hood.” Dr. Oddswell’s voice held a warning.

“He just insulted all of Mrs. Gopher’s and my work as—as women’s work and then practically said we couldn’t even do that!” Red snapped. The doctor gave her a stern look.

She scowled but fell quiet. Oddswell looked to Cuphead next. “Mr. Verrim is used to a certain lifestyle and with it a certain rather...narrow mindset. I apologize for any offense.”

“Don’t doc.” Bendy sighed. “You didn’t do anything except let him in. You can’t control what will come outta his mouth.”

“Yeah, it’s fine. Bendy and I have dealt with worse,” Boris assured him. “Do you really think Bendy and I will be able to fix the machine?”

Oddswell smiled. “There isn’t a doubt in my mind.”

“Still, I’d like to give that bozo a piece of my mind.” Finley flashed his fangs.

“Don’t Fin. He’s not worth it,” Sammy pleaded.

“Then how about pranking him?” Mugs suggested. A number of smiles spread across the dining room table.
Chapter Summary

"Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, welcome to another chapter of Inky Mystery!" Mic announced. "This week Bendy as a lot to learn after returning to Toon Town. Will he finally get the break he needs? Read and find out!"

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone.
S...sorry it's so late. M and I had a super busy weekend. A spook-tacular family reunions, b-days for sibs, driving, cleaning, moving, and so on. Wowee. It was fun but boy are we tired. Heh.

Next weekend will be just as nuts. It's my boos family trip. We are going to go on a killer camping trip! ^w^

Thank you for being so patient with us! We hope you enjoy this chapter!

“Bendy.”

Bendy looked over to Dr. Oddswell in the doorway. He put down the rune book that Felix was teaching them from. “Yeah?”

“Sorry to interrupt, but may I steal you for a quick check up?” Oddswell asked. Bendy glanced back at Boris and Felix.

Felix nodded. Boris’ ears fell. “Do you want me to come too?”

“Nah, it’s fine bro.” Bendy stood up and followed the lizard out the room. “Be back in a bit,” he tossed over his shoulder before heading down the hall and stairs to Oddswell’s study.

The day would be rather calm and relaxing, if not for the air of depression that hung in the halls like a shroud. Mourners and supporters were still dropping by, and every once in a while, a journalist or reporter. But Xedo did an excellent job managing them. It was nice to have the fox brothers visiting again, regardless Cup’s grumbling. The news had linked Snow to the Bbros. Bendy was sure there was a buzz about them and Felix now too. He was also certain that in the coming days there would be a lot of speculation about Cup and Mugs because of the ‘hero cup’ thing and their spot in the funeral shot. Oh well. They were all keeping low profiles now while Xedo did his best to shut down any wild rumors.

And since they couldn’t go out for fun at the moment and the house was so deary this morning, that meant they had to find a way to entertain themselves. The slew of pranks that had bombarded Jerry
had been the perfect antidote for the low spirits of the house guests.

It had started with a roach in his drawers and escalated to the bleach in his shampoo that turned his hair white. Then at breakfast, everyone went quiet when he entered the room. He was so unnerved by it that he didn’t even notice that they were staring at his hair. Then, he asked if they were talking about him, and Cup denied it in that overly charming persona of his that bled false assurances. Finley and the Warners were having a hard time not laughing.

Mugs had been the one that had finally cracked the man. He got himself some coffee and asked for them to pass him the sugar. Mugs did. Jerry used two large spoon fulls and stirred it in. Then, when he went to drink it, he spat out over the table.

He had been furious. He’d accused Mugs of tampering with his drink. Mugs had picked up the sugar bowl, and in the most innocent voice, exclaimed it was salt. He then apologized, claiming to have ‘no idea how that had happened’. Jerry had charged out with a coat and an excuse to see his wife. It was a great way to start the day, even if Bendy had to exercise and couldn’t best Cup in an even fight.

Oddswell, opening the door, brought Bendy back to the present. When Bendy entered, the doc closed the door behind them. They weren’t alone though. Dr. Scratchensniff was sitting in one of the two chairs opposite the doc’s seat. Bendy paused. What was he doing here?

“Take a seat Bendy,” the doctor said as he circled the table and sat behind the desk. “I have your record here. After conversing with young Mr. Boris, I have grown concerned.” Bendy frowned and fell into the last open chair next to the Warner’s guardian. “It seems your condition is worsening. Knowing what you are dealing with, I’m surprised you appear so stable.”


“Consider, Bendy. Blue Fairy, Snow White, and Sneezy all passed away due to emotional or physical stress. These are phenomenon you are dealing with at an alarmingly increasing rate. You are constantly straining your body with wounds and exertion. You are not sleeping. It’s a miracle you are still here after the attack I just witnessed, let alone still running around as you have been in the morning.” Bendy shifted. It...had been intense compared to other times. Both the last one and the one in Heela City. “Added to the emotional strain you’ve been under with the machine, Mickey’s rescue, and your apprenticeship to Mr. Hat, and I’m amazed you aren’t bedridden from just that.”

Bendy frowned. He had always dealt with schmucks similar to Hat. Bendy had also worked to get what he wanted. Sure, the stakes were higher than whether or not they’d have dinner that evening, but he’s been managing. “What’s your point, doc?” It wasn’t like it was news to him.

The reptile raised his scaly brows, and his wide mouth turned into a grim frown. “I’m saying, at this rate, you won’t live to see the end of the month.”

Bendy’s eyes widened. He wished he could say the doc was kidding, but Bendy knew better. Not even a month left? But they still needed two more parts, at least, and then finding and fixing that machine too! That wasn’t enough time!

“Thus, I am assigning you to have meetings with Dr. Scratchensniff here. He is a professional psychiatrist who has worked with some of the most well known people in this world. Daffy Duck, Ludwig Von Drake, and Princess Cinderella, just to name a few. I want you to meet with him twice a week while you are here.”

“What?” Bendy blinked and glanced at the bald man. “Woah, wait. How is that supposed to help?”
“I understand your hesitation, Mr. Bbro, but I can assure you ve only have da bes’ intentions,” Scratchensniff said. “You are under a lot ov mental stren’ and it vill only kill you faster unless ve take action.”

“Seriously? I’m so busy already! And I don’t have issues!” Bendy said. “It was just the blood loss. I’m already better.” He went to stand.

Dr. Oddswell narrowed his buggy eyes. “Bendy. You don’t understand. This is me compromising for you.” Bendy blinked in confusion. “If I am being completely truthful, you shouldn’t be allowed to continue on anymore quests. I should forbid this training so you cease exerting yourself so much. No more injuries, no more powers.” Bendy raised a hand to argue. “And don’t think for an instant I don’t know you are using your demon powers despite my warnings!” He pointed one of his bulbous fingertips at Bendy. Bendy lowered his hand dejectedly. “I would have you at this house where I can monitor you. You are worse than Blue Fairy was, and yet you got through it! It’s the closest thing to a miracle I’ve seen. But spirit and determination will only sustain you for so long. Something must change Bendy.”

Bendy stared at the doctor. He wasn’t joking. Not at all. He was that bad? The doctor didn’t even want him leaving the house? He wasn’t really going to do that, right? Bendy had to go. He had to get the parts. It was the only way. “You wouldn’t! You can’t! I can walk out if I want!”

Oddswell scowled. “I very well can. Remember, this is my house and you are a subject, not a patient. The rules are different.” Bendy bristled. He was mad if he thought Bendy was just going to roll over and be okay with staying!

Oddswell sighed. His glare softened. “And yet, if I did those things you would be emotionally compromised. You’d worry about your brother and the others until that killed you instead. It would throw you into a positive feedback loop of anxiety until finally there would be nothing left for us to do.” The doctor rubbed his snout. “There really is no helping this, Bendy. So, please meet with the good doctor here. It’s the best I can do for your situation.”

Bendy frowned. “I don’t really know how a shrink is supposed to help.” He was doing fine emotionally. He wasn’t a nutcase either. Wakko seeing Angelo was proof enough of that. Why did he need a head doc?

“When vas da last time you have slept t’rough da night?” Dr. Scratchensniff asked.

“What does that have to do with anything?” Bendy stopped and looked at the thick lens of the doctor’s glasses.

“Too little or too much sleep are da tell-tell zigns of problems. Emotional, mental, and so on,” the man said. “You are not vell, Mr. Bbro.”

“So, you’re saying I need a shrink or I die?” Bendy said deadpanned. “And I’m supposed to what? Tell you all my feelings? Maybe cry a little? And somehow that will let me live longer?” Wow, he was able to say it so calmly when his heart was racing.

“I vill help you discover new vays to manage your schtrez,” Scartchensniff responded simply.

“Bendy, as your doctor this is the best option I can offer. The doctor has agreed to have sessions with anyone in the house without any concern about payment. You all have faced traumatizing events these past few months. It’s not good to ignore it and pretend to be okay. You will only walk yourself to an early grave,” Dr. Oddswell said. “And I’d rather the next funeral I attend not be yours, Bendy.”
Bendy grit his teeth. Unwillingly, his mind went to Cuphead, tear-stained and hopeless in that back alley. Holly, limp, pale, and dead-eyed after waking up in the hospital. Mickey, now lame without any sure promise of getting his life straightened out after losing his leg. Boris slipping into his bed and hugging him while he shivered and whimpered, unwilling to tell him what his nightmare was about. “Fine,” Bendy relented. Just another thing he had to do. Stars, going after the parts was starting to become a vacation. “If that’s it, are we done here? I have to get back to my studies. Then, we are taking the part to that place.”

Bendy stood to go.

“Just one more thing, Bendy,” Oddswell said. “Why are you limping?”

Bendy paused at the door. “Just pulled a muscle on our last mission. I’m fine.”

“Quite. If it doesn’t get better, ask Ms. Hood for some muscle relaxants,” the doctor said.

“I am hoping we start tomorrow around lunch,” Scratchensniff said. Bendy waved and went out the door. Whelp, he couldn’t keep limping around if Oddswell noticed. He didn’t really want to go to the hospital. Telling Red was out, because that would get back to Oddswell, and he would know that Bendy had lied. So...what the hell was he going to do? Maybe Hat would heal him? He had done that before. Maybe Bendy could heal himself? He had Hat’s power supposedly. But he had no idea what to do with it. Then again, Oddswell had told him no powers.

He sighed. Guess he was limping to the observatory then. They’d lock the brush up next to that damn cog and the doll.

Hold the phone. The doll. Bendy smirked. There was an idea. Before returning to Felix and Boris, Bendy asked Granny for a sewing needle and some thread. She was glad to help. Bendy put the needle and spool in his vest pocket and went back to Felix. The rest of the lesson was interesting. It was on different forms of energy conversions that different runes could do and their effects on different circles and spells.

After that Bendy, Boris, and Felix went to lock up the brush. Bendy was grateful that the brush didn’t seem malicious, like the other two. They walked into the decrepit building. It wasn’t much different from the last time Bendy had seen it. There were a few burn marks in the walls from when Cuphead and Mugman had attacked. Paper scraps, dust, dirt, and abandoned furniture. Felix led them down a spiral of stairs into the basement. Darkness closed in around them, the air became stale. Felix stopped at a few doorways and touched the symbols on the side. They glowed and then dimmed. He opened the doors and led them further in.

They finally got to a room that had a table and a safe on it. Felix unlocked the safe. The cog sat against one side, the doll leaning against it like the back of a chair. Bendy reached in and took the doll out. He was careful not to touch the cog, regardless if it was still an issue or not.

“Bendy?”

“Just give me a minute,” Bendy said. Felix furrowed his brow. Bendy sat down and looked over his mini. The doll’s stitched mouth was in a rare frown, maybe even a scowl. It looked rough. Scuffs all over, the clothes were rumpled, and there was a tear in the leg. Bendy pulled out the needle and thread. He struggled to get the thread through the eye of the needle.

“What are you doing Bendy?” Felix asked.

“Trying something,” Bendy stated. He finally got the stupid thread through and then turned his focus
on the doll.

“Oh. You fixin’ something?” Boris asked.

Bendy frowned in concentration. “Yeah bro,” Bendy promised. He lifted the doll and pinched the seams of the hole together. His leg stung, and he jumped in surprise. Right. He forgot it did that. It was fine though. He readied the needle, doing his best to not think about what he was doing. He inserted the needle and waited for the pain. There was a small prickle in his leg but not as bad as the pinch.

“Bendy,” Felix voice was full of warning.

Bendy glanced up, then back down as he pulled the thread through and pinched again to continue. “Trust me, Felix. This is what this cussing thing is for.”


Boris tilted his head. “You mean the heal-whatever the page said?”

Bendy nodded as he pulled the thread through again. It didn’t hurt, just tingled. The pinching was the only thing that hurt. “I may have messed up the stitches, but I don’t think we have to worry about it.”

“What! Bendy! Why didn’t you tell us? Let me see!” Felix frowned and moved in front of Bendy.

“Wait, let me finish this first.” Bendy fumbled but caught the needle before it pulled off the line of thread. It did yank the seam, and he flinched at the pull. Felix froze.

“Sorry,” Felix said. “Please let me check though.”

“Alright.” Bendy put the doll down on the table, not lifting his hand from it. This thing liked to move too much to be trusted. Felix untucked his pants’ leg and revealed the blood stained bandages.

“Bendy,” Boris whined. “Why didn’t you say anything?”

Bendy shrugged again. “Just found out today?”

“Liar.” Boris frowned. Bendy smiled sheepishly. Felix worked on unwrapping the bandages. Bendy picked up the doll and needle again. He didn’t add another stitch though, curious to see what his leg wound looked like. From the three stitches he’d added, the hole was already half closed. The last of the bandage was pulled away. Bendy stared at the wound, as did Felix and Boris.

“You ripped out two stitches,” Felix said. “But…”

“It’s smaller, right?” Boris leaned closer. “It looks smaller.”

Bendy pursed his lips. It did. Curiously Bendy added another stitch, watching the wound. It seemed to just…fuse.

“By the sun and moon,” Felix said in awe. Bendy went to finish fixing the doll. As soon as the stitch was done, and he tied the knot, his wound was gone.

Boris muttered. “How does your leg feel, Bendy?”

“A little tingly but a lot better.” Bendy bent his knee and straightened it. He stood up. “It’s like it never happened.”
Felix looked from Bendy to the doll. “Why is it frowning?”

“Dunno.” Bendy looked at it. “But it’s still gives me the creeps.” Felix hummed. They locked all the parts away and returned to the house after that. Bendy then finished up his paper on the levels of hell and the homework sheets on demon script. Runes were complicated. Demon script was just backwards but easy enough to get once he figured it out.

He’d have to call Hat or go to the cussing casino.

He was calling. He already had to go out in the snow twice today. He picked up the phone and dialed the gambling house.

“Black Hat’s Casino. How can I help you?” a male voice answered.


“Sir, Mr. Hat is very busy. You can’t just expe--”

“Tell him it’s Bendy, and see if I’m wrong,” Bendy dared. There was a long silence.

“Very well. Please hold.”

Bendy grumbled. This better be just a quick phone call. He could really go for a nap right about now.

“H-eeey.” Yakko popped up beside him. “Whadda ya doing?”

“I’m on the phone, Yakko,” Bendy grumbled.

“Yeeyeah, I see that,” Yakko said with a raised brow. “Look, bud, pal, ol’ friend, when you have a moment, we need to talk.”

Bendy frowned. “About what?”

“Oh you know, uuuuuuuuuuh, stuff and things.” Yakko grinned. Bendy gave him a deadpan look.

He was about to reply when the person of the phone picked up. “H-he’s ready to speak with you!” came a panicked squeak, and then the line went dead.

Bendy blinked and lowered the phone. That couldn’t be good. A knock came to the door. Oh. It was very not good.

“Mr. Hat! What a surprise!” Granny greeted. Yakko raised a brow. Very very not good.

Bendy hung up the phone and fought the urge to run the other way. He walked to the front room. Yakko followed curiously. The familiar chill that Bendy associated with Hat drifted into the front room from the entrance of the house.

“Yes, I heard Bendy was back and came immediately,” Hat said. “Is he here?”

“Yeah,” Bendy grumbled. Hat turned with a raised brow.

“Ah, excellent. Come fledgling, we have a lot to go over before your interview with the Upper representative,” Hat said. He looked cheerful. That was alarming.

Bendy sighed. “I have a lot to do, Hat. Can’t I just give you my homework, and we do the rest of it
later?"

Hat scowled. “No.”

Bendy frowned. “And if I say no?”

The two glared at each other.

“Uuuuuuuuuuh, what’s all this?” Yakko stepped between the two of them. “Why’s he callin’ ya a fudging?”

“Fledgling,” Hat corrected. “He is my underling, and we have a lot to prepare for before that angel shows up.”

“Preparing? We throwin’ a party?” Yakko grinned.

“What? No!” Hat scowled.

Yakko’s brows raised in confusion. “If not a party, then what? A vacation?” He gasped and wrapped an arm around Bendy’s shoulders. “We can come, right? We haven’t really been able to do much with that depressing funeral and all. Please! Can we come?”

Hat scowled. “No! We are going to hell so I can go over some important--”

“Oh hell! I’ve seen that place! Did you fellas ever take care of that rotting egg smell?” Yakko looked back at Hat.

“It’s sulfur and no!” Hat snapped.

“Uh. Too bad. We’ll bring some air fresheners.” Yakko shrugged.

“Yakko, we’re not--”

“I’ll go get Wakko and Dot. Don’t you two move,” Yakko said and zoomed off.

“Let’s go before he returns,” Hat growled and grabbed Bendy’s arm. Bendy didn’t resist as Hat turned to the door.

“Oh, it doesn’t matter. If they want to come, you won’t be able to stop them,” Bendy stated with a smirk.

“And why’s that?” Hat sneered at him. Granny frowned from the front room.

“It’s because we’re zany,” Dot said from her seat on Hat’s shoulder.

“Wha!” Hat swung his arm, but the girl was gone.

“Possibly even the zaniest,” Wakko said next to him. Hat jumped. Bendy chuckled. Okay, so they were a little funny when they weren’t messing with him.

“Imptails!” Hat growled. “You are not coming. We have serious work to deal with.”

“We’ll stay out of the way!” Dot promised.

“Yeah, we’ll be good.” Yakko smirked. Bendy snorted. Yeah right.

Hat opened his mouth, closed it, and looked at Bendy. He gazed back at the older demon with raised
brows. What?

Hat straightened up and let Bendy go. “Very well, but annoy me or get in my way, and you will be tossed to the deepest level of hell. Understand?”

“Ohay!” the three sang out. Wait, what!

“Wonderful, let’s go.” Hat opened the door and black and green flames appeared on the other side of the front door.

Bendy took a step back. “Woah, woah Hat! Think this through! I haven’t agreed to go yet! I still—”

“C’mon! This will be fun!” Wakko and Yakko shoved him.

“We’ll be back for dinner!” Dot told Granny. Bendy didn’t really get the chance to protest. The Warners had forced him into the fire portal thing.

Bendy was ready to see the huge cavern and the rocky walls. That was not what greeted him. It was a lavish lobby. For a second, Bendy thought he was in the casino. But then looking around more closely, he realized it couldn’t be. The...people. They weren’t like anything he’d seen before. Horns and spikes, eyes and wings, all shapes and sizes. And the chilling cold that hung in the stale air was distracting. Magic and darkness and hunger. Bendy blinked. This was hell? They were all demons?

Beings over twelve feet tall, creatures with fur or scales or slime. There was one that had eight limbs and six eyes and four bat wings covered in strips, wearing a cocktail dress.

A demon smaller than Bendy ran up to Hat. “Master Hat! Welcome back! W-we weren’t expecting you,” he said.

Hat hummed without looking down at the demon. He was hunched over and was skinny to the point it looking like a breeze would be too much for him. His spiked tail was zig-zagged and looked like it might have been broken. His two almond shaped eyes were wide and shifty. The small horns on his head curved back slightly. His suit seemed to almost devour him. “We will be in my office, Agitate. I don’t want interruptions.”

“Yes sir.” Agitate bowed his head. Hat walked down the hall. Bendy stuck close. Not only was he surrounded by demons. They were staring at them.

“You didn’t say it was a ritzy place!” Dot gasped. She spun and was suddenly a glittery flapper dress and headband.

“We won’t be seeing others beyond this today, so it hardly matters,” Hat muttered as he continued walking.

“Ah, that’s no fun! You should let Bendy and me go dance! You **have** to have a dance floor around here. Uh, Uncle Hat?” Dot asked.

Hat froze and gave her a look of horrified disgust. “Uncle! Uncle! What in the seven levels of hell gives you the idea of our relations?”

Dot blinked, smile falling and eyes widening. “Well, you adopted Bendy, and I’m gonna marry him someday, so we are all one big happy family!” She grinned. “I look forward to calling you dad.”

Bendy’s jaw dropped. Hat’s did too.
“Bendy is this true?” Hat demanded.

“What!” Bendy jumped, throwing his arms up defensively. “Hell no! A million times no!” Dot threw herself at him, but he was ready. He held her back.

“Oh c’mon, Bendy! You know you adore me,” Dot cooed.

“And he didn’t adopt me. Stars guys,” Bendy groaned.

“But uuuuuuuuh, he sure bosses you around like a grumpy parent,” Yakko said. Hat scowled.

“Yeah, well, he isn’t.” Bendy tossed Dot away. Hat reached an elevator and pushed the button.

“So, what do you even do in hell, Hatty?” Yakko asked.

“Don’t call me that.” Hat sneered at the oldest Warner. “And I invest in a number of business on my territory. This resort is rather successful, along with some farmland on a different level, a few stores, a dance club, a couple restaurants, and so on.”

“Sounds boring,” Wakko said.

“I can toss you three outside and let the commoners rip you to shreds,” Hat suggested hopefully.

“Hat,” Bendy warned with a scowl. Hat scoffed as the elevator doors dinged and opened. A couple demons came out. One was in a suit with a wide brim hat and a grin that was disturbingly huge with rows of fangs. There was a couple in somewhat ratty clothes with holes and blood stains in them. The woman had two tails and three arms. The fella had long claws and a gas mask on. Bendy blinked at them. They stared at him and Hat in return as they passed. The woman leaned over to the man and whispered something to him. Hat ushered them into the empty elevator. Bendy turned to see the rows of buttons on the wall. Holy cuss, how big was this place? How many floors was that?

Hat hit one at the top. The Warners eyes lit up at the sight of the buttons. Hat put his hands behind his back. “Hit a single button, and I will personally escort you to my pet to be devoured in the basement.”

“Oh! A pet! Does it play fetch?” Dot asked. “Would it like a play date with mine?”

“Only with bones and severed limbs.” Hat smirked.

“Aw, how cute.” Dot grinned. Bendy frowned. They were all insane. All of them. He was the only sane one here. Cuss.

It seemed to take forever for them to reach the floor that Hat had his office on. They stepped out, and Bendy wasn’t surprised to see the hall carpeted and in similar taste to Hat’s office in the casino. There were items on pedestals lining the hall under paintings. Many of the paintings were of Hat from different eras and styles. The items were from rich jewels and treasure to random half destroyed junk.

A half melted helmet, a jeweled necklace, a vase with a war scene painted on it in dark shades, a stick with a couple leaves on it and so on.

“Don’t touch anything,” Hat warned. The Warners eyed the random items with mischief in their eyes. “Half of them are cursed anyway. Horrible death really, but if you must.” Hat waved a dismissive hand. Bendy could see the excited gleam as the three shared a look.
Guys,” Bendy got their attention. He shook his head. “Not this time.” The Warners pouted but all three nodded. Thank the stars. Bendy kept an eye on them anyway as they walked down the hallway. A floor to ceiling window showed the view. Bendy paused to look outside. It was the biggest city Bendy had ever seen. Tall buildings as far as the eye could see. Walls and pillars of the cave were carved into buildings and walkways. Roofs were gardens and seating areas for possible restaurants. Demons of several sizes were flying here and there. Some were walking around long bridges that connected buildings and walls, and pillars. Some were huge and wide for large creatures, others looked like they were as thin as ropes. Some were wooden, others seemed to be carved from the cave stones and others looked like they were made of bricks. Demons of every shape and size were going this way or that. There also seemed to be smoke or some sort of haze on the ceiling of the cave that Bendy could make out.

It was crowded and busy. And looking at all the different types of demons, although Bendy hated to admit it, they looked disturbing. They were grotesque and twisted creatures, beings that looked like a mockery of the creatures or people they resembled on the Surface. If they even resembled anything familiar. He could see why people shuddered at the thought of demons.

As for Bendy, he refrained from passing judgement. He would rather see what the people were like than what they looked like. Hat wasn’t a shining example. He hoped there were others.

“We have to use every available space.” Hat’s voice next to him made Bendy jump. He looked up at the older demon. Hat was looking out over the city with a frown and narrowed eye. He closed his visible eye. “Come. We are wasting time. You will get to see the city some other time.”

“Aaaw,” the Warners groaned and whined. Hat gave them an annoyed glance.

“What level are we on?” Bendy asked as he followed Hat down the hall again. Hell was divided into different levels, seven to be exact. Bendy had read about the structure that they had set up. The first was the Devil’s lair. For anyone that wanted to go to the Surface illegally, they had to cross the Devil’s lair and hope the king of hell or his followers didn’t catch them. There had been a description of his throne room and that something like small volcanos tossed out lava...or magma, since it was still underground.

The second level was dark, hot, and usually used for the trapping and torture of criminals or trespassers in hell. It was the furthest most uninvited non-demons ever get. After the reading, Bendy hadn’t been sure if it was more for show or use. He wasn’t sure he wanted to find out, either. Below that was the community levels. The third and fourth levels was where most demons lived. Bendy wondered if the whole level was just entire cities or not. If they looked like this the whole way through, no wonder there was an overcrowding problem. The fifth and sixth levels were for farming near rivers of magma that helped enrich the soil to grow food. There was also food storage, but there was a struggle with the mole people and beastly demons that would attack. In the places that didn’t have magma or farmland, there were the lower demons that couldn’t afford to live in the third or fourth levels for whatever reasons. They also had to deal with attacks from beastly demons and mole people.

Then, there was the seventh level. Dark and dangerous. There hadn’t been a lot of information on the seventh level of hell. Just that traitors and criminals would be tossed down there and never heard from again.

“This is the third,” Hat said as he opened the door. There was an office behind it. It was similar to the one on the Surface, but it was far grander. Beside a painting of Hat behind his chair, there was another wide window with rich curtains. The items on the pedestals were just as odd. A box with a button on it. An orb. A small box covered in jewels that shook slightly. The paintings on the walls
They also weren’t of Black Hat. There were three large paintings, depictions of hell and demons, the Surface and the people there, and Bendy figured the Upper and angels. Each one on the three walls, the Upper being over the doorway. Between the larger paintings of the three landscapes were paintings of battles and fights. Bendy gulped, his eyes landing on an image of an angel stabbing a demon with a spear. He looked away and focused on Hat. He went behind his desk and pulled a key out of his coat pocket to unlock a drawer.

“Oooooh! A secret drawer!” Wakko exclaimed. He raced around Bendy, hopped over the dark wood desk, and plopped onto the high backed chair with a bounce. He grabbed his feet and grinned in Hat’s chair. “Is it a candy drawer?”

Hat glanced at him with an alarmed scowl. “What? No you imbecile! It’s not a-- get out of my chair!”

Bendy smirked.

“No need to be so grumpy,” Dot said from her perch upon the desk just over the drawer that Hat had unlocked. “You need a night out on the town! Let’s go shopping!”

“No you little pest!” Hat snapped at her and opened the drawer.

“Oh, c’mon! A dance club with my Bendy-boo sounds like so much fun! A real razzle dazzle!” She lifted her arms and gave the demon jazz hands.

“Watching you three be ripped to shreds is what sounds like fun,” Hat muttered as he riffled through papers and folders. Bendy approached the desk, leaving Yakko to stare at the images alone.

“Alright, everyone calm down,” Bendy said. He didn’t need Hat and the Warners going at it. This city may end up flattened if that happened. “Leave ‘im alone. Sooner we’re done here, sooner we can go back.”

“Boo.” Dot pouted and crossed her arms. “I wanted to take my pet on a walk.”

“The one inside the box?” Bendy asked with a raised brow.

“Yes.” Dot smiled and lifted her chin.

“Not today Dot.” Bendy shook his head. Cup had warned him, and Bendy remembered tentacles. He didn’t want to know what the full creature looked like. He had a feeling it could give the demons here a run for their money.

“Ah! Here it is!” Hat lifted a thick envelope. He stepped over to the seat and shooed Wakko away. He also waved Bendy to come up to the desk. Hat sat down and opened the envelope. He also pulled out a file and opened that. There was a picture of Bendy that he didn’t remember being taken pinned to one corner. It looked like it had been in Dr. Flug’s lab. “I had to give you a history and a couple of false witnesses for your time spent down here. The Devil is so busy that he’ll sign it without looking, so we don’t have to worry there. The angels won’t care as long as you haven’t killed anyone on the Surface, which you haven’t.”

Hat glanced up at him with raised brows. His monocle flashed in the room’s light. “Correct?”

Bendy scowled and crossed his arms. “You’re kidding, right? Of course I haven’t!”
Hat rolled his eyes but nodded. “That will be easy enough. It’ll be your appearances in the news and that former rumor of you being a murderer that will be tricky.”

“But I was clear of those charges.” Bendy frowned. “Plus I didn’t do it!”

“Oh, I know,” Hat chuckled. “But angels hardly care what the Surface court has to say. It’ll be the angel judging you this time. Luckily for you, they are great at digging up the cussing truth, so that won’t be the problem if it comes up at all. It’ll be explaining why you are on the Surface as a rogue so much too.”

“Uuuuh.” Bendy raised a brow.

“You spend much of your time with anyone specific?” Black Hat glanced up at him after moving some papers around.


“Oh. The wolf puppy. Right. Well…” Hat hummed thinking. Bendy didn’t like the idea of dragging Boris into any of this demon nonsense. “He summoned you.”

“What!” Bendy exclaimed. “Hell no!”

“Yes, he summoned you and has a contract with you. That is how you are running around the Surface without the proper papers. The angel won’t be happy about it, but you’ll avoid the whole angels-kill-rogue-demons issue since contracts are still a grey area for them.” Hat smirked.

“Yeah? And what about Boris? Do I need to worry about angels going after him if you cussing write that down?” Bendy scowled.

“No, no, at that point, you practically own him. They can’t do a thing about it and won’t. That was part of the Surface agreement with the Devil they worked out.” Hat waved him off as he scribbled away with a quill. Bendy frowned. He didn’t like it. Witches and others that made deals with demons used to be burned for it...Sure, it was by other Surface dwellers and not angels, but any thought of Boris being put in trouble or danger because of him made him feel nauseous. It was already too much that he had been kidnapped not once, but twice thanks to the starfallen parts.

“Is there another way around me being on the Surface?” Bendy asked.

“That doesn’t involve you being arrested and taken to the Upper?” Hat gave him a deadpanned glance. “No. Not with you applying for a Surface pass. Sure, every demon sneaks up to the Surface once in a while, but most don’t end up in the cussing news.” Hat smirked.

Bendy glared. It wasn’t his fault, dammit! Hat continued. “You want to learn more about Surface business and trade under my guidance. Be prepared to answer questions about Surface and the treaty laws. You have those memorized, correct?”

“They were mostly common cussing sense,” Bendy grumbled and glanced down at the rich, plush rug.

“Good. And since it’s one of those featherbrains, use those manners you have.” Hat sighed.

“When is the meeting?” Bendy asked.

“Next week,” Hat stated. “We need you to have your background history down to a T, and there is a
party that Lady Nightwing is throwing in a few days. You and I will be attending so I can introduce you as my fledgling to a number of the higher demons, and you can get to know the fellow demons that you’ll be working around.” He sneered. “You could even make a friend while you’re there. I hope you have been reading the etiquette book.”

“Well yeah, but some of it was in demon script, and I’m not quite--”

“Excellent.” Hat snapped the folder close. Bendy scowled. This guy had a hard time listening to others. “Now, your false history is simple enough. You were born in the fourth level. Your parents were killed in a cave in, really common those, and you worked on one of my farmlands. You were summoned by the wolf and made a deal with him that demanded you stay on the Surface. When you became a fledgling, you sent in a request for a master. Since you worked on my land, I saw it first. I met with you and found promise. I decided to take you on as my underling and have been impressed enough with your work ethic that I am requesting for you to learn Surface trade. Good? I already have a couple witnesses reports to your ‘parents’ deaths and to you working on the farm.” Hat smiled, pleased with himself.

“A damn farmer? Do I look like I can cussing farm, Hat?” Bendy argued. If he could, he wouldn’t have starved so much. Hat frowned in annoyance. “Make me a street rat.”

“What?” Hat raised his brows in surprise.

“I was homeless and penniless on the streets. I stole for food. I was in trouble and had to go to the more dangerous lower levels. I was caught on your stupid farm, and instead of killing me, you hired me because I’m cussing clever enough to get past your starfallen security. Then, we toss in the damn summons and the fledgling stardust.” Bendy crossed his arms. “That’s way more believable and has some more truth to it. Change the ‘witness’ of my parents death to another worker that spotted me in your damn fields or something.”

Hat gazed at him for a long moment.

“What?” Bendy glared back defensively. Was it a dumb idea? It sounded better than having him always working for the schmuck as a sunblazing farmer.

Hat smirked. “Nothing.” He reopened the folder and wrote a few things down, crossed a few things off and ripped a page out before balling it up and tossing it away.

“Well then. I just need your signature on a couple of things, and we can call it good for today,” Hat said with a smile. It wasn’t a sneer or a smirk or anything cruel looking. Hell, he even looked a touch...proud? Somehow, that was more disturbing.

“Depends on what you’re having me sign,” Bendy grumbled and leaned forward.

“Just the request for a Surface pass approval from the Devil. Easy enough. No magic involved.” Hat pushed the papers from the envelope to Bendy and offered the quill. “So, you don’t have to cling to it for a week,” Hat mocked.

Bendy paid him an annoyed glance before looking over the documents. It did just look like a simple request form. Hat had already filled everything in for him. Bendy signed and passed it back.

“Wonderful.” Hat took the papers back. “Now, just one more thing.” Hat stood up and put all the documents back in the drawer before locking it. “Your report. Tell me about your training. How are the Cup brothers handling you? Oh and your assignments. Just put them in the mailbox with the address here.” Hat reached into his pocket and handed it to Bendy. He didn’t bother to look, just
stuffed it in his vest pocket.

“Well, actually, I have a few questions.” Bendy glanced up at him. “I used the shadows and got light headed. I passed out.” Bendy leaned back and crossed his arms. “I mean, I had some blood loss too, but I’ve gotten worse and was able to stay standing, so what’s the deal?”

Hat’s smile fell. He gazed at Bendy like he hoped Bendy was kidding. Bendy waited for the demon to speak. Hat sighed and raised his gaze to the ceiling as if he were asking for help from a higher power. “You don’t use your powers regularly,” he stated. “Your powers help you heal. If you don’t regulate them, then you’ll throw everything you have into one thing and drop everything else. You don’t have control.” Hat frowned. “So, we’ll have to fix that.”

“I can’t! The doc said no more powers!” Bendy threw his arms out.

Black Hat scowled. “If you don’t learn how to control and regulate them, then when they fluctuate, you will have no control and be overwhelmed. You won’t be able to direct the power and--”

“And I’ll go nuts?” Bendy guessed with a raised brow. “Build pressure until I burst?”

Hat glanced at him and sighed. “At least you’ve been doing your reading.” He waved a hand. “This illness worsens when you use them?”

“I think it’s because they exhaust me.” Bendy frowned. “I over do it and push too hard.”

“Well, if you gain control, you don’t exhaust yourself. We’ll start small, but you need to learn, otherwise when your power suddenly spikes, you won’t be able to handle it,” Hat explained. “It will be simple things. Have you noticed anything else?”

“My strength? I think I’m stronger, or maybe I’m just not controlling it as well?” Bendy hesitated. He was always in control of his strength though. Ever since he got Boris, he was really careful about holding back. He didn’t want to hurt him. So in the beginning, he treated the kid like glass until he figured out how much pressure most things and people could take. He worked on it until it became automatic. He didn’t even think about it anymore. Working with mechanical parts and delicate machines in the junkyard had been good practice too. It was weird that he would suddenly slip up like he had been, even if it was on the back of those hooved nightmares.

“Why so uncertain?” Hat raised a curious brow.

Bendy jerked a shoulder in a lazy shrug. “I haven’t had to think about my strength control in a long time. It’s weird to worry about it.”

Hat hummed. “Then, at least you have that handled. The other concerns will most likely be just as basic. Shape shifting, shadow control, hunger, strength, and temperature control may get away from you at times while you have your highs and lows as a fledgling.”

“Lows? so what? You mean, I’ll also lose my strength at some point?” Bendy asked. Hat nodded.

“For a period of time. It’s all very unpredictable. Not to mention your sub-type and whatever powers come with that.” Hat waved a hand. “You haven’t shown any obvious affinity for a particular power type or traits to a subspecies yet.”

“What are the subspecies’ traits? The book you gave me didn’t mention anything specific,” Bendy asked curiously.

“Oh, obvious things really, but there are so cussing many.” Hat crossed his arms and leaned back
against his desk thoughtfully. “All demons can change their appearance, but most have a form they are most comfortable with and will return to that. Many will have hints at their subspecies that way. Others try to hide it. Some examples are wings for wind type demons. Fire type demons are notorious for short tempers and bursting into fire at random moments. Shadow demons struggle to stay solid in darker areas where they could lose their outline easily. Several elemental demons have hints of their elements like rocky scales or metal skin and so on.”

“What about you? What type of demon are you?” Bendy tilted his head curiously.

Hat smirked. “Watch carefully, and you might find out someday.”

“Does that mean only fire demons can use fire then?” Bendy shifted forward. He had never really had an interest in magic. He didn’t like how it always seemed to break the rules of nature and common sense, but thanks to Felix he had started to learn that magic had its rules too. It just took some learning and creative thinking.

“Not necessarily. With the right spells and signs, any demon can produce fire. It’s just the fire demons that can do it naturally, without any help from other sources.” Hat smirked. Bendy hummed. He wondered what he could do. He had never burst into flames, and he didn’t disappear into shadows. All his powers had been basic demon abilities so far. “We’ll figure it out. With power spikes, you’ll probably give yourself away soon enough.” Hat rolled his visible eye. “For now, like that lizard said, don’t push yourself. I’ll be annoyed to have you die after I’ve done all this paperwork.”

Bendy snorted. “You sound so concerned,” he snarked.

“Good.” Hat stood up again. “Then, I best return you to the Surface before your foolish followers panic again.”

Bendy got out of the chair and turned to leave. He and Hat froze. The paintings had all been defaced. Mustaches, glasses, silly faces, and tongues and so on. Bendy’s jaw dropped. Wow.

“Oh stars.”

“What is the seven levels of hell is this!” Hat snapped.

The answer was obvious. “The Warners,” Bendy muttered. “Where are they?”

Hat paled as he looked at the room and rushed for the door. “Follow me,” he ordered.

Bendy hesitated before rushing after him. He looked around for whatever had Hat react like that. “What! What did they do?”

“They ran off with one of my items!” Hat snapped as he raced down the hallway. He paused to check if anything was gone. Besides more additions to Hat’s paintings, the Warners didn't seem to have done much. “We have to find them before they cause trouble.”

“They’re the Warners,” Bendy said deadpanned. “They always cause trouble.”

“But this could be terrible.” Hat scowled at Bendy as he hit the button for the elevator.

“How so?” Bendy crossed his arms.
“They took the Idol of the Spirit-Switcher,” Hat said. Bendy frowned. That was one of the dumbest names he had ever heard. “I know. I think it’s ridiculous too, but that thing can exchange souls from one to another. And demons are so different from each other that something like a switch could be a big problem.”

“Because of different powers?” Bendy guessed. Hat nodded.

The elevator dinged and opened. “Luckily, it only works under very specific circumstances. So, the chances of activating it i--”

“Don’t bother. They’ll have it working.” Bendy sighed. Hat’s eyes widened. Bendy answered before he could ask. “They’re the Warners. This is how it is. Have you ever been around zanies before?” Hat scowled at him accusingly and looked away. What? What was that about?

“I thought you had more control of your followers.” Hat sneered at him. “You organized an attack on my casino, after all.”

Bendy huffed. “Yeah right. No one controls those three. We’ll get it back, and then you’ll get us home.” An attack? Oh wait. Oh yeah… “Did you ever get that chandelier back on the Surface?” Hat glared. Guess that was a no.

Hat rolled his eyes. “Don’t ask. Now, what do you plan to do to discipline them?”


“Their master, and you need to learn how to rein them in,” Hat said. “It’s unsightly.”

Bendy laughed. Him? Their master? Yeah right! That was a good one! Hat looked annoyed. “Hat, I keep telling you. They’re friends, not servants or whatever you think they are.”

“Demons don’t have friends!” Hat snapped. The elevator dinged.

“Then I’m not a demon.” Bendy pointed to himself with his thumb, unbothered at Hat’s short temper.

“Ha! They will be the death of you if this is how you handle them!” Hat’s eyes narrowed.

Bendy glared back. “I have so many other things trying to kill me that I really don’t give a cussing flying leap what you think.” The doors slid open, and the sounds of chaos and exclamations rolled in. “Well, at least we found them,” Bendy snipped before walking out.

Demons were going this way and that or just staring. Hat and Bendy pushed themselves through the crowd to find the three swinging from...the chandelier. Bendy snorted.

“What the hell is with you three and my decor!” Hat waved a fist at them. There was a couple of demons flying up to try and grab them, but the zanies weren’t troubled. All the demons seemed more troubled. Heh. Why did he find that so funny? Everyone stopped to stare at Hat.

“Oh hey! Long time no see, Hatty.” Yakko leaned back and waved from the rim of metal and glass.

“Get down this insistent!” Hat pointed to the ground.

“We’d sure love to, but after nearly being eaten twice I, uuuuuuuuuuuuh think we’re good.” Yakko shrugged.

“Yep!” Wakko added hanging underneath by his arms, legs dangling in the air.
“The view up here is so nice after all.” Dot laced her fingers behind her head. The demons around chuckled and laughed.

Bendy raised a brow and glanced around.

“He can’t manage his debtors maybe?”

“I’m surprised he hasn’t killed them yet.”

“Maybe he’ll let me eat them.”

“What the hell is Hat waiting for?”

“It’s not a request! You stole from me. Now, return it!” Hat roared. If he heard the mutterings in the crowd, he didn’t respond.

“You mean this?” Dot pulled out a rather odd looking statue. It had four large round jewels that circled the top half of the cylinder statue. There were two fixtures between a pair of the jewels that resembled the basic shape of a nose, thus giving the statue a rudimentary look of having two faces. One on either side of it. Jewels lined the top and bottom of it in patterns that made it look like it had a collar and a hat.

Several demons gasped. A few turned and left. “They stole from him!” Bendy heard. Oh man, the drama! It was like every little thing was a scandal here!


“Aaaaw, but Bendyyyyy,” all three whined.

“We wanna annoy the writer!” Wakko complained.

“What writer?” Bendy blinked.

“Don’t worry about it.” Yakko waved a hand lazily. Bendy scowled.

“Get down before you break something!” Hat demanded. “If I have to force you, things will get bloody!”

“Is that a promise!” Wakko swung back and forth causing the chandelier to swing with him, glass tingling together as they went back and forth. Other demons began to leave. Some even seemed bored.

“Can I eat them, Mr. Black Hat?” Bendy glanced back to see a demon that looked like a cross between a prey mantis and a cougar. A cat-like face with huge buggy eyes and giant insect claws. Bendy fought back a shiver. Creepy didn’t even cover it.

“Shut it!” Hat snapped. “And you three! Stop that!” Hat lifted a hand. A shadowy claw formed and stretched up to grab the edge of the metal frame carefully.

“That’s not a no!” the other demon cackled and leaped up.

“No, you idiot dirt stain!” Hat snarled. Dot squeaked in surprise as the demon’s weight caused the chandelier to bounce.

Hat threw out a second claw to grab the demon. There was a pop, and sparks went flying. The lights began to flicker.
“Ew! Go away!” Dot pulled a face and bounced back. The chandelier dropped a few inches. Bendy tensed, not really sure what he could do in the situation.

“Hey! Leave her alone!” Bendy shouted. The demon tried to swipe at the girl. She twirled away.

“Hey now, that’s my sister!” Yakko said.

“Yeah, claws are cheatin’!” Wakko added. Hat managed to grab the demon’s head and the chandelier.

“Stop moving imbeciles! You’re going to--Agh!” There was a flash. Electricity buzzed. Dot and the boys suddenly went stiff. The statue glowed, and a bright blue light filled Bendy’s vision until that was all he could see.
Bendy Hates This

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

“Oh my. Ladies and gentlemen.” Mic bit his lip. “Today promises to be an ever interesting day indeed. Golly! You’ll just have to read it for yourself. Will they get the statue back in time? Let’s find out!”

Chapter Notes

Hello fantastic readers! What a week! I am swamped and I just got back to internet civilization after camping for half the week with boo’s family. They were great. But I want to go shower and get the last of my school stuff done so I can be free. Free as a spirit! XD Sorry if I haven’t gotten around to comments or questions guys. It’s been nuts. I’ll catch up after school ends for me. Thank you for your patience and enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Bendy groaned and shook his head. Man, what a headache! Cussing light had blinded him. He went to rub his eyes and nearly dropped something. He scrambled to catch it. What the hell? When had he been holding something? He blinked his eyes. The ground swayed, and he shifted to save himself from falling. What was going on?

He looked around with blurry eyes. Light? “Wha!” he shrieked and jumped back. There was a giant shadowy claw in front of him. It disappeared to reveal the disgruntled demon mantis thing underneath.

The demon hissed. “No snack is worth this!” he barked “Might as well get something though.” The thing snatched what Bendy had been holding and dove off the chandelier.

“H-hey!” Bendy barked and stopped. Was that his voice? He didn’t have time to feel confused. Sadly, that last jolt was enough for the glass and lights to fall. Bendy gasped as he tumbled to the ground. He tensed, ready for the pain. But it didn’t come, or at least, not like he expected. He hit the pile of metal and glass as they shattered and bounced back and rolled. He barely felt it. He hit the wall and stopped. The crash and tinkling of glass was deafening in the large room. Bendy stared at the mess with wide eyes.

Everything looked a little weird too. What was going on? It was like everything was far away? No, more like everything seemed flat.

“Damnit!” Yakko suddenly popped out of the mess. “That’s the second one! You cussing meatbags are going to pay!” Yakko roared.

Wakko jumped up and gasped. “Yakko! You cursed! That’s rare.”
“What the hell are you talking about? How did I--” Yakko’s scowl fell, and he looked down at himself in horror before sighing in defeat. He smacked himself in the face before dragging it down. “Imptails!”

He looked around before spotted Bendy. “You!” he barked. “Where’s the statue you stole from me?”

Bendy sat up and furrowed his brows. Uh? “I didn’t steal any…” He smacked his hand over his mouth. That wasn’t his voice. It was too high pitched. Too soft. It was a voice he recognized though. Bendy looked down at himself. His jaw dropped. To his horror, it actually drop to the floor. He gasped and jumped, his mouth spinning before snapping shut. He gingerly lifted his hands to his face. He wasn’t in his clothes anymore. He was in a flowing skirt. His tail wasn’t spiked but soft and cat-like. He didn’t have boots but bare white paws attached to his black furry body. The problem was, it wasn’t his body. “What the hell! Why am I in a skirt!”

Yakko paused with a finger raised before he dropped it. “You’re not the young female, are you?”

“Oh gee! Ya think!” Bendy snapped and jumped up. “It’s me! Bendy!”

Wakko furrowed his brows. “Are you two okay?”

“NO!” Yakko and Bendy snapped.

Yakko sighed. “And I am Black Hat. We were switched, which is exactly why I did not want you touching it!” Hat snapped at Wakko.

“Oh wow.” Wakko chuckled. “You’re Hat, and you’re Bendy?” Wakko pointed at one and then the other. Bendy scowled. Oh. He didn’t like this at all.

“Yes, well, this will be an easy enough fix. The little female was the last one that had the idol. We simply need to reverse the process.” Yakko straightened up with a frown on his face and turned to Bendy. “So, where is it?”

“I don’t know,” Bendy admitted sheepishly. “I think that one guy ran off with it. That bug-cat thing.”

“He what!” Yakko literally blew up. Like a mini bomb. Bendy’s eyes widened.

“Careful there, brother.” Wakko smirked. Bendy blinked at the pile of ash that Yakko-Hat had turned into. He scowled. “You’re both zanies now. Da rules are different.”

“I am not your brother!” the ash pile snapped.

“I am not zany!” Bendy barked at the same time. Wakko laughed.

“Uuuuuuuuuuh, so this is odd.” Hat walked around the mess. There was an inquisitive frown on his face, his visible eye was wide. He stumbled and caught himself. “Boy, you’re sure tall Hatty.”

“Don’t call me that!” Hat snapped, still ash.

“Wait.” Bendy frowned. “You’re Yakko right?” He nodded and grinned, showing off sharp fangs. “And if you’re in Hat, then that means--”

“Oh Beeeeenndddyyyy-booooooooooo!”

Bendy cringed. Oh stars above no. Anything but this! Please let this be a nightmare. Please!
He looked over to see himself skipping over, tail bouncing behind.

“Dot,” Bendy said her name like a curse. She cackled, her--his ugh! His eyes were way to big and excited! “Stop!”

“Oh come on, Bendy! Have some fun!” Dot twirled. “Awww, you’re so cute! I love the flower in your hair!”

Bendy growled. Dot skipped, her tail twisted in her legs, and she slammed face first into the floor. Bendy cringed and winced. “Ow! Owowowow! That hurt!” Dot exclaimed hands over her face; tail withering in pain, still tangled in her legs.

“Are you okay, Bendy?” Wakko asked.

“It’s Dot,” Bendy corrected quickly. Like he would ever act like that!

Wakko put his hands on his hips. “Well, this will get confusing fast.”

“Why does your tail hurt so much!” Dot winced and rubbed the spiked limb, slowly unwinding it.

“Because tails are sensitive, duh,” Bendy said deadpan, flicking the weird furry stump of a tail he had now.

“Ya didn’t bounce back either sis.” Yakko frowned.

“Of course not! Bendy isn’t a zany,” Hat said. Oh, he had pulled himself together while no one was looking. Good for him. He tugged on the pants that Yakko wore with a scowl on his face. “So, if we became zany when we switched, then it makes sense that you two aren’t anymore.”

“Huh, weird.” Yakko flexed his hands thoughtfully. “So, we’re demons then!” Bendy didn’t like that glint in his eye.

“And you better be careful! A demon’s power isn’t something to underestimate. If you lose control, you could destroy entire city blocks!” Hat barked. It was so weird to see Yakko’s face so serious.

“Is that a promise?” Dot asked and bounced back up on her feet.

Bendy scowled. “Dot. No. It’s not a game. This is serious trouble. We need to get that thing back and fix this!”

“Well that’s easy, ya just--” She reached behind her and brought her hands out in front of her. Dot furrowed her brows as she looked at her empty hands. “Um, that’s odd.”

“Ya can’t do that without your talent, sis.” Wakko stepped up next to Bendy and folded his hands behind his back. “You gots Bendy’s list of abilities now.”

Dot’s tail shot straight up, and her eyes widened and glittered. Bendy grimaced, oh stars! Don’t make him look so idiotic! She jumped in his face and grabbed his shoulders. Pain shot through his arms. “Bendy! What can you do! You’re a demon, so you have powers! How do you do the shadowwooooo!” She bounced up and down pulling on his arms, on the verge of ripping them off.

“Let go!” Bendy shrieked. She yanked her hands back in surprise. Bendy winced and rolled his shoulders. “Stars woman! You have my strength, so cussing watch it! You nearly broke my shoulders! Cuss!”

“Oooooh.” Dot dipped her head down and scuffed her shoe in the carpet. “Sorry.”
“I know this is very fascinating,” Hat stated, sarcasm dripping from her tone. “But we need to reclaim the idol immediately. Time is against us.”

“Whadda ya mean by that, Hatty?” Yakko tilted his head curiously.

“We have twenty-four hours to reverse this, otherwise, the change is permanent.” Hat glared up at Yakko. “And I highly doubt you could make it a week as a demon. Hell, a day is pushing it.”

“Ahhhh,” Yakko waved an arm. “How hard could it be?” His arm changed into a tentacle and reached for Wakko.

“Woah!” Wakko jumped away.

Yakko blinked and looked at his tentacle. “Huh. Oops.” The tentacle lashed around Yakko’s torso. “Um, how do I change it back?”

“Concentrate, you moron!” Hat snapped.

“That is surprisingly unhelpful,” Yakko retorted, pulling his arm away from himself. Bendy pinched the bridge of his nose. Wow. He had a nose. He shook the distracting thought away. Dot hopped in front of him again.

“Us switched forever!” she gasped, hands under her chin.

“This is a cussing nightmare,” Bendy stared, deadpan.

Dot straightened up. “I don’t know. You’re pretty cute, Bendy. A change of clothes, a little r and r, and I could be the talk of the town.” She posed and rubbed a pointer finger into her cheek as she winked and smiled.

“Stop doing that! Stars! You look like a little kid!” Bendy barked.

“I am a little kid, and you’re adorable!” Dot grinned and patted Bendy’s head a touch too roughly. The flower was pulled off Bendy’s ears.

“Ouch!” Bendy ducked away.

“Sorry!” Dot pulled back. She picked up the flower. “Here, let me fix it.”

“No! You’ll pull my starfallen ears off!” Bendy snapped.

“If you won’t wear it, I will.” Dot smirked. To Bendy’s horror, he knew she would.

“Fine!” Bendy said quickly. He was already trapped in a skirt, in the body of ten year old girl! Not even a woman! He rather that stupid flower be on this body than next to his goggles.

Dot grinned and approached. Oh stars. He didn’t even have to duck... Holy cuss he was even shorter like this! He grit his teeth to stop from screaming.

“Aww,” Dot cooed when she stepped back. “You’re so cute.”

Bendy was going to kill her.

“Watch it, Bendy.” Wakko popped up beside him. “You’re steaming. Keep that up, and you’ll blow up.” Bendy turned his glare on the Warner, forced himself to take a deep breath and start thinking about something else.
“Hat!” Bendy barked. He and Yakko were tangled in a mess of tentacles and claws now. They both paused in their struggles to look at Bendy. “How do we find the idol?”

“That demon is a mid-class demon. His master is a high demon name Aku. I know where to go, the trouble will be getting it back if that slug decided to give it to Lord Aku,” Hat explained. A claw opened up near his face. He smacked at the base of the claws, and it snapped shut before it could grab him.

“Great!” Wakko grinned. “Let’s go!” He turned to Bendy expectantly. Bendy raised a brow. There was an awkward breath of silence.

“What?” Bendy asked.

“Oh yeah! You’re Bendy!” Wakko dropped his fist into his hand.

“But you should have Dot’s talent, right?” Yakko asked. The tentacles disappeared, and quills ripped the back of his shirt and jacket. “So, get to it. Chop chop.”

“Oh come on! That suit’s expensive!” Hat snapped and poked Yakko in the chest. The demon shrugged and smiled sheepishly.

“I have no idea what you want me to do,” Bendy stated flatly.

“Use your space talent and get us to the front door of what’s-his-face,” Wakko said like it was obvious.

“Ha!” Bendy barked. “Are you kidding me! I have no idea how to do that!”

“Oh! That’s easy! You just grab the edge and pull!” Dot said.

“What edge.” Bendy looked at her annoyed. Dot blinked. She looked around herself.

“You know. The edge!” Dot frowned.

“What edge! All I see is the room and my face!” Bendy growled.

“The edge of the room! The edge of the space. You just anchor who you want to bring and pull the edge!” Dot wrapped her hands around something invisible and mimed pulling it.

Bendy threw his hands up in aggravation. Yakko--er, Hat stepped up to them. “No matter. I’ll just take us.” He lifted a hand and--nothing happened.

“UUuuuuuuuuuuh, you mean I should take us?” Yakko pointed to himself. His finger turned into a mini stop sign. “Oh c’mon!”

Hat grimaced. “I don’t believe you trying anything with my body would be wise. Actually, you shouldn’t even go out in public like this. You could ruin my image!”

Bendy looked at Hat. “Really? That’s what you’re worried about right now?”

Hat scowled at him, spinning straight, hands behind his back. It looked very strange on Yakko. “I worked very hard for my reputation. I have been a high demon of prestige for centuries! I deserve respect! I’m not going to let some imptail zanies ruin me!”

“Then, let’s get this thing back and fix this!” Bendy snapped.
“Bro, can’t you just drop the walls between our talents and such?” Yakko asked Wakko.

Wakko cringed. “Ya know I haven’t been able to do that for a while now.” He pouted. “And I don’t think doing that to a demon is gonna end well. You’re barely holding yourself together as is Yakko.”

“I’m doing fine.” Dot raised her hand.

“I can’t cussing teleport,” Bendy said, deadpanned.

“You probably can, you just don’t know how.” Hat pointed at him. Bendy sighed and tugged on the skirt uncomfortably. It was way too drafty for his liking.

“Well, I’m still not supposed to use my powers because of the damn illness,” Bendy grumbled. That caused him to pause. He looked over at Dot. She blinked and raised a brow.

“What?” she asked. She looked down at herself. “Did I get something on me?” She turned this way and that and frowned. “You really need some fashion help,” she muttered. Bendy ignored her. The illness. Did the illness stay with his body or did it move with him? Either way involved Dot in a very disturbing way.

“Then, I guess we’re walking.” Wakko stuck out his tongue. The other Warners groaned.

“You’re not going!” Hat barked at Yakko and Dot. “You both have no control!”

“Well, you and Bendy don’t know how to be zany either, so we better come anyway.” Yakko shrugged. “Either of you could accidentally pull out a bomb or monster and not know what to do with it.”

“Toss it, kill it,” Hat stated.

Dot gasped. “You aren’t allowed near any of my pets!”

“Oh stars,” Bendy groaned and headed to the doors. “Let’s get going. Hat just cussing get us there.”

“Wait, we can’t just walk out there,” Hat said.

Bendy paused and looked to him. “Get over yourself, Hat. We only have so much time, and I’m not staying down here all day.” He pushed the door open and walked out onto the streets.

It was a mesh of demons. Tall, small, large, thin, scaly, furry, all varying degrees of terrifying. Several paused to eye him. Ya-- Hat came out and grabbed his shoulder. “You can’t just--”

“Hey, what are two tiny treats like you doing?” a demon with a large underbite paused. He had two large horns curling away from his flat head and spikes running down either side of his head and neck. “Is your master around?” His diamond shaped pupils slid around them.

Before Bendy could answer, Yakko stepped out. “Fellas, we’ll need you to navigate. We don’t have a map.”

“High Lord Hat! Th-these are yours?” The demon took a step back.

Yakko looked up confused. “Uh? Wh—“

“Yes!” Hat cut in. “Yes! That’s it! We’re his! Begone!”
The demon growled at Hat but retreated. Yakko winked. “Good night everybody.”

“Stop fooling around,” Bendy grumbled. “And where did Dot go?”

“Something about finding a new outfit.” Yakko shrugged.

Oh stars. He had to be joking! Bendy threw his arms up in exasperation.

“This is not the time for this!” Hat snapped.

“No worries! Wakko is going to bring her back.” Yakko smiled.

“Really?” Bendy muttered not believing it for a second.

“Eventually?” Yakko shrugged.

Hat rolled his eyes and started down the street.

“Wait, don’t we need her to come along to switch us back?” Bendy went after the older demon in the zany’s body.

“Yes, but I’m done waiting. And we need the idol, so I will worry about your incompetent pet later.” Hat sneered.

“Hey now, that’s my sister there.” Yakko frowned.

“She isn’t a female at the moment,” Hat snarked back.

Bendy’s face flushed at that horrifying thought.

“Hatty! Ugh! No! Why did you say that!” Yakko cringed. Hat glanced at Bendy.


“I hope your fashion tastes improve if you remain in skirts,” Hat said. Bendy clenched his fist and went to swing at him, but the taller zany easily dodged.

“Woah now, Bends. That’s my body you’re trying to hit there.” Yakko pulled Bendy back.

“Oh c’mon! You’d look great with a black eye!” Bendy reached for Hat, who continued to walk with a bored expression on his face.

“Uuuuuuh, I rather not,” Yakko chuckled. “But hey! You can wreck this thing when we grab the idol!” Yakko gestured to himself. Hat’s frown deepened, but he didn’t comment.

In their arguing, Bendy hadn’t noticed where they were going. Now, he looked around at the strangest city he had ever seen. There were no vehicles, so demons crowded the streets as they walked. There were alcoves of stairs that led up to a criss crossing web of bridges and walkways above, some of wood and rope and others of the same stone or bricks of the buildings, all different sizes.

And the demons! Bendy had never seen such a mix of strange beings before! That included Nightmare Night and Holly’s mind. Small and tall, wide and thin, furry, scaly, slimy, soft, rock, metal, horrifying, and beautiful. Demons came in literally any shape or size. Some looked more like animals or a mix of animals, others appeared to be bugs, others more human. The human ones always had something a bit off about them though. A smile that was too wide. Arms a little too
long. A waist that was just too thin. It landed them in a creepy uncanny valley in looks. There were feathers and tails and horns and wings of all kinds. Fashion also seemed to be more to one’s taste than anything else. There were so many cultures and time periods mixed with the clothes. Bendy stared as a suit of armor with two tails and claws walked past.

Bendy got a sharp smack on the back of the head. “Ouch!” He glared at Hat.

“Don’t stare. They’ll notice and try something, imbecile,” Hat hissed at him. He jumped up and did the same to Yakko. “That goes for you two! You’re a high lord. Act with some dignity, and shut your mouth!”

Yakko snapped his jaw shut and grinned. Hat led them up a staircase built into one of the buildings. It was narrow, just enough room for two normal sized people to pass each other. “Hat, I really don’t think it was smart to leave Wakko and Dot alone like that,” Bendy said. Hat waved a dismissive hand.

“They’ll be fine!” Yakko assured him. “Death hates us, after all.” That didn’t comfort him.

They passed a bridge and kept climbing. Bendy’s legs were starting to burn for the climb.

“Curse these weak bodies,” Hat muttered as he slowed a bit.

“What’s wrong?” Yakko asked as he passed them.

“Your pathetic body is already getting winded!” Hat snapped.

Yakko gave him a half mast gaze. “You’re a zany. Just shake it off.”

“Uh? How are we supposed to shake off exhaustion?” Bendy asked.

“Like this.” Yakko picked him up. Bendy stiffened in surprise. Before he could retaliate, Yakko shook him up and down like a mixed drink.

“H-H-Hey!” Bendy shrieked. He tried to kick away, but Dot’s legs were shorter than he expected, and he missed. Curse Hat’s long arms! He’d just decided to bite Yakko’s hand when he dropped him.

“See?” Yakko said and picked up something from the stairs.

“See what?” Bendy demanded.

“Are you tired now?” Yakko asked as he straightened up.

“No! I’m annoyed! Don’t cussing pick me up!” Bendy barked.

Yakko leaned down a little, Bendy’s eye twitching at the insult to his height, and showed him what he picked up. There was a line on his gloved finger. It looked like a large eyelash. “What the hell is that?”

“One of the shadows that was under your eyes. You haven’t been sleeping well, Bendy. Tsk-tsk!” Yakko straightened up.

“Hey! Move it! You’re holding up traffic!” a demon behind Bendy growled.

Yakko turned. “Oops! Sor--” Hat jumped up and slapped a hand over his mouth.
“Just move!” Hat barked as he hung from Yakko’s shoulder. Yakko blinked, shrugged, and turned to walk. Bendy scrambled to catch up. To his annoyance, all the exhaustion and burning in his legs were gone.

“So, how does this zany junk work?” Bendy asked.

Yakko pried Hat’s hand off his face to answer. “Easy. As long as it’s comedic, you can do anything.”

“Comedic,” Bendy parroted flatly.

“Yep! A joke, a pun, a gag, a prank and so on. As long as you go for the laughs, you can ignore the rules of almost anything else.” Yakko smiled encouragingly. It didn’t look right on Hat’s face.

“Imptails,” Hat cursed and dropped off Yakko’s shoulder. They left the stairs for a wide stone bridge that continued down a street way and branched off a couple of times. They kept walking. Bendy wondered if Dot and Wakko had destroyed anything yet. He hoped Dot wasn’t doing anything weird to his body. What the hell was he going to do if she scarred it for life? Like some crazy tattoo of her name or something? What was he going to do if he had to go back to the house like this? He couldn’t be able to live down Felix’ expression or cussing Cuphead’s laughter. Hell, what would Boris think?

And a joke? What the hell did that mean? He could do anything as long as it was funny? How did that work? Did it have something to do with his vision being so weird and making everything look flat to him?

They walked past a fruit stand that was selling potatoes. Bendy reached to pick one up, and it disappeared.

“Hey! What do you think you’re doing!” the demon behind the stand barked at him. Bendy stood there, mouth open and empty hand still up in surprise. Where had it gone? What just happened.

Hat reached into Yakko’s coat pocket and tossed a coin on the counter. “Stop causing trouble!” he ordered Bendy.

“I just touched it! That’s all!” Bendy exclaimed.

“You probably tossed it into Dot’s pocket,” Yakko said. Bendy looked at the skirt and frowned.

“No, no, pocket space. Not an actual pocket.” Yakko chuckled. Bendy frowned. Okay... but how did he get it there, and how was he supposed to get it back? Before he could ask, there was a bird like shriek above them. Bendy snapped his head up as a shadow appeared above him. A large parrot lizard thing flapped about them.

“There you fellas are! We’ve been flyin’ around everywhere lookin’ for you!” Wakko stuck his head out over the side to stare down at them.

“Wakko!” Bendy exclaimed.

“And Dot!” Bendy’s jaw dropped again.

“What the hell did you do to me!” he shrieked. The demon landed on the road. The Warners jumped off.
The parrot glared at Yakko. “So, they’re yours,” he croaked, narrowing his beady eyes. “These gremlins are the pits, and I’ll have you pay for them later, Hat!”

“Awww, are you gwumpy-hwumpy, Mr. Parrot?” Dot lifted her hands to the side of her face and tilted her head, pouting. Her hands were hidden from view in the long sleeves of the sweater she was wearing. The parrot flinched away from her.

“You’ll pay!” he barked at Yakko again and took off. Wakko and Dot waved.

“Awww, I think he’s sad,” Dot cooed.

“Sunblaze that! Where are my pants! Why are you only in a big sweater!” Bendy snapped.

“It’s a sweater dress Bendy, and it’s cute!” Dot gushed. The damn thing was a couple inches above her knees. No shoes, either. One side of the wide neckline of the ‘dress’ hung off, showing her bare shoulder. There was a star printed on the front of it. She also had on a puffy hat. It looked kinda like a newsies hat with the front brim. But the body of it was too round, and there was a flower in the corner of it. To finish the horror, she had found a choker with a heart jewel and a loose ring hung from her tail. How did she get it past the spike?

“It’s terrifying. What have you done to me?” Bendy muttered.

“I made you adorable!” Dot gushed with happy wide eyes. She looked like a little girl. She had turned his body into the image of a little girl. Someone end him. Please end his suffering now!

“Go back! Go change! I will not accept this!” Bendy raged.

“Let’s go,” Hat told them. He glared at Wakko and Dot. “Now that you’ve given me trouble, I expect you to listen!” He turned and started to walk again.

“I don’t wanna! We can be cute together now, Bendy-boo!” Dot grinned and linked their arms. Bendy yanked himself away.

“You’ve gone too far, Dot! Too cussing far!” Bendy snapped. “Where are my things? My bag? My goggles!”

“All here buddy.” Wakko patted Bendy’s shoulder bag. “No worries.”

“Oh, there are plenty of worries. Mountains of worries.” Bendy snatched the bag and followed Hat. “Don’t cussing tell me no worries.”


Bendy ignored them. He was so angry. His eyes were probably...He didn’t have that problem right now though, did he? He glanced back at Dot. The outfit instantly angered him anew. He looked forward again. No glowing eyes or super strength. So, he didn’t have to focus on those things. Weird. He dug in his bag, past his neatly folded clothes, to find his goggles. He pulled them out and put them on. At least he could have one thing to help him feel normal.

“Bendy, what are you doing! Those don’t match my skirt at all!” Dot complained.

Bendy looked over his shoulder to give her the darkest glare he could. “Don’t you dare talk to me about what I can wear;” he said as seriously as a death sentence.

The brothers chuckled as Dot pouted.
“Wow sis, you put fire in Bendy’s eyes. That’s impressive.” Wakko chuckled. Bendy swore his teeth felt sharper for a moment there too. Damn. He hated zany bodies.

The group continued on. Yakko and Wakko tried to talk and cheer him up, but Bendy was having none of it. Hat seemed to match his mood. The demons would give him, Hat, and Wakko odd looks but didn’t approach with Yakko around. Thank the stars.

The city stayed weird, though. There were food stands that had a mix of fruits and vegetables that Bendy did and didn’t recognize. There were restaurants with weird meals listed, clothes that had extra limbs, holes for wings or spikes and so on. Bendy would probably find clothes that cussing fit him without going to the...more youthful areas of shops.

There were shops for sharpening horns, claws, and spikes; stores that sold killer weapons, spell books, rock and scale polish, curse remedies, skin stores. There was a dance club that he was tempted by and paused near. Then, he saw Dot wink at him from the corner of his eye. He scowled and kept walking.

There was a whistle from the front of the club. Bendy glanced back to see a strange demon with bells attached to three protrusions from his head. It looked like a jester’s hat. He had a sharp face and black eyes with white glowing slits for pupils. He was eyeing Dot. “Hey cutie, wanna dance?” Bendy grabbed Dot’s arm before she could respond and dragged her away.

“You can come too! We don’t bite--much!” The guy cackled. It seemed he had friends at the door with them judging by their leers.

Wakko frowned.

“No, no! Don’t waste more time! Do something insane later.” Bendy told him, grabbing his wrist as they hurried past. The sleazy demon laughed. Bendy hurried them along before things could get crazy. He wasn’t sure how much longer they walked, but it felt like an eternity. The Warners weren’t making it easy either. Wakko kept grabbing food from stands to stuff in his face, making the demons running the stands angry. Hat was forced to carry his wallet to handle that, and because Yakko tried to buy a weird helmet. Speaking of Yakko, the fella wouldn’t stop talking. He bounced around; asking questions, making comments, fiddling with things, and occasionally breaking things. Hat looked close to strangling him. It didn’t help that Yakko did all this in Hat’s body, which seemed to get more of the attention. Especially when he shifted or grew something like a buzzsaw or a tentacle.

Dot was just as bad. She would ask if people thought she was cute, comment on looks, and try on most anything that was being sold. She would reach out in empty space for something only to grow frustrated and scowl. All three bounced around in mad energy and noise. Bendy was getting a headache. He wished he had earplugs.

He reached out to grab Dot away from a jewelry shop to have earplugs pop into existence in his hands. Well, not quite like that. It was more like there was suddenly a dark pocket or hole that appeared around his hand and, before he could flinch back, there were the plugs. Bendy stared at them in confusion.

“Seems you’re figuring out my space talent,” Dot commented. She frowned and made her eyes big and innocent. Bendy hated that look on his face. Like he was a cussing little kid! “But why earplugs? Are we annoying you, Bendy-boo?” She smiled slyly. Just then, Yakko broke out in song, Wakko not far behind.

Bendy jammed the earplugs in his ears thankfully. Hat looked like he was somewhere between popping a blood vessel in his head and strangling the three. They reached the edge of the city. The
businesses changed to nice houses, then into mansions, and then into castles and fortresses or at least that’s what it looked like to Bendy. They got to a spire of black stone that looked more like a spike jutting out of the ground than a building. There was a bridge that led up to a door though, so it had to be someone’s house.

Hat didn’t hesitate to knock on the door. They waited for a long moment. Bendy took out the earplugs.

“Nobody home?” Wakko suggested.

“Then, we should just let ourselves in.” Yakko smiled.

“You will do no such thing,” Hat said without looking at them.

“Then, what do we do?” Dot whined and flapped her arms, ends of the sleeves swinging freely.

“We wait,” Hat said like he couldn’t believe he had to explain this.

But we’re bored!” they complained together. Ha—Yakko started to melt.

“Uh,” he muttered.

“Pull yourself together, you idiot!” Hat snapped at him.

Just as Bendy was about to snap at them, the door opened. There was a beetle like demon that filled up the doorway and towered over all of them. “What is your business?” it hissed and clicked it’s large pincers.

“We--”

“Silence worm,” the bug snapped at Hat, pincers only a few inches from his nose. He looked to Yakko expectantly.

“Oh? Me?” Yakko asked. Bendy elbowed his leg...since that’s where he could reach. He pulled his arm back, a string of goo following him. Ugh! Nasty! Damnit Yakko! “I mean, yeah me! Black Hat!” Yakko straightened up and suddenly the melting stopped and reversed. Oh stars, they were never getting that damn idol back.

“Vamoo,” Wakko muttered and chuckled. The demon didn’t seem impressed.

Yakko straightened up and cleared his throat. “Right, no speech talent. That’s a new one for me.” Wakko and Dot chuckled at their old brother. “We are here to reclaim--”

Hat yanked on his sleeve. Yakko doubled over to the other’s height. Hat whispered fiercely at him. Bendy couldn’t make it out. He glanced over at Dot and Wakko. They were trying to look past the demon in the doorway.

Yakko straightened yet again and cleared his throat. “I’m here to visit Lord Aku.”

The demon clicked and retreated. Wakko and Dot tried to go in, but the door slammed in their faces.

“Ouch!” Dot complained. “That’s mean!” She rubbed her face as she stepped away from the door.

“Duh! You aren’t a zany! Running face first into a door hurts!” Bendy said exasperated.

“So, how long do we wait?” Yakko asked.
“It should only be a few minutes,” Hat said. The Warners groaned. Hell, Bendy groaned with them. Luckily for them, it didn’t take long for the beetle to come back.

“This way,” he hissed. The Warners minus Yakko bounced in. Hat didn’t allow the eldest, giving him a sharp glare as they walked across the dark entrance. The inside seemed just a jagged and cave like as the outside.

“People live here?” Yakko asked.

“I think they could use some redecoration,” Wakko said.

“Or a woman’s touch,” Dot added.

“At least they have good ceiling height.” Yakko looked up. Bendy followed his gaze, up and up and up. Oh boy. It disappeared into darkness. That wasn’t unsettling at all. Oh no, he could definitely imagine something horrible dropping on them from up there. They were taken to a large throne room. It was more ridiculous than Hat’s office in grandeur. Was this a demon thing? A huge shadowy creature sat on the throne. It could be called anything else. He had fiery eyebrows and a thin beard. He had perfectly round eyes that stared down at them.

“Ah, Lord Black Hat. What brings you into my home this day?” the overly tall demon said in a booming voice. Yakko didn’t react, staring at the ceiling instead. Hat stomped on his foot.

“Ow! Alrig--Ah, oh, uuuuh, I mean. Yeaah.” Yakko turned to look up at the huge twenty foot tall demon. Hat facepalmed. Bendy inwardly cringed as the larger demon narrowed his eyes. Yakko cleared his voice. “I am here to reclaim some property one of your underlings, uuuuh, foolishly took.” Yakko put his hands behind his back and straightened his spin. He almost looking convincing until he went up on his toes. Oh stars above.

Aku raised one of his fiery brows and frowned. “Oh really?” he purred. “And what would such an item be?”

“A statue.” Yakko puckered his lips. “Brought in by that one fella.” Hat groaned quietly.

“A statue? I have seen no such statue,” Aku said and leaned back in his seat. “Which underling, Lord Hat?”

Yakko grimaced. “That one...uuuuh, the bug cat.”

Aku didn’t seem impressed. “I have many underlings. A name would help, Lord Hat.”

Yakko tossed a worried look to Hat. Bendy watched the shadowy monster of a demon. There was the faintest hint of a smirk on his face. Bendy smelled something rotten here.

Hat sighed and stepped up in front of Yakko. “Alright Aku, you had your laugh. Now, return the idol.”

Aku chuckled, his shoulders shaking. “Ah Black Hat, this is too rich. To see a being such as yourself in this state is truly enjoyable.” The tall demon grinned. “But I don’t see a reason to hand over something my underling brought me. What is your plight to me?”

Bendy scowled. He had known the whole time.

Hat, on the other hand, smirked. It wasn’t as intimidating on Yakko’s face, but somehow it was just as unsettling on a Warner’s face. “Do you wish to test my patience, Aku? Even in this form, I will
crush you so completely as to erase you from any history of this people, so only your little Surface
samurai will remember you as the pest you are.” Hat chuckled. “And that’s if he ever comes back.”

Aku’s growl shook the castle. Bendy pinwheeled his arms to save himself from falling. “You dare to
threaten the great Aku? The master of masters himself? The deliverer of darkness. The shogun of sor-

“Don’t waste my time with titles, Aku.” Hat rolled his eyes. “Either hand over the idol, or I will get
my forces ready.”

Aku sneered. The room darkened as his form seemed to spread over the walls and floor. Bendy
stumbled back into Dot and Wakko. “I could squash you like a bug, Hat.” The demon leaned down
and got in Hat’s face.

“I doubt it.” Hat narrowed his eyes. Bendy felt a chill in the air as the two glared at each other. He
shared an uncertain glance with the Warners.

“How do I pull out weapons?” Bendy whispered to Dot urgently.

“You just think about it and pull them out,” she whispered back. “What about your shadow stuff and
demon powers?”

“Don’t! I’m not supposed to use those,” Bendy hissed at her.

She frowned. “Well, that’s just disappointing.”

“Maybe we can talk this out?” Yakko asked.

“Does it look like we can talk it out?” Bendy hissed. Yakko shrugged.

“Uh, fellas?” Wakko said.

“Think he’d be up for a game of checkers?” Dot asked.

“Are you people always crazy?” Bendy pinched the bridge of his nose.

“Guys,” Wakko said.

“What? It worked against death alright.” Dot shrugged. Her sleeves flopping around her covered
hands.

“I don’t even want to know.” Bendy sighed.

“She does have a point though,” Yakko pointed out.

“Guys!” Wakko shouted.

“What!” Bendy and the others answered at the same time. Wakko pointed toward Hat and Aku.

Bendy looked over just as the two started to laugh. The taller demon shrunk down to about ten feet
tall. His flowing shadowy form looked like robes with ridiculous shoulder spikes that curved toward
his head. The two demons were laughing loudly. Bendy had missed something. He blinked in
confusion. How had it gone from death threats to chummy laughter?

“Very well Hat, we have a deal.” Aku sighed. A deal?
“Now, tell me, what are these that you have brought with you.” Aku turned to them. “There is the one that has your body, of course. But what of the others?”

Hat raised a brow at them, an amused smirk on his face. “That is my new apprentice, Bendy, and his Surface followers.” Aku slithered over so quickly that Bendy flinched back. He wasn’t looking at Bendy though. He was looking at Dot.

He hummed and circled her, his eyes narrowed. “Your apprentice? I am surprised, Lord Black Hat. I would not expect you to take one so small and seemingly frail.”

“Small!” Bendy snapped. “Who the hell you callin’ a pint-sized peewee midget, you match-for-brows!”

“Easy Bends.” Yakko held him back around the middle before Bendy could attempt to deck him.

“But I am cute, right?” Dot asked, turning her sleeved hand to her cheek and widening her eyes. Bendy cringed. Noooo! Aku furrowed his fiery brows in confusion.

Hat stepped up beside him. “Yes and no. That’s his body,” Hat said and turned to Bendy. “But that is the rest of him.”

Aku looked at Bendy. “In the form a little Surface female?” Bendy grit his teeth.

“Can we just be switched back already?” Bendy demanded.

Aku chuckled. “Well, at least the look in her eyes is better.”

“I’m a guy!” Bendy barked.

Aku glanced at Dot then back to Bendy. “Are you sure of that, young fledgling?”

Oh. He was going to rip this guy’s double horn things off and shove them down his throat!

“My underling has a point Aku,” Hat said, the smile falling away.

“Yes, yes.” Aku waved his hand to the armored bugs. They scurried away. “This has been most amusing, Lord Hat.” He turned a sharp smile on Hat. “You’ll have to visit again next time you have some misfortune.” He snickered.

Hat growled. “Not likely.” Aku gave a full belly laugh at that.

“I also hope to meet your fledgling apprentice when everything is set in order.” Aku looked between Bendy and Dot again.

Hat huffed. “You can now if we fix this here.”

The bugs returned. One had the idol in its claws. Hat took it and looked it over carefully. The demon looked around the room and frowned. “Do you have any electricity?”

“No, I don’t care for it.” Aku waved a dismissive hand. Bendy blinked. Really?

Hat sighed. “Then, we will see you another time, Lord Aku.” Hat nodded to him and turned to leave.

“Don’t ever change, Lord Hat,” Aku chuckled. As soon as the door to the castle closed Hat scowled.
“I really hate that demon,” Hat growled.

“Really? You fellas seem like pals to me,” Yakko mused.

Hat shook his head. “There is a level of respect all demon lords deserve, but never think we have friends. Demons don’t do friends,” Hat hissed.

“Aaaw, does that mean you don’t see us as pals?” Wakko asked.

“Never,” Hat answered immediately.

“That’s too bad.” Yakko sighed.

“Yeah, we make great friends.” The Warners all glanced at Bendy. He blinked.

“What? You three have been more trouble than anything else.” Bendy frowned and rolled his wrist dismissively.

“Aw, flatterer.” Dot brought her hands up to her chin and tilted her head.

“Would you stop!” Bendy barked. “And put on some starfallen pants!”

“But I never wear pants.” Wakko tapped his chin with finger. Bendy smacked himself in derision. He pulled his hand down and startled when his face stretched with it before bouncing back into place like it was elastic. It didn’t hurt or anything. Creepy.

“Would all of you knock it off!” Hat snapped. “We shall return to the resort, where we will promptly switch back.”

“Such a spoilsport.” Yakko sighed. “I’ve never seen my face so grumpy before. Makes me look older.”

“Enough!” Hat barked at him. Their group walked back the way they came, back into the more crowded parts of the city with all the demons. Bendy was able to relax a little now that they had the stupid statue back. He decided to try and figure out the space stuff Dot could do. He noticed that everything seemed more flat to him. Like he could peel it off or just pick it up regardless of what it was. He tested it with a few boxes and junk in the street. Much of it would disappear if he focused on it while picking it up. It was kinda fun. Pulling things out was equally as entertaining.

He would think about it, a clear picture would show up in his head, and then he’d reach out and pull. It would just be there. He got the potato he had accidentally taken. Wakko was quick to claim that. Bendy noticed that if there was something not in her space pocket, he wouldn’t be able to ‘see’ it or visualize it as clearly. It was like there were two worlds. The one in front of him and the one in the back of his mind. Now that he was figuring it out, the stuff was a little distracting. He pulled out a bouncy ball and bounced it as they walked.

They just had to walk back to Hat’s stupid resort. Thank the stars this was going to be an easy fix.

“Hello there,” a voice said behind him.
And so we really know what torture Bendy had to endure because of Dot, here's a visual.
Bendy Just Wants Normal

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

“Welcome ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls to another Chapter of Inky Mystery!” Mic greeted. “They have the idol but they aren’t home free yet. Can they get back to Hat’s resort safely? Find out!”

Chapter Notes

Hello readers!

Welcome! So much has happened! Apparently there was a number cypher in the last few chapters. A few readers have cracked that. The messages are...concerning. A discord has been open for Inky Mystery. You can join and talk to everyone, share art, and theories and just have fun.

Now I have to go. I’m helping a friend look for a wedding dress. Enjoy the chapter and see you next week or in the new Discord. ^^ Chao!

Bendy frowned. Stars, if he just jinxed himself. He looked over, and his jaw dropped all the way to the ground. A gorgeous woman with curvy hips and full lips was smiling at Yakko. Her thick eyelashes framed the flirty wink she sent his way. She had light beautiful curls that tumbled down to her waist, and the tight cocktail dress she wore didn’t leave much to the imagination.

Yakko and Wakko had similar reactions. Wakko’s eyes turning into hearts. Yakko’s forked tongue...er, Hat’s...the fork tongue was hanging out from between his fangs.

“Hellooooo nurse!” Yakko, Wakko, and Bendy all said together. Both Wakko and Bendy appearing on either side of her and Yakko taking a couple steps to stand in front of her. Bendy blinked, how did he get from there to here? Wait! Had he just said what he thought he said! She seemed surprised by the sudden group too. Then she grinned a movie star smile.

“Why hello. What brings you here with your pets?” She glanced at Wakko and Bendy with curious, large eyes. Bendy pouted. A pet?

“I can be your pet.” Wakko winked. The woman’s brows raised, and she leaned down a little, lifting his chin with a gloved hand.

“Oh really?” she purred.

“Only if I get to go too,” Yakko said.

She chuckled and straightened. “My, my, aren’t you in a rush.”
“Only for you, gorgeous.” Yakko winked. Didn’t quite work with the monocle only letting one of his eyes being visible. Bendy snorted.

Bendy pushed Yakko aside. “How ‘bout w--”

“You three! Here! Now!” Bendy looked behind him to see a scowling Yakko or rather Hat marching toward them. Ah man. What now?

“Oh look! A third one! How cute!” She giggled. “That means we’ll have enough for dessert!”

Yakko responded first to odd statement. “Uuuuuuuuuuh, Dessert?”

“Well, these other two are quite small for dinner and dessert. The third split between us would be perfect!” She gave him the same winning smile. “He even wants to be mine!” She put a hand on Wakko’s head, pushing his hat askew. Yakko’s eye widened in horror, as did Bendy’s.

“There’s been a misunderstanding.” Hat snatched Wakko away and turned, the Warner tucked up under his free arm like he was a box. “There’s no dinner here, Lady Nii--ma’am,” Hat stated over his shoulder. The woman’s grin suddenly stretched too wide, showing hidden teeth on either side of her head. Her pupils became thin slits of red. Bendy cringed away from her.

“A feisty one too!” she giggled, her voice becoming weird, like there was an echo to it. “My favorite.” She leaned over like she was going to charge Hat.

Yakko stepped in front of her, hands raised. “Sorry. He’s right.” The demon woman jerked up. Her face turned dumbfounded. Several other horrors stopped too to look at Yakko. “Can’t eat tonight. Maybe another time! Here!” He waved his hand. Nothing happened. He looked confused before his eye landed on Bendy. “Oh,” Yakko muttered. “Right.” He cleared his throat. “Well, that’s okay.” He reached into his pockets, pulled out a couple of things. A small box. A pen. Something hissed and bit his finger. Yakko yanked his hand back and frowned at the pocket. He checked others before he found a card with a top hat on the back of it. He looked at it and grinned. “Here. Call me.” He slipped to card in her limp hand and hurried away.

“Did Black Hat just apologize to me?” she asked in a scandalized tone. Bendy furrowed his brows. Out of the whole mess, that’s what got her? Several of the demons turned to look at Bendy. He swallowed and made accidental eye contact with a few of them. He gave an uncertain smile and a limp wave before hurrying away toward the others.

Hat was in the middle of chewing them out when Bendy caught up. “--why you don’t talk to anyone! Period! Morons! If I had my powers, I’d turn you both inside out! I’d rip your arms and legs off and switch them! It’s stuff--”

“I think we get the idea BH,” Yakko said chagrined.

“You obviously don’t!” Hat snapped. “And don’t call me that!”

“Sorry Hatty, she was a ten! We couldn’t help ourselves!” Wakko said from under Hat’s arm. Black Hat dropped him to the ground. Wakko bounced up like it was nothing.

“Don’t say that word here, you spineless nimrods!” Hat hissed, glancing around them. Bendy did too. He noticed a number of demons were watching them now. “And don’t call me that either!” He spared a glare for Wakko before looking around them suspiciously.

“Why not apologize?” Yakko furrowed his brows.
“Apologies are a sign of weakness down here,” Hat hissed quietly. “And there are those here that attack anything they think they can beat. Since I’m a high demon, I’d be a rather impressive victory.” Hat’s anger and concern melted into a smirk. “As if they’d ever be able to beat me.”

Bendy deadpanned. “They’d really kill for bragging rights?”

Hat snorted. “Many have killed for less.” He narrowed a glare at Bendy. “And if someone proved themselves enough, they might earn a status increase. Killing a high demon when you are a middle class demon is one way you can prove you’re strong enough to be a high demon.” Bendy scoffed. These people were nuts! “And sadly right now, this idiot,” Hat looked at Yakko, “isn’t nearly apt enough in my powers to hold his own in a fight.”

Yakko blinked. “Hey! I’ll have you know I’ve taken candy from a mean candy business man once!”

Hat facepalmed. “I think even an imp could defeat him right now. So, we must return to the office and switch back before anyone else figures that out!” Oh great! That’s just peachy! Bendy forced himself to take a deep breath. Suddenly, every glance their way seemed to be full for murderous intent.

“Hey, fellas,” Wakko asked.

“What is it, Wakko?” Bendy asked.

“Do any of you see Dot around?” Wakko turned his head completely around looking for her.

“Well she was right, uuuuuuueeeeh.” Yakko lifted a finger and glanced behind himself only to see the demons and crowded street in the twisted city. “Oh. That could be a problem.”

“A problem!” Bendy exclaimed. “She’s running around as me! Dressed like that! In hell!” Bendy threw his hands on his head. “We have to find her!”

“We can find her after I get switched with him.” Hat pointed to Yakko.

“Oh no! I am not waiting that long!” Bendy turned away and headed back.

“Yeah, sorry Hatty, but she is our sister,” Yakko spun on his heels and followed Bendy. Wakko nodded and went with them.

“Wait!” Hat stomped his foot. “That’s my body you’re walking away with!” Hat rushed over and hissed at Yakko.

“If ya wanna change that, help Bendy.” Yakko smirked. “It’s not that hard. Dot does a pretty good job of getting the spotlight on her.” That’s what Bendy was worried about.

They wandered up and down the streets, daring to spread out but not really separate.

“--but call me Dottie, and you die.”

Bendy glanced over to see that sleazy demon from earlier leaning over Dot. Relief flooded through Bendy before new worries started up. He looked like a joker. A clown. A sharp smile with sharp fangs and sharp eyes to match. The white of his eyes were black which made them seem hollow. He was tall, slender, with three weird protrusions flopping out of his head that were stripped and mocked a jester’s hat. They even ended in bells.

“That’s real cute. You ready for that dance, doll?” he asked her. Dot lifted her covered hand to her
mouth and widened her eyes innocently.

“Who? Me?” she asked.

The demon grinned. “Who else? C’mon! You’ll have fun. Won’t even need to pay.” He put a claw
with six fingers on her shoulder. Bendy scowled and hurried over. He jumped in beside Dot.

“Hey Dot! I’ve been looking everywhere for you.” Bendy hooked his arm with hers, stopping the
two from going any further. The joker frowned before he saw Bendy. He could see the guy’s wheels
turning. “We have to get going.”

“Hey now, don’t be in a rush! You can come in too, little lady.” The creep grinned. “It’s open to
non-demons too.” Bendy really didn’t like that look in his eyes.

“No, we really need to go,” Bendy said and tugged Dot a little. The demon didn’t loosen his grip.

“But she seems really interested. You’re ruining a good time here kid.” The demon narrowed his
eyes.

“Bendy, I think—”

“The fellas are waiting.” Bendy didn’t take his glare off the schmuck.

“You have a boyfriend, little miss?” The sleeze glanced at Dot.

Dot took her arm for Bendy’s and wrapped it completely around his shoulder. “This one is my
favorite right now.” That seemed to take the demon back a moment before he burst into laughter.

Bendy wanted to cringe away but didn’t move. If it got this schmuck to leave them the hell alone,
he’d put up with Dot’s antics. “You’re tellin’ me I don’t stand a chance here, Dottie?”

Dot’s eyes suddenly flashed red. “I said don’t call me ‘Dottie’.”

The demon finally let her go laughing. “Or what? I tried to be all welcomin’ but...” He reached for
them both. Bendy tensed to run. Dot grabbed his arm and flipped the guy over her shoulder. He
slammed into the ground with a loud crack, the cement path cracking underneath him. Bendy’s eyes
widened to saucers.

“Oh, so that’s how you wanna play it? You think a little no-name hussy like you can beat me?” The
demon glared up at Dot.

“Pa-lease! You aren’t scary! Mr. Director, now he is scary! You got nothin’ on him!” Dot declared.
Before Bendy could process what in the world Dot just said, the demon flipped back up on his feet.
He had bells in his hands. He threw them at Bendy and Dot. They exploded on impact, throwing
Bendy and Dot back. Demons moved out of the way as they rolled across the ground. Bendy was
again surprised that it didn’t really hurt. Dot rolled away behind Bendy.

“That all you got, Dottie!” The demon walked toward them with an excited smile. “I’m gonna have a
fun time beatin’ you to a pulp but don’t worry! I won’t kill you! I’ll make you watch as I rip your
little pet limb from limp and drink her blood first!” His eyes slid to Bendy as a forked tongue licked
his fangs. “I bet you taste great!”

Bendy grit his teeth and pushed himself up. Okay, he needed something to fight with. He didn’t have
demon strength. A gun? No. Sword? Still nothing. Come on Bendy! The demon kept coming closer,
a lazy pace without worry. He was going to kill him. Cussing damnit! What did he have to fight
with! An anvil came to mind. What the hell was he supposed to do with an anvil! Drop it on him? How! Just ‘cause he was in a zany’s body didn’t mean he knew how to think like one!

The schmuck was nearly to him. Bendy gulped and tensed for anything. Then, a shadow sailed past him and impaled the demon. Bendy startled and looked behind him to see Dot with red eyes, her hand lifted up as the shadows around her turned. The demon shrieked and pulled himself back.

He hissed, the bells on his head extension things ringing. “You little--”

“You think you can get away with attacking us?” Dot asked softly. “With threatening us?” She narrowed her eyes. The air grew cold. The shadows danced around her, riffling the edges of her sweater and the loose end of her sleeve. The other side was burned off and ripped at the wrist. The hat had fallen off her head. “Usually, I don’t care, but you called me that again.” Her tail lashed the ground, causing sparks to dance from the spike. “And you don’t touch Bendy.” The air became frigid.

“Um...Dot?” Bendy muttered. Holy cuss, no wonder he intimidated people! Even in that stupid and now destroyed outfit, Dot was scary! The other demon sat up. There were holes in his suit now and a little blood, but not much. He seemed more annoyed than injured.

The schmuck laughed. “That really bother you so much, Dottie?” She hissed, her fangs looked sharper. The shadows reached for him. “Then, I can make it so you never hear it again.” He grinned and lifted his hands. They changed into the larger forms of the bells on his head-things. He banged them together, just before Dot’s shadows reached him.

The sound was terrible. Bendy grabbed his ears but it hardly mattered. The noise shook through his whole body and seemed to try and split his skull. Demons fled this way or that to get away from the fight and the noise. Dot’s shadows dissolved, and she fell to her knees as the blaring ringing seemed to somehow focus on her. The demon stepped toward her, each step forward seemed to make the ringing worse. Dot tried to fight back, but any shadow she got dissolved quickly. She couldn’t focus in all this sound.

“DOT!” Bendy couldn’t even hear himself. What could he use? He pulled a hand away from his ears and started pulling out every he could. He tossed most of it aside. A rubber duck, a yo-yo. A few skirts, a skull, a chicken, a swimming suit, a camera, sunglasses, a butterfly net, a box of crayons. He nearly screamed in frustration and pain. Then, there was a hand on his shoulder. He whirled around to deck whoever it was but stopped.

Wakko jammed two earbuds in his ears. The horrible noise stopped, but Bendy’s head still felt like it was going to explode, and his chest was vibrating with the sound. He could feel it thrumming through him. Wakko then grabbed the box of crayons from his hand and pulled one out. Bendy would have questioned him, but he had a serious look on his face, even with his tongue sticking out of his mouth. Wakko leaned down and drew a circle he then drew up into the cussing air. Bendy watched as Wakko drew a crude but recognizable cannon and aimed it at the joker demon. He shouted something. Maybe ‘fire in the hole!’ and then pulled a cord. The cannon went off and a cannonball flew into the ringing demon. The schmuck didn’t even notice until the ball hit him. The side of a building exploded with the impact. The ringing stopped all together.

Wakko grinned proudly and pulled out his earbuds. He said something. Bendy blinked. Wakko shook his head and pointed to his ears.

Oh! Bendy took out his earbuds. Wakko spoke again, his mouth moving. Bendy’s ears were still ringing. “Can’t hear you man, but good job!” Bendy answered loudly. He could hardly hear his own shouting. Stars, this better not be permanent.
Wakko smacked his own face and shook his head. What! What did he say? The Warner looked off to the side, his eyes widened. “What? I just gave you a compliment! C’mon Wakko, work with me here!” Wakko didn’t respond. He followed Wakko’s line of sight. It was Dot...or at least, Bendy thought it was Dot. It was where Dot had been...but now there was only a dark mass. “What the hell is that?”

Wakko grabbed Bendy’s shoulder, forcing him to look back at the Warner. “Is that Dot?” He said it slowly, so Bendy could read his lips.

“I-I don’t know!” Bendy exclaimed. Was it? Was it an ink attack? But that didn’t look like she was melting! What the hell was going on? Something huge lashed away from the mass, a shadow? Maybe? It crashed into one of the abandoned stalls and crushed it. Bendy and Wakko jumped.

“Hey!” Bendy said. “I heard that!” He blinked. “I can hear myself again!”

“That’s because the joke is over,” Wakko said. “Now, what do we do about that?”

“I have no idea!” Bendy threw his arm toward it. “I’ve never seen something like this! Where’s Hat?” Bendy demanded and looked around. He would know what to do right?

Wakko shrugged. “Can’t you pull him out? He is around, right?” Bendy gave him a lost, panicked look. “With your space talent!” Wakko waved an arm. Bendy shrugged. Wakko smacked his own forehead. “I said I wouldn’t try this anymore, but--” Wakko flexed his hands. He glanced at the mass, more of the shadows slashing out violently. Then he reached out and pulled. There was a weird shift. Unlike other times, where Bendy didn’t know what was going on, this time he saw it. It was like the air next to Wakko turned into a curtain. He pulled it aside and grabbed Hat and Yakko who were on the other side. He dropped the curtain, and it fell back into place like it was never there. All of it took less than a moment.

“What the--!” Hat gasped.

“Wakko!” Yakko shook a finger at him disapprovingly. “We talked about this with Dr. Boo!” Bendy looked around. They were just down the stone path on the other side of the dark mass.

“We gots an emergency!” Wakko pointed down the street.

“What the hell did you do!” Hat demanded, pushing through Wakko and Bendy. He grit his teeth at the sight of the mass. Bendy noticed movement from the broken wall, the bell demon was coming back around too. Great.

“What? What’s going on Hat!” Bendy demanded.

“She’s going beastly. We have to get away before she’s finished forming!” Hat grabbed his arm and started pulling him away.

“She’s what!” Bendy shrieked and planted his feet, wrenching his arm free of Hat’s grasp.

“We don’t have time! Run or you will be killed!” Hat shouted over his shoulder as he sprinted to a narrow space between two buildings.

“We are not leaving my sister!” Yakko declared, puffing his chest out and raising a finger resolutely. Bendy turned around to see a huge black form crash into the bell demon. There was a horrible scream and breaking and tearing sounds. The last of the wall crumbled away, throwing dust into the air. Yakko’s eye and the monocle widened. “Time to go.” He grabbed Wakko and dashed away.
Bendy felt goosebumps run all over his body as he turned and followed the Warners and Hat. Bendy tried to see over his shoulder, but he couldn’t quite make out Dot or the other demon in the cloud of debris.

Bendy nearly fell over when a loud roar shook the ground. For a moment, he thought the joker was attacking again, but this wasn’t that sound. It was an echo, two sounds in one. A deep bellow and a high pitched screech. Bendy ran faster. He reached the small space and was yanked to the side. He squeaked before a hand slapped over his face.

“Shush!” Hat hissed. There was slamming and crashing, but it didn’t sound like it was coming their way. “Her sense of smell will be overcome by the blood for a few minutes, but if she hears us she’ll attack,” he whispered.

Bendy pulled away and whirled on Hat. He leaned up on his toes to get in Hat’s face. “Explain now Hat!” Bendy hissed at him. “What’s happening to Dot?”

“I told you! She went beastly!” He pushed Bendy away with a slow hand as not to trip him or case a ruckus. “She lost control of her emotions and magic, and it turned on her. The demon instincts took over.”

“And what can we do about that?” Yakko asked, leaning forward on the wall to look at Hat.

“As we are? Nothing,” Hat stated. Bendy grit his teeth. He had to be joking! “That beast will kill us in an instant. She’s already ripped that middle class demon apart, and he was rather good with his magic. He was close to becoming a high demon even. We don’t stand a chance like this. Our only hope is to get away or last long enough for high class demons to come. It shouldn’t be too long since it’s the middle of the city.”

“And then what?” Wakko asked.

“They stop her,” Hat said, glancing behind him. The sounds of crashes and roars continued. Bendy didn’t like that tone.

“Stop her how?” Bendy asked slowly.

Hat looked at him. It was a distant look, cold and uncaring. “By any means necessary.”

Bendy’s heart dropped into his feet. “You mean they’ll try to kill her!”

“Only if they can’t contain her, but yes. That’s a possibility,” Hat admitted.

She could die. All because of his powers and nature. All because of Hat’s borrowed powers. Because of this stupid switch and a scumbag demon sleeze. He shared a look with Yakko and Wakko.

“Well? What are we waiting for? Let’s stop our sister before we have to say hi to death again,” Yakko announced and clapped his hands without bothering to be quiet. Wakko nodded furiously. Hat paled.

“You idiots can’t be serious!” he hissed.

“Catch you later Hatty!” Wakko waved as he raced back out of the narrow alley. Bendy followed him. Yakko tried, but Hat grabbed his arm.

“Don’t think I’ll let you go with my body, worm!” Hat hissed. Bendy didn’t wait to see the
argument, instead focusing on helping Wakko.

Wakko and Bendy went back on the street and looked around for Dot. Bendy didn’t see anything but the now-destroyed area. Windows were broken, walls wrecked, and cracks on the ground. A bit of the bridge way had broken away. Good stars, it was trashed. Store products and food were thrown everywhere. Bendy pointedly looked away from where that one schmuck had been. He didn’t have anything for that right now. No. He made a decisive effort to think or freak out over it later. Which ever happened first. Not now. He had to focus.

“Dot!” Wakko called.

Hey Dot!” Bendy’s higher pitched voice cracked as he called out.

There was a blur behind them, and suddenly Bendy was splat against a wall. Literally. He melted down into a puddle underneath the spot he hit. Before he could panic, his body snapped back to normal. Bendy patted the skirt and his legs and arms. “H-holy cuss,” he whispered, his voice shaking.

“Don’t fight it, Bendy.” Wakko said next to him. Bendy looked over. Wakko plopped his leg back on like it was a toy piece. “You’re a zany right now. That means that if it is funny, you can do it. Relax, go with the flow, and we’ll be able to stop her without a problem.”

“How can you be so sure?” Bendy swallowed his throat, dry with fear.

Wakko grinned. “I’ve been in a few sticky situations.” He stood up and pulled Bendy up with an offered hand. Wakko turned and paused. “Golly Bendy, that’s quite a look.”

Bendy furrowed his brows before turning and seeing what Wakko was talking about. That...was Dot? How?

What stood before them didn’t look anything like Dot er...himself. It had six limbs, four to walk on and two shorter ones, above the front legs; that were grabbing, crushing, and clawing at anything they could. The two front ‘legs’ still had claw-hands with thumbs, crushing most things it stepped on. Muscles shifted under black skin. Spikes, possibly the spine itself, jutted from it’s back between two bat like wings. Spikes also stuck out of the elbows and haunches of the muscled limbs. A long tail with a spike more like a spearhead bashed a wall. It was muscular and skeletal. Bendy could make out the ribs and carpels from where he stood.The creature’s head was horseshoe shaped. Two sharp horns curved back and inward. The jaw and mouth were pretty much the same thing. Sharp fangs lined the bottom side of the head. The smile stretched all the way up either side of its sold black eyes, except for the burning red slit pupils.

Bendy’s legs suddenly struggled to hold him up. The air smelled acidic, sharp, metallic. Reluctantly, Bendy compared it to blood. But it wasn’t quite that. The air was freezing cold as the beast stalked toward them. That couldn’t be Dot. That couldn’t be his body. It just couldn’t! His mind screamed the denial.

Yet, there was that stupid ring around it’s tail, tight; almost painfully tight looking; at the base of the spike. Stars. That was it. It had to be Dot. That’s what Bendy would turn into if he ever lost control. His stomach turned nauseously as the reality of it all sank in.

“Dot?” Wakko asked. The demon’s red pupils snapped to Wakko and narrowed. “It’s your brother, Wakko. Ya gotta snap outta it and pull yourself together.”
The demon was over to them so quickly Bendy didn’t even have time to gasp before he found himself in the clutches of one of the smaller hands.

Wakko was knocked away by one of the longer front arms. Bendy didn’t see where he got tossed. The hand wrapped around Bendy was tight, almost too tight. But it didn’t crush him or cut him like he thought it would.

“Dot! Stop!” Bendy shouted. The creature hissed and gurgled, lifting Bendy to eye level. “Yeah! You!” Bendy tried to pull his arms out of her grasp. “Knock it off! We have to get back home before everyone flips their lids, remember? This is too much Dot! Calm down!”

Her jaw opened...and opened. Way to far. Bendy’s eyes widened as he saw down her throat and the rows of giant shark-like teeth, each the size of Bendy’s fist. The beast roared that strange shriek bellow.

“Woah there!” Wakko called out. Dot snapped her jaws shut, way to close to Bendy’s face, and suddenly bucked. Wakko was on her back, sitting between two spines, a cowboy hat in his hand. “Easy girl! Yeehaw! Get along, little sister!” He waved the hat and grinned as Dot thrashed around, trying to buck him off.

“Bendy! Get me a lasso!” Yakko called out somewhere behind them.

“How?” Bendy called out as he was yanked around. The other smaller arm reached back to try and grab Wakko. The younger Warner brother started hopping around the demon to dodge the claw.

“Just think it!” Yakko tried out.

Bendy squeezed his eyes shut and tried to imagine Yakko holding a rope.

“What the hell is this!” Hat barked from somewhere.

“Close enough!” Yakko called back. “Hold on!”

“Will do!” Wakko saluted just as the hand slammed down on him. “Oops.”

“Wakko! You alright?” Bendy asked a little dizzy. Dot having shaken him around with all of her thrashing. His eyes spinning before he shook his head and fixed his vision.


“How can you be calm at a time like this!” Bendy shouted.

Wakko blinked, then he easily slipped his arms out of demon’s claws and rested his elbows on the creature’s hand. He plopped his chin in one hand and waved the other hand at Bendy casually. “You’re not thinkin’ like a zany Bendy. You gotta get looney. Loosen up. Have fun.”

Bendy gaped at him. “Are you kidding me! Dot’s a monster! She’s killed a guy! She could be killed any moment! She could kill us at any moment! How the hell am I supposed to be cussing relaxed RIGHT NOW!” Bendy kicked his legs in the air and thrashed around uselessly.

“By having a little faith that everything is gonna work out Bends.” Wakko smiled. “Trust me.”

“Trust you!” Bendy shouted.

“Yes,” Wakko laughed. “Trust me.” Bendy stopped and looked at the nutcase. He did look relaxed, unworried, and easy going. It was like nothing got under his skin. Even a threat to his life or his
sister’s.

Bendy swallowed. “What do I do?” Bendy asked. Wakko was suddenly lifted up. “Wakko!”

“Give me a car jack and a tin of mints!” Wakko answered as he was hoisted into the air. Bendy was also brought up, but Wakko was lifted into the air, above Dot’s head. Her huge mouth swung open under him, lips pulling back. It was terrifying to watch. Bendy didn’t even bother questioning or arguing. He just shut his eyes and tried to imagine them.

Then, there was a snap.

“Wakko!” Yakko shouted. Bendy’s eyes flew open. Wakko wasn’t in her hand anymore. He was gone, and Dot’s mouth was shut. Oh no. oh no, oh no, oh cussing no. Oh no. Not this. Come on. Not like this. Holy cuss. Yakko tossed the rope, it sailed over her horns and head. He pulled as it caught around her neck and still raised arm pinning the arm to her throat. She thrashed, throwing Yakko into the air.

“Well looky here! What a mess you’ve made Hat!” A woman’s voice cut through the mayhem. Even Dot paused in her movements to look for the source of the new sound. Bendy twisted his head around. There on top of the bridge above, was a line of demons of differing sizes and shapes.

“Finally!” Hat shouted. “It took you long enough!” Bendy couldn’t see where he was hiding. Before anyone could say anything, the beast’s mouth opened. There Wakko stood with the carjack and the mints.

“Golly Dot! Your mouth sure does stink,” Wakko complained and lifted a hand to cover his nose. “Here.” He turned the tin of mints over and dumped the load in her mouth. “You need them.” He then hopped out and back on the ground.


Wakko sighed and planted his fists on his hips. “Now, I’m just insulted!” Just as a claw slammed down on him. Bendy winced. “I’m fine!” Wakko’s hand stuck out from underneath the claw to give him a thumbs-up.

“What the hell are you nuts doing?” The row of demons had jumped down. There were about seven of them. They were all vastly different from each other. One was a large rock thing, one looked like an owl with a grotesque grin that stretched past its solid black eyes. One was a thin fox thing with a super fluffy tail. Another was a tall being with multiple arms, and it seemed to be holding a white mask in each hand. There was one that looked like a lizard in a suit, another that was knight in black armor, and the last was a small sunflower plant thing with shark teeth.

“We got everything under control,” Yakko said. Bendy turned to see the fella was standing on Dot’s back. She started to buck and thrash again, flapping the wings and pulling at the rope twisted around her neck and arm. Yakko had managed to toss a loop of the rope around Dot’s head and hold it down so that she couldn’t open her mouth and drop the car jack. He hung on, keeping the rope tight, and riding out the mad thrashing. Bendy was starting to feel sick from getting jerked around so much. How had Wakko done that trick with his hands? Relax? Bendy took a deep breath and tried to relax his body. He slipped out and fell to the ground a little awkwardly, but hey, he did it! He scrambled away as a claw crashed down next to him. Dot was turning around and around, trying to get at Yakko.

“You’re kidding Hat!” Bendy looked over to see the speaker of the demon. It was the fox. A girl, if her skirt and short sleeved blouse had given any hint. “That’s a rampaging beastly demon. Move
away or die.” She crouched down and spread her huge black claws across the cracked ground.

Bendy sprinted and tripped in front of her. “W-wait!” he panted and pulled himself up. “D-don’t kill Dot! We can catch her! I’m sure we can calm her down, please! This is the first time this has happened.” Bendy had no idea what he had to say to stop them, but he had to do something!

“A first rodeo, huh?” The fox raised a brow. She looked around at the other demons. “Well fellas? Whadda say?”

The multi-masked demon turned his head. It had a blank expression on the mask it was holding up to cover his face. “I see no problem in restraint. The beast’s mouth is even bound at this moment. It would not be difficult.” His voice was drawl and low. Almost expressionless. He didn’t really show much of his body under the grey robes he wore. Only his hairless grey head and the holes where all his arms stuck out, long fingers holding the masks. Each mask had a different basic expression. Bendy didn’t waste time trying to count them.

“Ugh. Wanted to rip up.” The rock demon grunted. The owl, about the same height as Bendy, hopped up on the rock demon’s shoulder. It’s talons actually looked like skeletal human arms with long nails.

“Now, now, there’s plenty of ripping and killing to be done, but this a first offender. We can have a little class,” the owl hissed in a female voice, it’s freaky grin getting even wider. That thing didn’t have the fangs Bendy had almost gotten used to. Its mouth was empty except for the small hooked beak at the bottom of its alarming smile. The rock demon, grunted seemingly annoyed.

There was a crunch behind him. Bendy glanced back to see Dot slowly crushing the car jack in her mouth. Yakko had fashioned some kind of harness around her head, but she kept trying to rip it or him off. It was obvious he was struggling.

“Best we stop wasting time then. That device isn’t going to last much longer,” the lizard said, tucking a handkerchief into his breast pocket. The plant swayed back and forth and the knight pulled out a giant ax from behind him.

“Alright, let’s go.” The fox grinned and burst into flames before bounding forward. The others moved with her. Bendy watched, mouth hanging open a little as the demons worked.

The fox distracted Dot with the bright flames, clawing in front of her to get Dot to come after her. The multi-limbed demon and the owl flew and jumped onto her back, grabbing the ropes from Yakko and working quickly to also bind her wings down. The knight helped defend the fox as they dealt with the three front claws that reached and slashed like an angry feline. The rock demon slammed into the Dot’s side, stopping her from turning or twisting around on the others that were tying the ropes and pushing her into a corner. The lizard was a blur, deflecting the tail from hitting anyone else. The plant...didn’t seem to move. Until Dot hit the wall. Then vines and flytrap mouths burst from the ground and wall, capturing Dot’s limbs and tail. Dot roared furiously. All in all, it took them less than two minutes to corner and capture her. The rock demon went to strike her, but the owl landed on his raised arm and shook a hand-talon at him. He seemed putout and lowered the arm with a huff. The owl stepped onto his shoulder.

“Done! Done! Beastly Bye-bye!” the plant chirped and dove into the ground, disappearing from view. They made it seem so easy.

“There we go Lord Hat, all in a day’s work.” The fox slapped Yakko on the shoulder. Yakko nearly fell over from the impact of her claws. She chuckled. “Whadda got to do with this here beastly, anyway?”
“It’s my apprentice,” Hat cut in, stepping out of the little alcove hiding place. He had the idol held tightly in his grip.

“Uh?” The fox gave Hat a confused look. The lizard burst with laughter. The owl let out a strange tweeter of giggles and covered the lower part her scary mouth with a wing. “What so funny?” the fox asked.

“Well Hat, you sure do seem to be in a rather unfortunate event.” The lizard grinned a fanged smile and tugged on his lapels.

“Shut it, Taffy, before I decide to end you,” Hat growled at him, which wasn’t so scary since it came out of Yakko’s mouth.

“What? But Hat...” The boulder demon pointed to Yakko with a look of confusion.

“Yes Cory, that usually is. But today Lord Hat seems to have switched bodies,” the owl twittered again. The rock demon turned to Hat with the same confusion.

“Seriously!” The fox perked her ears and grinned. She brushed her mop of hair out of her eyes gleefully. There was a weird vertical slit in her forehead just under her small horns.

“But that meal,” Cory seemed to argue.

Hat sneered. “If you ever consider me a meal again, Corundum, I will throw you to the pits.”

“Now, now, no need for threats,” the multi-limbed demon sighed and shifted over to Hat, towering over him. He seemed to drift in his cloak rather than walk. “We did just perform a service for you, after all.”

“I understand that, Lord Wajah, but I won’t stand to be insulted,” Hat stated coldly.

“What about compensation?” Taffy asked.

Hat narrowed his eyes at the lizard. “This is your job, mongrel. I owe you nothing!”

“True, but we could still kill it.” Taffy glanced back at Dot, who seemed to be tiring out in her thrashing around.

“What exactly would you want?” Hat put his free hand behind himself and lifted his chin. The dark knight lifted Wakko, who was eating a victory lollipop and waved from the large demon’s metal clad grasp.

The tiny plant popped up from the ground next to the knight and clapped it’s leaves together. “Snack! Snack!” it chirped as it bounced.


The demons turned to him, and suddenly, he thought speaking up was a mistake. He felt like prime rib on display with the way they looked at him. Luckily, Hat saved him.

“My fledgling is correct. We will decide on something later, if any of you deserve anything that is.” Hat glared at Taffy.

“Very well. Have a blood filled day all,” the multiple limbed demon said as an odd farewell before
drifting down the street silently.

The owl sighed. “I have some matters on the other side of town, so I best go too.”

“Other side,” the rock demon grumbled.

“Oh? You too, Cory? Then, shall we go together?” the owl offered. The rock grunted before turning and stomping away with the owl on his shoulder.

Other demons were starting to reappear around corners and from buildings. It seemed the problems were over. The knight dropped Wakko gently to the ground. Hat nodded to him as the knight passed silently. The sunflower seemed to wilt in disappointment. “Hungry,” it hissed before diving into the ground again.

Taffy chuckled, showing crocodile teeth. “Good luck Hat, hope to see you at the meeting later.” The lizard walked away on shiny shoes and a flick of his tail. Hat glared at the lizard’s back.

“I hate that cold blooded pit climber,” Hat hissed. Bendy didn’t like him either. No, all these characters seemed to be a handful in and of themselves. Wakko and Yakko made their way to him, both giving him a smile.

“Seems we dodged a bullet,” Yakko said happily. His clothes were torn in several places, there were a few cuts on his face and limbs. His hat was still perfect though.

“We dodged a sister,” Wakko said.

“You smell like bad breath.” Yakko pointed out. Wakko frowned at him. Bendy looked over to see that Dot was now limp in the ropes and vines. She was huge, twenty-five feet long, and ten feet tall. How in the world were they supposed to change her back?

“So this,” Bendy jumped back as the fox suddenly shoved her face toward him, “is your new fledgling, even though that’s his body?” Her eyes were bright with curiosity and glee.

Hat sighed and stepped up beside her. “Yes Lady Ava, this is Bendy.” Her fanged smile grew wider.

“Bendy,” she purred. The fox glanced at Dot and then back to Bendy. “Well, it looks like you might have some promise. If you live, that is,” she chuckled.

“Thanks?” Bendy said uncertainly. Hat cuffed him on the back of the head. “Ouch!”

“What have I told you?” Hat hissed at him.

Ava laughed. “Maybe I spoke too soon.”

Bendy scowled and rubbed his head. “Can we cussing go now? Fix this mess? Huh!”

“Yes, let’s before something else happens.” Hat sighed. “Lady Ava, if you would, can you take Dot back to my resort?” he asked the demon fox. Her ears fell.

“What will you give me for it?” Ava asked.

“One of the lesser items?” Hat offered.

“No,” she denied instantly.
“An underling,” Hat said.

“Have plenty.”

“One of my debtors?”

She hummed for a moment then shook her head. “How about a day with your fledgling?”

Hat glanced at Bendy. “No.”

“Too bad.” She shrugged. “Good luck moving her.” Ava waved and turned on her clawed foot to flounce away. “Hate to see what happens when she starts using her magic. Bye.”

“Wait! That’s fine,” Bendy cut in.

“Bendy!” Hat snapped. Bendy shot Hat an annoyed look.

“It’s fine,” Bendy repeated. “Unless you can carry her back.” Hat scowled but didn’t reply.

“Excellent!” Ava turned back around and pranced to Dot. “See you at the resort!” She waved a hand. Red flames shot up from the ground and covered her and Dot. Both were gone when the flames died down.

“She barbecued my sister,” Wakko observed.

“Probably not. Dot can be pretty heated herself,” Yakko joked.

“Enough!” Hat snapped. “Let’s go.” He turned and led them down the street. Several of the demons watched them, but all kept their distance now. Bendy was grateful. It took them another half hour or so to get back to the resort and crash through the lobby. People greeted Yakko as Hat. None of them cared at this point. They went up to the office, practically crawled into the room, and shut the doors behind them. There on the chair next to desk was Dot, back to normal, curled up under a blanket, supposedly sleeping. She looked ruffled and bruised, but she was breathing evenly.

“What a day.” Yakko wiped at his brow.

“Don’t you even start, Yakko,” Bendy grumbled. His feet hurt from all the walking, which was saying something for him. Maybe Dot’s body wasn’t used to walking so much.

“So, what do you do to switch back, Hatty?” Yakko asked.

“Electrocute the idol. The four of us need to be looking at it, and we will exchange bodies again,” Hat explained.

“Berries, so who wants to wake sleeping beauty over there?” Wakko asked.

“Oh please, you are so much worse.” Yakko chuckled. Wakko blew a raspberry at Yakko, which only made the older Warner laugh. “Yeah! I got an idea, let’s make Bendy do it!”

“What?” Bendy deadpanned.

“Well, it’s your body and your love interest so why not?” Yakko snickered. “It’s a real sleeping beauty thing, man.”

“Shut your trap! Love interest!” Bendy growled and went to punch Yakko, who easily dodged away laughing.
“You gonna kiss her?” Yakko asked.

“No, no Yakko. They already did that gag, remember.” Wakko lifted a finger knowingly.

Yakko sighed. “I can’t believe we weren’t there for it. Shame on Tap.”

Bendy felt his face heat remembering very well what everyone had told him. “How do you two even know about that!” He threw his fists up in derision. The two laughed as they dodged away from the angry non-demon.

“Enough!” Hat snapped, causing all of them to stop. “I will toss all of you out the window if you don’t wake her and shape up!”

Yakko and Wakko mockingly saluted him. Bendy rolled his eyes and sauntered to Dot. “Hey, Dot. Wake up. We gotta head home.” She groaned and rolled over, hugging the blanket closer to herself. Bendy snorted. “C’mon Dot.” He put a hand on her shoulder and shook her gently. “We’ve probably missed lunch by now. I’m sure everyone is worried.”

Dot groaned and shifted again. Bendy sighed.

“What the hell are you two doing?” Hat asked. Bendy looked over to see the Warner brothers eyeing a light.

“Hey Bendy, pull out the electric triangle.” Yakko told him. Bendy blinked but did as told. He sadly accepted that he no longer questioned the Warners insanity. He only ignored it now. He tugged and a triangle with two wires attached to it appeared in his hands.

“Do I even want to know why you three have something like this?” Bendy asked.

“Probably not,” Wakko said and snatched it from his hands. “We’ll set up.”

Bendy sighed and went back to shaking Dot’s shoulder. He half expected her to jump up and try to kiss him. Then again, she really did look rough. Dark shadows were under her eyes, bruises and small cuts probably looked worse than they felt. Bendy sighed, he’d probably look worse tomorrow.

“Dot. Hey Dot!” She coughed and turned over so her back was to Bendy. Oh brother. Her tail fell out from under the blanket. That damn ring still on...Oh stars, it had bruised. That wasn’t going to feel good. He groaned. “That chair can’t be that comfortable, Dot. Can’t you do this when we get back to the house, ya know, in our own bodies?”

She coughed again but didn’t respond.

“We’re ready!” Wakko called over.

“Dot! C’mon!” Bendy barked. “I know you’re tired, but we need to wake up for two minutes here!”

She mumbled something and curled up tighter then coughed. Bendy sighed and leaned down, ready to jump back if it was a trap. “What?”

“It hurts,” she whimpered. Bendy furrowed his brows.

“What hurts?” Bendy tried to see what was wrong. Was she injured worse than he had thought? Was it just the tail? Dot coughed and hacked, it sounded wet. Bendy turned her around to see ink stain the blanket she held to her mouth. “Oh cuss!” he cursed.

“What now!” Hat snapped.
“Oh no!” Yakko was beside them in an instant. “Dot!” He wrapped an arm around her shoulders as she coughed wetly and spat out more ink.

“Here!” Wakko hurried over with Hat’s trash can.

“What’s going on?” Hat demanded.

“It’s an ink attack,” Bendy snapped, watching Dot with worry. Ink started to drip down her head as she moaned. He stepped back so her brothers could be beside her.

“It hurts! This hurts! Please make it stop!” Her eyes watered, and tears spilled down her cheeks. Dot dropped the blanket and grabbed the can to throw up ink. Bendy grimaced, the ghost of the taste on his tongue. Holy cuss, that looked nasty!

“An ink attack?” Hat asked, stepping up next to him.

“Yeah, we melt.” Bendy grimaced as Dot started to sob in pain. He ripped his eyes away from the sight of the worried brothers and the suffering girl. “If you want to switch, we better do it now. She won’t be able to see in a few minutes,” Bendy said tensely.

Hat watched her then turned to Bendy. “But then you’ll be suffering.” He stated it like a fact, with no emotion or concern.

“I know,” Bendy said. “But that’s my body, and if anyone is going to suffer in it, then it’ll be me.”

“Could you die?” Hat asked.

Bendy glared at him. The hell? It wasn’t like he cared! “Maybe,” he admitted reluctantly.

“Why not let her take your place then? We could find you a new body, and you won’t have the ink illness hanging over you.” Hat suggested like it was an obvious answer. No...more ink illness? Just like that? No more pain or acidic taste or melting? Bendy wouldn’t admit to the temptation. He would never put someone else in his position...even if the prospect of not going through that hell anymore sounded so nice.

“Hey! That’s our sister your throwing under the bus!” Yakko snapped from beside her. Ink was now running down the sobbing girl. She clung to the trash can, sobbing as she gagged and screamed in pain. Wakko was also giving Hat a nasty look.

Cuss. Could she hold out? He knew they were bad. He knew they could kill. Please hold on, Dot. Damn, is this how Boris felt whenever he had an attack?

“You three have been nothing but a thorn in my side! I hold no pity!” Hat snapped.

“HAT!” Bendy barked. “Cussing switch us! Now!”

Hat straightened up. “Fine.” He sneered. He marched over to the triangle that the Warners had set up on a lamp. “You with the hat, look away or you’ll throw it off, and we could all end up in the wrong body,” he ordered Wakko. The Warner quickly nodded and shut his eyes.

“C’mon Dot. Look up,” Yakko prompted. Hat waited until he made eye contact with the rest of them, and then he touched the idol to the triangle. There was a loud snap, the lights went out and there was a flash of blue light.

Bendy felt like he was tossed into a fire and was suddenly suffocating. “Ugh!” His stomach rolled
terribly, and he threw up in a trash can that was in his lap. He faintly registered that the switch must have worked and that Wakko left him to check on Dot. She had collapsed on the ground. Hat jerked away from him. Bendy nearly fell over before Hat caught him with shadowy tendrils that felt cold against his burning skin. Bendy groaned and swallowed a scream of pain as his body trembled and dripped.

“Disgusting,” Hat muttered.

“You’re no peach yourself,” Yakko said and pushed the idol into Hat’s hand before dismissing him and sliding in next to Bendy. “Hey bud, how’ you holding up?”

Bendy grit his teeth ashamed of the sobs and groans that kept wanting to become screams.

“Don’t worry, you don’t gotta hold back with us. We know Bends,” Wakko said from somewhere. The tears and ink were making it hard to see. It was something in his tone that made Bendy break and screech his pain and burning and fear. He didn’t know how long he screamed and threw up, but he was relieved the numbness didn’t come. Wakko and Yakko also were really good at keeping the ink out of his eyes. He was finally free of the pain and exhausted. The Warners got him water. It took some time for him to appreciate that he was in his body again; then, a little time after that, to become aware that he didn’t have any clothes on under the blanket.

“Clothes,” he croaked.

“I think you should get cleaned up first Bendy,” Yakko said. Bendy pulled the blanket up to his chin. “Hey Hatty! The Surface, chop-chop.”

Hat and Dot had both been rather quiet after the switch back. Bendy wondered if something was wrong, but he was too tired to bother asking. Hat grumbled, and then there were green and black flames and Bendy was in a new room on a new chair. His stomach rolled uncomfortably. “Ugh, Hat, warning damnit.” Hat ignored him and went to his desk.

He waved a hand. There was a snapping sound, and suddenly there was Flug on the ground, groaning in pain. “Flug.”


“Have 5-0-5 prepare a bath for the fledgling. Take samples from that.” Hat indicated the can with a tilt of his head. “And some blood samples from him. Start researching everything you can find on ink illness.”

Dr. Flug stood up and saluted Hat. “Yes sir!”
Errands and Plans

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"Welcome ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls to another chapter of Inky Mystery." Mic grinned. "With Bendy and the Warners return everything seems like it can finally calm down. Cup and Mugs can now go get some things done."

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone!

How is life? Mine is great! We are thinking of getting an illustrator to make some book cover art for the series. That will be exciting to see! ^^ We have a new gift oneshot in the Inky Mystery spinoffs. LollingCat wrote a humorous party night for the questers and their friends. It's called A Princess with His Prince. A good sum of it was based off of jokes made in the Inky Mystery Discord. Once you're done with this and you need a laugh I would recommend checking it out.

Have a great week, enjoy the chapter and thank you for all the love and support!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Cuphead sighed in derision. They had been waiting for hours now. Cup had half a mind to march into that damn casino and take Bendy back, regardless what Hat would do. The zanies had gone with him, and their guardian didn’t seem concerned in the least. To be honest, Cup was less concerned than before simply because those three were with him. They didn’t seem like it, but those zanies were tough. They wouldn’t let Hat do whatever he pleased.

Boris was a mess. Mugs was distracting him in the backyard, training even with the snow. Cup was keeping an eye on Felix, Finley, and Sammy. The last looked like he was about to have a panic attack. The other two were ready to storm the castle. Cussing Morons. They wouldn’t get anywhere in the casino. That place was Hat’s domain, and Bendy was under contract now. It was best they wait here. Still, this was annoying.

“That’s it. I’m going!” Finley stood up.

“Sit your tail down,” Cup snapped. “They’ll be back, damnit.”

“It’s been way too long,” Fin argued. They were sitting around the front room. Drinks were on the coffee table along with small snack sandwiches. Granny was obviously aggravated too. She’d been in and out of the kitchen since Bendy was taken. She’d hadn’t taken any breaks or come to talk to anyone.

I was a bit distracting. So, many delicious smells of sweets.
“We told him,” Felix muttered again. “We told him that he couldn’t just run off with Bendy.”

Oh stars. It was the same circles again and again. He was getting a headache.

“And he’s a demon that does whatever the hell he wants,” Cup said. Again. “Like all of them. It will be up to Bendy to lay down that rule.” The cat was not happy with that answer. Again.

Was Cup trapped in a time loop or something? It sure felt like it.

The door opened. Cup and the rest stood. Bendy came in with the Warners around him. Flug behind them. Cup narrowed his eyes. Flug paused at the sight of him.

“Bendy!” Felix was on the demon in an instant. “What did they do to you? You’re covered in bruises!”

Bendy flushed. “I-I’m fine, Mr. Felix. Really,” he said, flustered as the cat turned his head to gently look at his face. On top of the minor wounds, he had dark circles under his eyes. He looked exhausted.

“What the big idea bub?” Finley poked the beanpole in the chest. Flug huffed, annoyed, but only looked away from Cup for a moment. Cup took two steps toward him, and his goggled eyes locked right back on him. Afraid? He cussing should be. Cup was wary of whatever stupid gun the scum had brought, but he was pretty confident that he could shove the schmuck’s goggles into his skull before he could pull it out.

“Don’t know what you’re talking about.” Flug tugged on his white coat labels.

Cuphead narrowed his eyes. ”You do--”

“Look here, you.” Felix beat him to it and grabbed the scientist by his tie. “You tell your boss if he ever pulls this stunt again, angels will be the last of his worries. Got it!”

“Woah, M-Mr. Felix, it’s not--”

“Hold on Bends.” Cup held him back with a hand on his shoulder. Not that he needed to. It looked like a breeze would not him over. And Cup wanted to see the cat face off with the mad scientist.

“I wouldn’t go threatening, Black Hat.” Flug pulled himself free of the cat’s grasp and dusted himself off. “You have no say in their affairs anyway.”

Felix actually looked like he wanted to punch the man. Interesting.

“Wait a second there big guy,” Yakko piped up. “The injuries are mostly our fault.”

“Yeah, Bendy woulda been back sooner if we hadn’t gone a little too far,” Wakko admitted. Cup frowned. Zanies usually could go too far and forget that not everyone can pull themselves back together again. Still, they seemed to have some nicks and cuts here and there. The only one that seemed completely fine was Yakko. And taking responsibility? What the hell happened?

“It’s my fault he’s hurt, Mr. Felix. He was trying to stop it.” Dot’s head was hung low in real shame. Oh wow. That was rare.

“Don’t worry about it, Dot.” Bendy shifted uncomfortably, not looking at her.

Felix looked over the Warners with a furrowed brow. He pulled back from Flug and crossed his arms. He seemed conflicted. He looked at Bendy again. Finally, he sighed. “At least all of you are
back and safe.”

“Bendy!” Boris came crashing through the hall from the back room. The noise and questions picked up again. Flug inched his way back toward the front door. Oh no. It wasn’t gonna be that easy. Cup slipped away from the group and stopped the mad scientist before he opened the door.

“Those zanies may have covered for you and Hat this time, but I see the kid in that shape again after visiting you lot, and you’ll be dealing with me,” Cup promised.

Flug stiffened like Cup had electrocuted him. “Y-you wouldn’t try anything against Lord Hat.”

Cup snorted and smirked. “Try me, nimrod. After what you put me through, I’m capable of anything, remember?”

Flug shivered, sweat staining his stupid paper bag. “I-You-It wasn’t like that.”

“Demon’s blood?” Cup hissed quietly. “Cussing demon’s blood? You really gonna try and deny it?”

Flug hunched his shoulders and cowered, shutting his eyes and lifting his arms to hide behind. Cup wanted to punch the weasel, but he refrained. That could wait. Besides, it was old history. There was something else he wanted more. He grabbed the man by the shirt and brought him nose to bag.

“Now listen. You tell that damn boss of yours that he still owes Alice and Bendy a favor for that night he ditched them. They kept their end of the deal while he just cussing stood on the sidelines. When he wants to make even, tell him to come talk to me. I know how he can make it up to them.”

Flug’s eyes widened from behind his dark goggles. “Wha--"

“Now, get outta here before I blast you out the window.” Cup shoved him at the door. Flug stumbled and grabbed the doorknob to save himself from falling. Flug looked at him before scrabbling out into the snow.

“Cup?” Mugs poked his head into the hall. He glanced out the window to the retreating form of Flug. “Is everything okay?”

“It’s fine,” Cup said and came back to the front room. Red was looking over the Warners. Bendy was gone. “Where’s the shrimp?”

“Went to bed. Apparently he’s exhausted,” Mugs said. “Guess whatever happened tuckered him out.” Cup nodded. They’d get the full story eventually. Now that the shrimp was back, they could go out and take care of a few things without having to worry about anyone doing anything stupid here.

“Alright, then let’s go,” Cup said and reached for the door. Mugs’ good mood dropped like a rock. Cup almost snorted. They both knew that they had held back on reporting for too long. Even if there was a funeral, the boss wanted to hear from them when they got back, and one did not leave the Devil waiting.

“Hey.” Boris popped up behind them. “Where are you goin’? I thought fellas would want to know what Hat did.”

“Oh! Uh…” Mugs shifted uncertainly.

“I have something I forgot to get. We shouldn’t be too long,” Cup cut in. Boris’ ears perked up.

“Oh? Then, can I come with?” He asked hopefully. Cussing kid with his innocent look.
“It’s really not gonna take us that long,” Cup tried.

“Good, then it shouldn’t be an issue that I come,” Boris figured. Don’t snap at the kid.

“Are you sure, Boris? Bendy just got back and you were really worried,” Mugs said.

“Yeah, but now he’s asleep, and I have all this nervous energy.” Boris’ ears fell and his smile became sheepish.

“Did I hear something about energy?” Finley stuck his head out of the front room. Damnit! Were they in a circus or something?

“Yeah?” Mugs raised a brow.

“Well kid, how ‘bout comin’ with Sammy and I on deliveries? We gotta get some things for Granny too. That should help ya burn away those nerves and help some folks out. Whadda say?” The small fox swaggered in and tossed an arm over Boris’ shoulder.

“Okay!” Boris perked up.

“Berries. Then, go get a coat and some real boots. We’ll be in the cold a lot,” Finley told him. Boris nodded and headed back to the stairs.

Finley turned to Cup. “And I know ya mean well, pal, but I don’t think Bendy would appreciate murder in his name, no matter the good intention behind it.”

Cup jerked back, eyes widening in surprise. “What?”

Finley snickered and lifted a hand to his large ears, flicking one forward. “What? You didn’t think these things were just for decoration, did ja?” He pocketed his hands smugly. “You pull some of the best surprise faces, Cuppy, you really do.”

Cup grit his teeth.

The casual teasing changed to a more serious frown. “Now, I don’t know what you two are up to. Nothing good, I’d think, if you didn’t want to bring Boris.” Cussing again with the suspicion! “But I like you fellas. I really do, and I wanna trust that whatever you’re doing, it’s to help us. So, I’ll leave ya alone.” He winked. “Just remember that trust is easy to lose, ‘kay?” With that, the fox moseyed away.

The cuss was that about? Cup blinked and shook his head. Best leave before anyone else tried to tag along. Mugs pulled a coat from the closet and the two left the house in a crunch of snow and ice. Cuphead used to love the winter. Snowball flights, snowmen, snow angels, sledding, and finding different animal tracks. It had been fun on the islands, but now it seemed to just weigh him down.

The city was starting to look better, but the weather had slowed things down to a crawl. Rubble and destruction had been cleaned up and moved out. several windows and streets were fixed. But there were still a number of buildings covered in tarps or with gaping holes, and places that had statues or trees were noticeably bare.

Still the city had moved on. People were running around doing their own things, going their own way. They got some more looks than he was used to. Probably from them being in the news again...or just the way they looked. Dish people weren’t the most common thing in the city, after all.

They got to the bar and went in. The young ram looked up expectantly then gave him a nod. Several
people stopped conversations at their arrival and turned to look at them. Cup sneered at the room and headed for the basement stairs. Mugs pulled his scarf up and eyed the room warily. They got down the old wooden stairs and to the brick wall with no problem. If Cup had to fight outta this place, he was gonna be steamed. A couple of news articles and suddenly everyone thought he was slippin’ or something. Cussing morons.

He wrote up the Devil’s door symbols and waited for the hole to open. He really hoped this didn’t end in a beating. He’d have a cussing time explaining any injuries to the group after this Hat fiasco.

To his luck and his annoyance, only King Dice appeared from the dark void in the ground.

“Well, well, if it isn’t the Cup brothers.” He smirked and crossed one leg over the other as he leaned against the wall. “I was wonderin’ when you’d decide to call.” He waved his hand like a starfallen magician and two rolled up newspapers appeared in his gloved hand. “You two really like the news! I would have never known! Three articles, and it’s hardly been two weeks since the boss took away that glamour.” He chuckled and shook the papers out, showing the picture of the funeral and the one from in front of the hotel in Heela City. “Hope no one's lookin’ for ya boys. Could get messy if they see these.” Dice chuckled darkly, his eyes flashed green.

Cup narrowed his eyes. “Shut your yap! We’re reportin’. We don’t needa listen to your cussin’ barkin’.”

“Someone’s grumpy today. What’s the matter, cupman? Upset that your little actress friend died?” Dice asked and waved his hand, making the papers disappear again. “It looks like it was a handsome funeral.”

Cup didn’t go for the bait even if he itched to punch the schmuck. He could feel his brother’s agitation next to him. “Why the hell was Yosemite Sam at the town nearest the machine part?”

Dice raised his brow. “What?”

“Why the hell does the boss have debtors near the parts?” Cup demanded. “I thought we were here to find the damn things, but he already knows where they all are, doesn’t he!” Cup accused.

Dice’s grin became dangerous. “That sounds like an accusation, dish.”

Cup lifted his head. “It damn well is! What the hell is going on! What’s he planning?”

Dice threw his head back and laughed. Cup lifted a hand, but Mugs grabbed his arm and yanked it down. He shook his head quickly. Cup glared at Mugs before turning the glare back on the casino manager. “And that, little man, is none of your business.” Dice stepped up and grinned down at him. “You seem to be forgetting your place, recently. To help remind you, the boss has a few things for you to do around town.” Dice pulled out an envelope and flicked it at him. Cup caught it. It was sealed with wax. A fancy D with horns was pressed into the wax. On the other side was Cup and Mugs’ names. Cup looked up to Dice from the envelope. “Ya got three days to finish it, got it? Three. You fail, you get a weekend in hell. The boss doesn’t care what you have going on up here.”

Cup grit his teeth. He had a good guess at what this was. Grunt work. Something they hadn’t had to do in a while. “What about Sam?”

“What about him? He isn’t your problem.” Dice lifted his hands and shrugged. He grinned and waved his hand. The hole reformed.

“Wait! Who else!” Cup called. Dice snickered and winked before he jumped in the hole and disappeared.
“Slimy little demon hussy!” Cup punched the wall. Pain throbbed up his arm satisfyingly.

“Don’t break your hand because of him Cup.” Mugs sighed. “What’re the jobs?” he asked into his scarf.

Cup snorted and ripped the damn thing open. He pulled out the expensive paper a small black marble also rolled out onto Cup’s hand. Cuphead pocketed the marble and unfolded the letter. Mugs leaned over his shoulder to read it.

You have three tasks to finish in three days.

First, you are to gather those of the criminal world that stand in opposition of me. Those that attacked you. Warn them that I will not stand for those that will get in my way. Crush the marble and show them what appears as an example of what will happen to them if they dare interfere again.

Cup had wondered how long the boss was going to allow the mob bosses to run amok around here. Apparently, they were getting too nosy now for his taste.

Second, bring me Jeremy Fairfax alive. I have an offer for him.

Cup’s eye twitched. A cussing new debtor, if he agreed. Why did this schmuck sound familiar? Oh wait, hadn’t he been one of the Sykes’ cronies? Yeah, that pretty boy.

Third, report on everything you know about Black Hat’s recent activities.

Cup felt his stomach turn. Whelp. He knew that Cup wanted the boss to focus on Hat and hopefully Ava, but this was too soon, and Bendy was more in the cross hairs than he’d liked. Speaking of. What the hell had Hat done to him? Was this tied to that? Mugs visibly paled next to Cup. “Not too bad, right Mugs?” Cup forced a small smile.

“What if it’s about Bendy?” Mugs asked.

“He won’t hurt Bendy,” Cup said quickly. He didn’t know that, but stars, he hoped. There was no reason for the boss to go after him now, was there? Unless something changed that Cup wasn’t aware of. The anger at Dice’s taunts flared up in him again. Cussing hell smear.

He pocketed the ‘chores,’ and they headed out. He tossed a tip on the counter for the bartender and walked away with his head held high. He ignored the goons that watched him walk away. They were all going to be set straight after whatever the boss had in this marble.

“So, are we going to go find this guy today?” Cup hummed. “We can ask around, I wanna visit someone else first.”

“Who?” Mugs asked.

Cup smirked.

He headed down the street to a familiar bar. A bar he hadn’t returned to since before they left town not that long ago. “Uh, Cup?” Mugs asked nervously. He paused and looked up at the sign. “What are you--”

Cup went inside without stopping and walked straight up to the bar. Mr. Winky was drying off a glass and didn’t look up as he greeted the ding of the bell. “Welcome to m- ah!” he cried out as Cup grabbed the back of his head and slammed his face down on the counter. Mr. Winky dropped the glass. It shattered in the now silent room. Cup ignored the eyes on him. Mugs came into the room
and quickly took his spot next to Cup. Mr. Winky had yanked back and covered his face with a hand, blood dripped between his fingers. Cup hoped he busted the schmuck’s nose.

“Wh- you two!” Mr. Winky gasped nasally. Cup let a sharp grin spread across his face.

“Hey there, Wink! Long time, no see. Glad you remember me,” Cup said proudly. The man lowered his hand. “Ah-ah.” Cup lifted a finger. “None of that now. See, I have a favor to ask of ya, Wink. See, my boss has a little message for that cute group you pulled together that other time. Ya know, the ones you shipped me to for a little chat?”

Mr. Winky narrowed his eyes, shifting back. Did he think he could run? That was cute. Cup chuckled. “So, I need ya to call those fellas together again for a meetin’ tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow!” Mr. Winky gasped. “You think I’ll--”

“Oh I know you will.” Cup lit his finger. “You see, because if ya don’t, I’m gonna have some free time, and I can get a bit destructive when I’m not busy. This place could make a great bonfire.” Cup hummed conversationally. “And there is that underground shop you have by the docks! Oh, and the bank investments!” Mr. Winky paled. Cup smiled cheerfully. “Yeah, I know about you. I even know where you’ll run to if you try to skip town, Wink-buddy. So, I wouldn’t bother if I was you. Just be a good little informant, and inform them that we are meeting tomorrow at ten.”

Cup heard shifting behind him. “Hell, come too! You might learn something important.” Cup took a step back, then two. The room was charged with tension. “Oh and for every person missing, that’s a finger I’m taking off you, got it?”

Mr. Winky glared at him with fury. Cup almost laughed at his outrage. “Thanks pal.” Cup walked smugly out of the bar with Mugs. He pocketed his hand and hummed as they left.

“You…” Mugs stopped whatever he was about to say and just shook his head. “So, is that it?”

“We should find out where this Fairfax is, then ask Alice about her time at the casino, hope she’ll spill any information we don’t already know.” Cup shrugged. “Then, we can report after we get this guy.”

“Okay,” Mugs agreed. “So go talk to Mortimer?”

“Yeah, unless there’s any other informant that might know.”

“I think you slammed the other best one in town into a counter,” Mugs stated deadpan.

Cup snickered. Mugs rolled his eyes. “At least you’re having fun.”

“Oh c’mon, Mugs! That guy had it comin’ to him,” Cup said. Mugs sighed and nodded. “Think I broke his nose?”

“Prolly, and maybe chipped one of his huge teeth,” Mugs said.

“Oh! That should be what I do next time that twerp thinks he can mess with us.” Cup grinned.

“It’d make his smile less creepy,” Mugs muttered and tugged his scarf back down.

“Those are some tombstone teeth, huh?” Cup asked. Mugs snickered. They went to the rat’s favorite restaurant, an upscale little place with tables outside next to the city park. The park was rather barren with half the trees gone and destroyed, the other half bare under the winter snow. They crunched
their way into the place, stomping ice off their pants and shoes. Cup scanned the room, and lucky him, found the rat in the far corner.

He was leaning over a table toward a busty dame in a dress that seemed far too thin for this weather.

“So whadda say, doll? Cha-cha-cha!” Mortimer winked.

The lady frowned. “I’d say you’re a pig, but that gives them a bad name, so you’re obviously a rat!” she huffed and stood to leave.

“I’m a mouse!” Mortimer snapped.

“And I have standards,” she said over her shoulder and walked out of the building, nose in the air.

Cup whistled. Mortimer turned to glare at him. “Nice job striking out with the ladies.” He chuckled.

The mouse rolled his eyes and sat down at the now empty table. “Oh ha-ha. What you do want glass head?”

“I’m ceramic, and we need to find a schmuck.” Cup smiled and slid into the seat across from him. Mugs following his lead.

“Oh yeah? Who?” Mortimer glanced between them.

“Jeremy Fairfax,” Mugs said. Mortimer’s brows shot up. He straightened in his seat.

“Yeah?” He breathed. Oh? That was an interesting reaction.

“You know the guy?” Cup asked.

“We used to have lunch from time to time,” Mortimer said and shrugged. So a client. Cup wasn’t too surprised since the pretty boy used to work for Robert Sykes. “Whadda want with him?”

“Ya don’t need ta know,” Cup said. Mortimer scowled. “We just have some business with him. Ya know where he’s at?”

Mortimer lifted his snout and hummed. Cup frowned. Oh brother, not this act. The damn mouse knew, but he was gonna play hard. Mortimer tapped his chin. “Well, I think I heard something about him getting released from prison recently. But I just can’t quite recall where he went after that.”

Cup rolled his eyes. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a roll of cash. He tossed it to the sleeze. Mortimer snatched it off the table and slipped it into his coat. “I think he and a fella name Pete have become chummy. Pretty sure you can run inta him if you go by Pete’s restaurant on the north side a town,” Mortimer said. “If not there, he got a cheap place near the docks. Guess he’s havin’ it rough trying ta find work or somethin’.”

“Thanks Mortimer,” Cup said and stood. “We’ll be seeing ya around.” Cup put his hands in his pockets, Mugs behind him. It was going to be a long walk back to the house in the snow.

They reached the door when the mouse called out to them. “Hey, you remember that you still owe me a favor, right?” Cup paused and looked over his shoulder to the mouse. Mortimer had a glint in his eyes.


“Not yet, just checkin’.” Mortimer’s grin seemed more like a smirk. “It’s good to make sure I still
have my options.” Sleeze. Cup shared a glance with Mugs before walking out into the cold. Cup wasn’t sure he liked that reminder.

They walked quite a ways before they got to a familiar street.

“Hey, can we warm up at their place?” Mugs asked.

Cup shrugged. “As long as someone’s home, I don’t see why not.” They turned and took a flight of stairs up before knocking on the girls’ door.


“Sad you can’t see your girlfriend?” Cup teased.

Mugs snapped his head up and pouted at him. “She’s not my girlfriend.”

“Oh please, you two are a thing.” Cup rolled his eyes. “Practically all over each other.”

“A-am not!” Mugs’ shoulders hunched.

“Have you kissed her yet?” Cup elbowed him playfully as they got back out on the street.

“Cuuup,” Mugs moaned.

“That’s a no,” Cup laughed. Mugs leaned down and scooped up a handful of snow. “Woah there, don’t start anything you aren’t prepared to finish.”

Mugs narrowed his eyes and threw his arm back. Uh-oh. Cup dashed away, eyes on Mugs so he could dodge. “Why run! Take it like a man, Cup!” The snowball barely missed him. He crouched and armed himself with the powder to retaliate.

“Ha! Me? You could never win at a snowball fight!” Cup laughed and tossed his projectile at his brother. Mugs ducked just in time and rolled back up with another snowball. “Why run! Take it like a man, Cup!” The snowball barely missed him. He crouched and armed himself with the powder to retaliate.

“Time out!” Mugs made a ‘T’ sign with his hands. He panted, his breath coming out in clouds. “Let’s warm up in there. I’m nearly an icicle.” Cup snickered but dropped his snowball.

“Alright, victory is mine,” Cup claimed.

“No way! This is a temporary truce.” Mugs argued as he headed for the door.

“Sore loser,” Cup sang. Mugs whirled around and nailed Cup in the chest with a big handful of snow. “You little cheating schmuck!” Cup gasped. Mugs ducked indoors, a cheeky smile on his face. He had just broken all the respectful rules of a snowball war truce! Oh. He was going to pay. But Cup wouldn’t be able to get him in the shop, and he knew it. That sneaky dish!

Cup narrowed his eyes as he stepped inside.

“What are you two doing! You’re both soaking wet!” Betty gasped. Mugs chuckled and rubbed the back of his head shyly.
“Sorry Ms. Betty. We were hoping we could warm up in here for a minute if that’s okay,” Mugs asked.

“Okay! Please! You’ll catch your death like that! Come in, I have some cocoa in the back.” Betty came around the counter and quickly ushered them to the back of the store.

Holly was in the back, counting things on the shelves. She turned as they came in. The girl blinked. “What happened to you two? Did you jump into the bay?” she said with a little humor.

“You could say that,” Mugs chuckled.

“More like you’re a cheat,” Cup muttered.

Mugs sighed. “Such a sore loser.” D-did he just! Cup glared at him.

“You are putting yourself in quite the corner little brother,” Cup warned.

Mugs put his hands on his hips. “You don’t scare me big brother.” This little troublemaker was going to get it.

Holly smiled at the both of them, arms folded. She leaned over and looked at Betty. “Looking for the towels? I just put a bunch of cleaned ones in the cupboard over there.” She pointed.

“Thank you dearie.” Betty flitted over to the cupboard. She opened the door and there was a sleepy meep. Cup glanced over to see if he could spot the little critter. He couldn’t. It was all white. Betty tutted, shifting the towels, and the creature jumped up onto her shoulder. When Snowball saw the two of them, though, she gave a happy meep. She leapt...and rapidly drifted to the floor halfway to them. Holly turned, giving Snowball a studying look.

The tiny critter sighed and scampered across the rest of the floor. When she reached his feet, she looked up and meeped. Holly folded her arms. “Good to see her allegiances haven’t changed whatsoever when she sees you,” she said with chagrin.

Cup blinked and crouched down to offer her his hand. “Is she okay?” he asked. “She’s not floating like usual.” Snowball scampered up his arm, pausing to chitter happily under his handle before bouncing to his head.

Holly hummed. “She’s going bald in some spots, which makes it harder to fly. It might be the stress from the Far West. I’m not sure. Usually the bristles grow back pretty quickly.”

“Don’t most plants die in the winter?” Mugs asked with a worried glance. Cup blinked. He hadn’t thought of that.

Holly’s brows lowered, and she gave Mugs a piercing stare. “I don’t know what your talking about,” she said with a huff, hands coming up to cover Snowball defensively. Which had her on her tiptoes to reach Cup’s head. Cup gave her a curious smirk at how close they had to stand for her to do that.

“Gettin’ a little personal there H.” Cup chuckled and winked.

She tried to give him a deadpan expression, but her brow twitched. “Well, I…” She started. Then she took a step back.

“I didn’t mean anything by it! It’s just...there’s so much snow outside.” Mugs trailed off.

“She’s hedgehog too. Maybe she just goes bald during the winter,” Holly mumbled.
“Do hedgehog’s hibernate?” Cup asked and lifted a hand to his head to tease the small animal. He would try to tickle her, and she would dodge around his cup.

Holly shrugged. “I don’t know. I’ll have to look into it.”

“Hey! Then, maybe she’s a bit more like a tree! Like she sleeps in the winter, and then her fluff will come back in spring,” Mugs suggested brightly.

“Well, if that’s the case, then I might have a bald, sleeping hedgehog on my hands soon,” Holly said. Snowball leaned over the edge of Cup’s head and meeped indignantly. Cup couldn’t help but chuckle at the mental image.

He felt the critter mess around in his hair. It was probably a mess. Holly watched, brows low. “How does it even get wet?” she murmured to herself. “It’s a bubble.” Cup raised a brow and smirked. When was she going to learn they didn’t answer those questions unless there was a reason to?

“It would appear so, huh?” He couldn’t help but tease her curiosity. She scowled at him. “Hey, Holly. When are we doing that night plan?”

Mugs raised a brow and paused in drying off his face and taking off his coat.

Holly grinned. “I was thinking the weekend after next.” She hummed. “The only problem is...Mickey.” She sighed. “Everything will be harder with his leg like that. I had a dance club in mind, but with things the way they are, we’ll have to plan something else.” She clicked her tongue, thinking.

“Uh? What’s going on?” Mugs looked between Cup and Holly in confusion. “A dance club?”

Holly gave him a mischievous look. “Hey Mugs, wanna help us set up a huge group date?” she said. “Cup and I are plotting on how to get Bendy and….” She lowered her voice, making sure no one was near. “Alice on a date together.”

Mugs eyes widened, then a smirk crossed his face that would probably surprise anyone that didn’t really know Mugs very well. “Oh really? You think you can pull that off?”

“If they think they’re helping Mickey and the girl he likes, it shouldn’t be too hard.” Cup chuckled. Mugs puckered his lips and lifted a hand to his chin thoughtfully.

“Which brings us back to the question of what Mickey can do,” Holly said, folding her arms. “We could do a movie. But nobody talks to anybody doing that.” She hummed.

“And Alice could easily keep a distance there,” Mugs said. “No, we’ll need something that we go as a group, but interact as individual couples from time to time.” Mugs frowned. “Damn. The dance would have been perfect.” No kidding bro.

Holly nodded. “If only there were a way to help Mickey.”

“What? We can’t make him a peg leg or something?” Cup snorted.

“You can’t really dance on that,” Mugs frowned. “At least not without a lot of practice.”

“The guy works in a circus. I’m sure he can pull off a few tricks we don’t know about.” Cup shrugged, but it sounded weak, even to him. “Dinner wouldn’t bad an idea, but then no one will have the one-on-one we want.”
Holly scowled. “Let’s think about this some more.”

“Too bad it’s winter. A carnival would work for a trade off couple things and group things,” Mugs said.

“Yeah, but he works in a circus. Would taking her somewhere that feels like work really be a good first date?” Cup asked. Holly nodded in agreement. Actually, was it a first date? Cup had no clue. It was for the other couple they were aiming for, but they had to be convincing with the mice.

“Maybe a haunted house, and you go through as couples?” Holly suggested, tapping her face.

“But there aren’t any now. We all missed Halloween thanks to all this mad running around we’ve been doing,” Mugs said. Cup was secretly grateful for that. He wasn’t sure if he was ready to see those Halloween Town freaks after Nightmare Night. He was still a bit miffed how some of them acted. Sure, they were meant to scare, but Jack had made it clear they don’t harm physically. A lot of those freaks pushed it that night with those monsters and wild animals.

Holly frowned. “Actually, that might be for the best. We’re all stressed enough.” She hummed again. “Too bad there aren’t any theme parks nearby. The nearest is on Coney Island.”

“I think the snow would have them shut down anyway,” Cup muttered.

Holly sighed. “You’re right. I’m not even thinking straight,” she said, folding her arms.

“Wish Christmas was closer,” Mugs said. “People usually have some romantic jazz going on around then, but I think we’ll still have to wait a couple of weeks for that.”

“At this rate, we might end up waiting a couple weeks anyways. Maybe it’s for the best.” A mischievous smirk scrawled onto her face. “Going to a romantic event might be fun.”

Mugs gave her a confused look before a flush climbed up his neck, and he ducked away. She gave a bark of laughter. “Mugs, you’re so cute!” she cackled.

“I-I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said into his scarf. “I’m not the focus here.”

“No but you are definitely a part of it.” Cup raised his brows. He smirked, but he was sure Mugs could see he didn’t mean it.

Holly just hummed happily, patting Mugs on the shoulder. Mugs forced an embarrassed smile to Holly.

“Oh! Cuphead, Mugman, I didn’t know you were here,” Alice gasped from the doorway. She came in, her surprise quickly changing to a beautiful smile. “How are you both?”

“Wish Christmas was closer,” Mugs said. “People usually have some romantic jazz going on around then, but I think we’ll still have to wait a couple of weeks for that.”

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“Oh! Cuphead, Mugman, I didn’t know you were here,” Alice gasped from the doorway. She came in, her surprise quickly changing to a beautiful smile. “How are you both?”

“We’re doing fine,” Cup said. “How ‘bout yourself? The cold not bothering you much?”

She giggled. “It’s snow problem. The mountains around my home could get pretty chilly.”

Holly chuckled. Mugs snorted a laugh. “Good one.”

Alice beamed. “How’s everyone at the house?”

Mugs gave Cup a glance. Like hell he knew what happened to Bendy and the zanies. He wasn’t sure they should get into it like gossiping old women. “You girls should drop by. I think it’s been a long day for Bendy.”
Concern flashed in Alice’s eyes. “Oh? Did something happen?”

Cup lifted a hand to wave off the comment. “Better he explain than me.” Mugs raised a brow but didn’t fight him on it. Alice turned her questioning look to Holly. She shrugged in confusion, looking concerned.

“I think it’s okay,” Cup said, so they wouldn’t go ditching work to check on the demon. “But a visit to cheer him up might be what he needs.” Mugs’ eyes widened before he looked away, seemingly distracting himself watching Snowball.

Alice’s cheeks got a hint darker. “I think we can manage that.” Holly’s smile curled up on both sides.

Cup smiled. “Good. Well, we’ve been away long enough that they’ll think we ended up in a snow drift somewhere. We better get back.”

Alice took a small step toward them. “Let Granny know—”

“I’m sure the old gopher is expecting you.” Cup gave the women a two finger salute before turning to head out.

“I’m not even close to dry yet,” Mugs muttered, grabbing his coat again and putting the towel down.

“You’ll live,” Cup said, then felt a weight shift on his head. Oh yeah. He almost forgot. He turned back and carefully extracted the dandehog from his hair. “Don’t think she’d enjoy a trip through the ice,” he said and handed her off to Holly.

“Thank you.” She shook her head. “It was bad enough when I lost her when we got back.” He nodded to her and Alice again before heading for the door.

“You fellas are heading out there again already?” Betty as with a disapproving glint in her dark eyes.

“Yeah, people are expecting us,” Cup said and steered to the counter. “But I could take some smokes with me too if ya don’t mind.” He pointed to the boxes of cigarettes behind her. She huffed but rung him up. Cup winked and pocketed the box before they dared the snow again.

The two walked in silence for a few feet before Mugs opened his big mouth. “That was really nice of you to invite them for Bendy.”

Cup snorted and lit a cigarette with his finger. “What are you talkin’ about? They were gonna show up anyway.”

“Yeah, people are expecting us,” Cup said and steered to the counter. “But I could take some smokes with me too if ya don’t mind.” He pointed to the boxes of cigarettes behind her. She huffed but rung him up. Cup winked and pocketed the box before they dared the snow again.

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Cup snorted and lit a cigarette with his finger. “What are you talkin’ about? They were gonna show up anyway.”

Mugs rolled his eyes. “Oh please, you don’t just do nice things for people. You think about it.”

“Don’t know what you’re talking about, bro,” Cup denied easily.

His little brother snorted. A cloud huffed from his mouth. “Whatever Cup. You can’t lie to me.” Cup just let out a breath of smoke into the cold air. They stayed quiet for another block before Mugs spoke up again.

“You’re teasing me, but you really don’t like that Cala and I are close, do you?” Mugs asked quietly. Cup peeked at him from the corner of his eye. Mugs gaze was serious and guarded.
“You don’t want my opinion on that,” Cup told him and faced forward again.

“I kinda do though,” Mugs said.

“Why?” Cup asked. “Afraid I’ll try something?” He smirked.

Mugs’ expression didn’t change. He stared at Cup expectantly. “Cussing stars Mugs, really? You don’t trust me for nothin’ now, do ya.” Cup couldn’t hold back the jab.

Pain flashed in his brother’s eyes before they went flat again. “Just be honest Cup. What’s wrong with me going on a few dates? Is it me you have a problem with or Cala?”

Cup grit his teeth. He studying Mugs for a long moment. The poor idiot. “Both,” he finally muttered between his teeth. That seemed to throw him for a loop. Mugs’ eyes widened before he schooled his features again. He really was the pits at hiding his emotions. Thus him always hiding behind that cussing scarf.

“Why?” Mugs breathed.

Cup let a breath of smoke out through his nose, it whisped and curled away from him. “Because you’re both cussing debtors, that’s why. You’re both setting yourselves up for a hell of a bad time when the boss finds out,” Cup said. Mugs opened his mouth but Cup kept going. “She’s a cussing runner, Mugs. We’re the ones that had hunted her down last time. I mean damnit, man! You’re his starfallen lapdog! You don’t think that hellspawn won’t notice at some point?”

“He thinks she’s dead or gone Cup! He isn’t looking for her,” Mugs argued, his eyes narrowing.

“Oh really!” Cup snapped. “I bet he’s pretty damn curious where her soul went if she cussing died then! He has that damn train, so it isn’t like a ghost can try to move on without him knowing.”

“Cup.” Mugs gasped in offense.

“Look.” Cup sighed and tried to rein in his frustration. “I just don’t wanna see the day when the boss orders you to take her contract.”

Mugs lifted his chin. “I won’t.”

Cup glared at him. “Then, it’ll be your contract.”

Mugs continued to hold that stubborn glint in his eyes. “I still won’t.”

“So what? You’ll run too? How ya gonna help Boris and Bendy if ya do that Mugsy?” Cup sneered.

“I’ll find a way. I’m sure I can still be useful. There are plenty of debtors that avoided collectors and the boss for years,” Mugs argued.

“None of them were this high up on the damn totem pole bro.” Cup took another long drag of his smoke.

Mugs pursed his lips. “I’ll find a way,” he said stubbornly. “I know there has to be something I can do.”

“And have you thought about what running would do to me?” Cup added. Mugs snapped his head up to look at Cup in surprised confusion. “You think I’ll be allowed to sit on the sidelines while you run off on your little rebellion? If he doesn’t force me to go after you, he’ll be taking my contract
too.”

Fear crossed Mugs face. “You think he’ll take your soul?”

Cup growled. “Yeah! I do! And then, he’ll send me after you.”

Mugs gulped. “We can go together then. The three of us. You said you were working on a plan after all.”

Cup sighed and shook his head. “Just leave it Mugs.” They reached Baker Street. It was quiet as the grave as they walked through the snow, other footprints leading them down the sidewalk.

Cup and Mugs got to the house, shook off the snow for the last time. Cup sighed and pulled out a comb to fix his hair. Mugs shrugged out of his coat and hung it up to dry. Cup was determined that they weren’t going outside for the rest of the afternoon. He was done with ice.

“We’re back,” Mugs called. That got several calls welcoming them home from around the house.

“That was pretty long for a short trip!” Boris’ head popped out of the dining room. “What were you guys even doing?”

“Oh, we went to see the girls at Betty’s shop.” Mugs shrugged.

“Uh?” Boris perked his ears. “Why?”

Mugs turned a mischievous glance at Cup. Cup raised a brow. What? Mugs sauntered into the dining room. Cup followed warily. He spared an annoyed glance at Jerry who was reading in the front room. His eyes widened before he ducked down into the book again. Spineless sleaze. Felix was in the dining room with Boris, no sign of Bendy. The cat smiled at them in greeting. There were pages and books on the table. Looked like they were back to studying those rune things again. “Well, we were talking to Holly about setting up Mickey and Minnie and Bendy and Alice on a group date with a bunch of us.” Boris pulled a face, wrinkling his snort in derision. What the hell had Bendy put the pup through to make him pull a face like that? Cup knew the pipsqueak’s flirting was moonrocks bad, but there had to be a few stories he was missing.

Felix’ ears perked. “Oh? Mickey?”

“Yeah, turns out that he’s been pinning for this dame for a while and everyone thinks they just need the right opportunity.” Mugs shrugged. “Problem is that we are struggling to find a good date spot.”

“Bendy’s favorite’s are dance clubs but with Mickey…” The wolf’s ears drooped.


“Did someone say Christmas?” Finley and Sammy came in from the back. The fox shook his large ears, little flakes of snow drifted to the ground. Sammy was shivering despite his coat and gloves, his bean pole form probably didn’t retain heat well.

“Yeah, we’re trying to think of a good group date spot where Mickey and his girl can also have some one on one time. It’s turning out to be a bit tricky,” Mugs said.

“A group, huh?” Finley rubbed his chin thoughtfully. “I’ve passed a few clubs--”

“Can’t dance fox,” Cup cut in. The short fox glanced at him before humming.
“Well, that sure throws in a wrench, don’t it?” he muttered.

“What about a candlelit dinner?” Sammy suggested after he shed the large coat and returned from putting it away.

“They need wingmen I think,” Mugs said. “And a group dinner won’t give them the couple time.”

“The pictures come to mind, but ya don’t really get that quality time.” Finley tapped a foot, his tail swished. “Quite the conundrum.”

“Indeed.” Sammy nodded.

“Sadly, it’s too cold for carnivals and festivals,” Felix said. “And since he works at a circus, that might not be the best setup. Could run into the theater problem again.” Running in circles here. Stars, this was annoying.

“Mickey’s also famous.” Boris spoke up. “So, things out in public might be tough. I can see fans stopping them often.”

Bendy came downstairs and eyed the group. He was looking a bit better, still a bit pale in Cup’s opinion. “What’s going on? You all look like you’re stumped.”

“We’re trying to find a good dating spot for Mickey and his lady friend. It needs to be a good place for a group but for them to also have some time to themselves,” Mugs said again. “Dancing clubs would be perfect, but Mickey can’t dance now.” If they started from the top again, Cup was gonna leave.

“It’s tougher than we thought,” Finley admitted.

Bendy furrowed his brow. “Uuuuh, why are we involved in Mickey’s love life all of the sudden?”

“Cause his friends asked Holly, and Holly asked me,” Cup said.

“You?” Bendy came into the room and gave him a skeptical look. “Why the hell would she ask you?” Something glinted in the light. Cup glanced back and saw a gold ring hanging off of Bendy’s tail.

“Because I’m starfallen charming, that’s why!” Cup snapped. Bendy snorted. “Least I don’t get asked what I want on the kid’s menu.” There was a sharp pain in his shin. Cup hissed and hopped away, nearly losing the cigarette from his mouth. Bendy innocently made his way over to the disapproving looks of Felix and Boris. Little cussing pipsqueak and his cussing demon strength! That kick cussing hurt! Damnit! “What the hell is with that new jewelry?”

Bendy blushed and flared at him.

Boris sighed, his face going deadpan. “We haven’t been able to take it off yet.”

“Shush!” Bendy waved a hand at his brother. Oh. There was a story there and Cup was going to find out what it was.

“Alright, enough. I’m sure Christmas will work just fine Mugs,” Felix said. “We’ll all think on it.”

“Too bad Mickey can’t just get a new leg to dance on,” Cup said offhandedly. “Damn, I might need a new leg.” He glared at the smug demon on the other side of the table.

“Holly said a peg leg wouldn’t work.” Mugs sighed.
Bendy snorted. “Course not! You’d need a way to balance or a lot of practice before walking on a peg. And to dance...well, he’d need an ankle and toes or something similar. Something that could take the weight shift for himself and his partner. Something smooth to turn and twist on.” Bendy lifted a hand to the table and tapped the a blank paper.

“What? You have an idea bro?” Boris asked. Bendy glanced at him. Then, his eyes lit up with some excitement Cup hadn’t seen before.

“Maybe...hmm.” Bendy puckered his lips and narrowed his eyes. “Let me think about it, Boris.”

“Oh c’mon! Share with tha class Bendy!” Finley complained. Sammy chuckled. Cup shared a glance with Mugs. His brother was back to smiling and seemingly relaxed. He really was happy here with all these people. Stars, what a headache. Still, he found a smile on his face too.

Chapter End Notes

And some art!

This amazing rendition of everyone soul-switched is by Notweirdjustrandom!
And this art is by Tap. Our Beastly Bendy from last chapter.
Chapter Summary

"Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls! Welcome to another chapter of Inky Mystery! Today's journey is with the wonderful, fantastic Felix the Cat!" Mic announced. "See what the adventurer is doing in his time back in the city."

Chapter Notes

Hello!

Not much to say today. It's hot. I've melted a little bit but I'm still going! I'm scrambling to find work and haven't been the best at answering comments here or questions on the tumblr. I'm sorry. ^^u I will try to do better. I hope you all have an amazing week! Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Felix sighed as he packed away his books to go.

"Thanks again, Mr. Felix," Boris told him. The wolf was in exercise clothes. Seemed that Cup and Mugs were pushing them hard after what happened in Heela. Felix was grateful, but he wanted to be involved in this too. For all of them. He thought the Cup brothers relied on their powers too much. And he wanted to give all of them as much help as possible, since it seemed no matter what he tried, they always ended up separated.

"Sure, Boris. You and Bendy are quick learners. You’ll have runes down in no time." Felix smiled. Boris grinned.

"Alright, enough of the nerd books. Let’s go!" Cup slung an arm around Boris’ shoulders and dragged him to the backyard, the wolf giving Felix a last wave. Bendy and Mugs already out there. Felix sighed. Oh, if only he didn’t have that meeting with the head of the archeological department at the school today. And Bendy and the Warners still hadn’t really explained what happened. Felix was a little worried, but the demon assured him over and over that it was fine. The Cup brothers weren’t pushing for information. Boris wasn’t either. Felix agreed that he needed space, but it was hell! Something had to have happened. Bendy was bruised and cut. The Warners were quiet and subdued. That was unusual for any zany. It had to be serious. It wasn’t his place to push but...

"Ah, Mr. Cat, I was hoping to catch you." Professor Oddswell came down the stairs. There were spots of black on his coat, and Felix couldn’t help but wonder who’d had an attack. "Can you spare a few minutes? I need to talk to you." There was a serious glint in the professor’s buggy eyes. Felix felt his concern deepen. He could use his bag to get to the school quickly. He had a few minutes.

"Sure professor," Felix agreed.
“Excellent.” The gecko led Felix to his office and quickly shut the door behind him. “Now, first, I want to apologize. What I have to say isn’t a pleasant thought. But for caution’s sake, I believe we need to discuss it.”

Felix sat in one of the chairs across from the desk. The professor took his seat quickly and gave Felix a serious look. “Discuss what?” Felix asked, the concern hardening into worry. The professor wasn’t one to beat around the bush.

“You see, I need to talk to you about...Boris,” Oddswell said slowly.

Felix blinked. Boris? Felix had been anticipating Bendy, since he was the one that was sick. What did Boris have to do with anything the doctor was concerned about?

The doctor observed him carefully before continuing. “You see, I am worried about what might happen to him if anything happens to Bendy.”

Felix jerked his head back a bit in surprise. “Excuse me? Professor, I don’t understand.” Felix furrowed his brows. Something happening to Bendy? And happening to Boris? What was the professor talking about?

Oddswell sighed. “You see, Mr. Cat, if Bendy were to pass away suddenly, Boris has nowhere to go. He’d be a ward of the state, I think the saying goes.” The gecko snorted, showing a little of his opinion on the laws. “I’m not sure if he’d remain in Toon Town or be sent back to Sillyvision or sent to some other foster home or orphanage.”

Felix froze. His mind tripped over ‘Bendy were to pass away’ and then kicked into overdrive. Where was this coming from? Why was the professor bringing it up? How bad was Bendy? The cat knew he wasn’t good, but was he really that bad? Worry shifted to fear in his gut, turning it uncomfortably.

“Since Boris and Bendy are the only ones that can see the map, I can’t afford to lose them both. All those that are sick can’t afford to lose them,” the professor explained gently.

“I-is Bendy okay?” Felix choked out. He knew it seemed bad back at Heela, but the aftermath of an ink attack always seemed bad. He knew it was dangerous, but somewhere down the line, Felix had started to believe they’d get this machine found and fixed first.

Professor Oddswell sighed. “If he were my patient, I wouldn’t be allowed to tell. But since he is my subject, I am at liberty to disclose the truth that he has been unwilling to share.” Fear dropped into cold dread at Felix’ feet. “He isn’t good, Mr. Cat. I told him that unless something changes, I can’t see him reaching the end of the month. Even if he does, I am uncertain of Christmas.”

Oh stars above.

“He knows that?” Felix whispered. Professor Oddswell nodded. He hadn’t said anything to anyone. He hadn’t acted differently. How long had he known? Probably since they had gotten back. He was still smiling and yelling and just as determined as ever. Felix hadn’t noticed. Felix ears pinned down to the sides of his head.

“This is why I want to take this precaution. I’m not saying it’s indefinite. Bendy is a very strong-willed young man, but I have to take as few risks as possible when it comes to getting a cure.” The professor adjusted his glasses, his tongue flicking out in his nervous tick. “Right now, Bendy is barely of legal age and has custody of Boris. But if he doesn’t make it, I don’t want to go jumping through hoops to get Boris back to us,” Oddswell explained.
Felix looked up. “What are you suggesting Professor?”

“For one of us adults to have co-custody of Boris. So that if the worst happens, Boris doesn’t have to be shuffled off to some unknown corner of the country,” Professor Oddswell explained.

Felix ears perked up. “Professor?”

“You are close with the brothers and have excellent teaching skills,” the gecko said, his tail tip twitching back and forth. “I really think you’d be the best chance of help for Boris if the time ever came.” Felix’ jaw dropped.


“Oh? Why not?” The professor tilted his head, his buggy eyes boring into Felix.

“I have work! I do a lot of traveling! I don’t even have a house! What kind of life is it for a kid to always be on the road like that? What would they think if I just suddenly request to adopt Boris out of nowhere like that?” Felix said. “Besides, I’m not father material!” Even saying the word felt strange and foreign on his tongue.

The professor chuckled in amusement. “Mr. Cat, you sell yourself too short. You have already made time out of your work to be a part of this quest. In terms of traveling, I’m sure it would be a far richer life experience than the one either of them came from.” Amusement shined in the gecko’s eyes. “And as for father material, I believe both of them may already see you as a father figure.”

Felix opened his mouth to protest.

*Thanks Mr. Felix!*

*Thanks Dad.*

Boris’ bright smile. Bendy’s open happiness. They...did? A strange warmth pulsed his Felix’ chest at the thought.

“And I know Bendy is of legal age. But if it would be too strange to only take Boris, then why not adopt them both? Sure, we may not have to worry the state will try to take him, but I think he’d appreciate being in a family with his brother as a brother, instead of a guardian, all papers signed.” Professor Oddswell smirked.

“I...I’ll have to think about it, sir. That’s a lot to ask of someone.” Felix frowned at the former teacher. The gecko chuckled.

“I only ask what I think is necessary, no matter how uncomfortable it is. The fact of the matter is that Boris needs someone to help tie him here if Bendy is gone,” the professor said. Felix frowned. “Though, I will do everything within my power to prevent such a fate.”

Felix left the house shortly after that. He took off his bag and tossed it into the street. It changed into his motorcycle and helmet. He put on the helmet and kicked the bike into life. Him? A father? Him of all people? And to the B-Brothers no less. He tried to imagine what it would be like. Would he need to get a house? Probably. He didn’t want to leave them to a tent, especially since most of their childhoods were on the streets. How would he do it though? Would he take them with him on his work? Would his colleagues tolerate that? Would the boys? What about school? Neither of them had ever been, despite their intelligence. They had taught themselves to read and basic math skills, even some advanced things. Then, would he have to leave them to the house and school alone for weeks
or even months at a time? Would they be able to handle school?

And what if the professor’s ‘worst case scenario’ happened? Felix would never be able to replace Bendy, nor would he want to. Would he really be any support to Boris if he lost his brother? Felix wasn’t sure. He had no idea what he would do. Would asking him to continue with the quest be too cruel with the loss of his brother? The professor only saw the numbers, but it would be world shattering to Boris. Felix wasn’t really sure if he’d be able to keep going if he lost Bendy. They were just that close.

Then, there was the media. Felix sighed. He didn’t really care what people thought of him. Not anymore, at least. But the paparazzi had some influence in people’s lives. Felix couldn’t deny that. Look at the fiasco they had over Snow White’s passing, and the struggle they were giving Charming and the dwarves, for example. If Felix adopted the boys, it would light a fire of speculations and questions. Would they even be able to have a normal school experience with that kind of attention? He was famous, and they were growing in fame. It could be a real problem for their studies.

And what about the demon side of things? Felix was doing his best to learn what he could of demons to see what he could do to help. Bendy’s powers were obviously linked to his emotions. His panic attack proved that. He also understood a bit of the fledgling things, but he didn’t know their culture. Their magic. Their abilities with souls. Even though Bendy didn’t really seem interested in his species, that didn’t mean he wasn’t a part of it. Felix wasn’t sure how to help the young demon with it. He was loathe to have to trust Hat. The older demon was working off of some self interest and pushed for Bendy to remain secretive of it all. Felix remembered Hat swatting Bendy on the back of the head for apologizing. The cat’s grip tightened on the bike’s handle. No. Felix really didn’t like the older demon.

He pulled up to the university’s front and got off the motorcycle. Some students stopped upon seeing him. Felix took off the helmet and put his hat back on. He tossed the helmet back at the bike. It warped back into his bag. Felix grabbed it and strapped it back around his waist.

He ignored the whispers of the college students and headed to the science buildings. Would they even want him as a father? They’d never had parents before. Would it be weird? And what about him? Did he really want kids? Not that Bendy was a ‘kid,’ but he was young. He had called him ‘dad’ that one time.

Could he handle having a family? He hadn’t even been able to hold on to a girlfriend. And now there was this confusing... thing he had for Oswald. Ozzy.

Felix felt his face heat. Oh boy. No time to get flustered and confused. He was going to a meeting. Felix entered the science building. He passed the displays of rocks, maps, bones, and star graphs. He glanced into a couple of open door classrooms, hearing the lectures of a couple of the professors. He reflected briefly on when he first sat down in a college class. He had still been a—

“Mr. Cat!” Felix looked over.

“Professor O’Connell.” Felix greeted the old professor. He walked up and shook the man’s offered hand. “It’s good to see you. How is the family?” He had large, callused hands. His wrinkled forehead and thick brows gave his sharp eyes an intimidating shadow. His broad shoulders and straight-laced suit helped that intimidating facade, but the smile dismissed all of that.

The professor scoffed. “Still running around Egypt with no abandon. I think my son is hoping you will come to help them some time soon.”

“Oh?” Felix raised a curious ear. “Are they having trouble?”
“You know Egypt,” the professor scoffed. “There’s always a problem with a mummy.”

Felix smiled. He wasn’t wrong. If it wasn’t a mummy’s curse, it was some ancient relic. “I’ll see what I can do. I’m rather engaged at the moment.”

“This ink machine nonsense?” Professor O’Connell asked as he turned and led Felix down the halls.

“It’s not nonsense sir. It’s a cure,” Felix said. The older man hummed. “I’m sure of it. An ancient machine from the Micco people. Technology long forgotten and lost now resurfacing with this plague.”

“Is it a plague, Felix?” O’Connell asked, his thick brows lowering over his sharp eyes.

“I think it’s heading that way sir,” Felix stated. “There are already so many people moving here for Professor Oddswell’s help and the other doctors that are working with him.”

O’Connell’s frown deepened at Oddswell’s name. Felix lowered his eyelids. “You don’t approve of the doctor?”

“His methods are dangerous and dismissive of proper conduct.” He sighed. “But his convictions on doing what he believes is right are admirable,” he said reluctantly. “But that is not what you are writing on is it?”

“No. I’m continuing the research Professor Wiseton was working on. The ink machine is a big part of the end goal, but I don’t know how the professor got to that point,” Felix said.

O’Connell’s frown showed his concern. “Are you sure, Mr. Cat?” He opened a door to his office. All the walls were lined with books. There was a couch against one corner and a desk with papers stacked in piles and files. A couple of cabinets were behind the desk. “The work you and Miss Dodd were doing, looking for the bells of Tinabula was making some headway, wasn’t it?”

Katie. He needed to send her another letter to apologize. “She’ll be fine on her own for now. Dodd is a very tenacious,” Felix said.

“You are not wrong.” O’Connell chuckled. “But that is some great work. Why abandon it?”

Felix sighed. O’Connell walked around his desk and opened a drawer to rifle through it. “Professor, will you help me and give me Professor Wiseton’s notes? Anything he had left?”

The head of the archaeological department grimaced. “I would like to, Mr. Cat. I really would. But all of his effects were taken by the police for the investigation. I’m sorry, Felix. I have nothing for you.”

Felix narrowed his eyes. It was the same over in England. Another wall. Stuff gone. Research lost by the police or the department. What the boys had told Felix came back to him. Something about a cult? A group that asked and then threatened them to stop digging. He still hadn’t found any evidence of who. He was suspicious that Cuphead and Mugman might know something. But with how Cup had reacted when he and Xedo came to them about working for a demon, Felix was hesitant to ask him directly.

“As for your last papers on the city of Tinabula, if Dodd can bring any evidence of your theories, I will gladly approve it to be published.” O’Connell smiled. “The logic and research are perfectly sound.”

Felix was pulled out of his thoughts. “Oh, thank you professor.” He had to go to the police then. “I
appreciate the support. I best go though. I have a lot to do.” Felix nodded to the man and turned to the
door.

“Can’t even stay for a friendly chat? I’m sorry to hear it. We will have to get together at some other
time. Drinks perhaps,” O’Connell said.

“Yes, that would be nice. Good-bye professor.” Felix waved.

“And Mr. Cat,” O’Connell called out. Felix paused at the door. The man gazed at him soberly. “Do
be careful. Whatever happened and is happening is very dangerous.”

“Will do professor.” Felix smiled.

“Good luck.” The teacher smiled. Felix stepped out and walked back down the halls. His smile
dropped as he walked past displays of skulls. Maybe those female detectives would be helpful. They
were in charge of the professor’s investigation when he returned home from the dig. They seemed
like reliable officers. Maybe they still had his notes and effects. Felix could only hope. The cat
sauntered back to the street. He was stopped by a couple of students and other professors for
autographs and questions. Felix smiled patiently and gave them the attention he could, but his mind
remained troubled. Both over his lost mentor and the boys.

He got back on the road and drove to the police station. Police were going in and out. There was a
pair officers bringing in a grizzly with a scar on his face. Felix took a deep breath and walked up the
stairs. He approached the front desk. The eyes that followed him didn’t bother him. The woman
behind the desk didn’t look up at first.

“Toon Town Police Department, how may I help you?” she said in a drull tone.

“I was hoping to talk to some of your detectives.” Felix smiled. “Detective Featherworth, if I
remember correctly.”

“Do you have an appointment? A report?” She looked up and paused at the sight of him.

“Sadly no. I may have some connections to a case of theirs though,” Felix said. “Can I see them?”

“I’m sorry sir. They’re out, but I can take a message for them.” She lifted a pen to a pad of paper.

“Alright. Tell them Felix the Cat came by to talk about the professor. If they want to get into contact
with me, they can call Oddswell’s house or Sheba’s bookstore.” He gave her the numbers and
considered giving her the number to the bag’s phone but decided against it. He didn’t want to risk
that phone number getting out. So with that, he left. Feeling slightly defeated, Felix walked to
Sheba’s store. She was reviewing his transcript before sending it in for printing. Felix would have to
bring Bendy the new book as a present. He’d really like that. If he had time to read it, that is…

Felix sighed. He was going to start avoiding thinking about it, if he didn’t start planning. Felix knew
himself well enough to know when he wanted to avoid something.

Adoption.

He chuckled nervously. It was just a suggestion from Professor Oddswell. It wasn’t like he had to. It
wasn’t like he had to completely change his life...but he wasn’t sure he was comfortable leaving
enough alone. He needed to talk to Sheba. She’d have a couple of ideas.

Felix grimaced. Though telling her and living with her knowing what he was considering were two
very different things. She was going to drive him up a wall for weeks with this.
He entered the shop. “Sheba! Hello?” She wasn’t at the front.

“In the back!” Sheba called out.

Felix wandered back. “Hey.” He waved at the light toned cat. She smiled at him.

“Hello to you! So, when were you going to tell me about this train, uh?” Sheba tilted her head to a paper on a box. It was the newspaper about Heela. Felix shrugged uncaringly.

Sheba blinked. “Okay, what has you whiskers in a knot?”

Felix plopped down on a box.

“What? Did the bunny turn you down?” Sheba smirked.

“Sheba!” Felix’s bristled, his tail going straight with surprise. She laughed at him.

“What? You look like someone ran off with your milkshake. Did you finally confess, or did he get a girlfriend, and now you are trapped in the closet?” Sheba teased.

“This isn’t about Ozzy.” Felix blushed and looked away.

She grinned. “Oh Ozzy, huh? That’s an upgrade from ‘Mr. Oswald’ now.” She tail waved back and forth in amusement. “So, you two have gotten closer. Shame on you for not telling me sooner. You should hook me up with that mouse while you’re at it.”

“Mickey has a girlfriend,” Felix said deadpan. Technically not, but Felix was sparing him here, and he had someone he was interested in already.

“Rats!” Sheba snapped her fingers and propped her ankle up on her knee. Felix snickered. “The cute ones are always taken! How likely is it that they stay together?”

“Almost indefinitely. Give up on the mouse, Sheba,” Felix told her. She crossed her arms and huffed.

“Alright. Fine. What did you really come here to talk to me about?” Sheba leaned back.

“How is the transcript coming along? Any changes I need to make?” Felix asked. Sheba frowned at him. Felix felt his ears fall. They both knew he was avoiding it.

“A few,” she said slowly. “But that’s not why you’re here either. What’s wrong Feels?” Her teasing fell away and some concern showed through.

Felix sighed. “Okay. Um…” Felix had no idea where to start. “Do you think I’d be a good dad Sheba?”

Sheba stared at him for a long moment. “Excuse me. What?” Felix felt his face heat and his fur bristle a little at the look in her eyes. He fought the urge to cover his face and, instead, dropped his eyes and took off his hat and coat to cool down. “Felix the Cat, did you suddenly get a kid?”

“What! No! Nothing like that!” Felix jumped and turned back to her.

“Good!” Sheba pointed at him. “I’d say whatever girl is trying to claim you’re the father can’t prove anything!”

Felix smacked his forehead. “Gee. Thanks Sheba. That’s the support I need right now.”
Sheba snorted. “Don’t grumble at me. I ain’t the one sitting here wallowing in whatever this is.” She lifted her hands behind her head and leaned back in her chair.

“Sheba, could you just answer the question?” Felix sighed. His face was on fire. This had been a mistake.

“Okay, okay.” Sheba rolled her eyes. “Oh course you’d make a real jazzy pops. I mean, remember those adorable bunny kids? They were all over you! They ador--” She gasped. “Wait a furball moment! Are you and the bunny an item! Are you cussing daddy cat now!”

“Shheeeeeebaaaaaaa!” Felix wailed and finally gave in and hid his face.

“You cad! You smooth son of a gun! You didn’t tell me!” Sheba was standing over him, grinning that oh-so-annoying grin.

“No! That’s not it! Stop!” Felix threw his hands down. “This doesn’t have anything to do with them Sheba! C’mon! I’m here for help!” Kill him. Please.

“Tsk.” Sheba’s smile fell in disappointment. “You’re killing my good mood, man.”

“Me!” Felix said in exasperation. “You’re exhausting me.”

Sheba chuckled. “So, what’s this about being a pops, if it isn’t marrying into that bunny family?”

“Oh ha-ha Sheba,” Felix said derisively. “No. Nothing like that.” Little kids were way easier for him to handle. “It’s...well...it’s a bit complicated and a bit of a delicate situation and a bit of a concern.”

Sheba raised a brow. “A bit?”

“A bit.” Felix sighed. “I don’t really know what to do or think.”

Sheba puckered her lips and went to the front of the shop.

Felix blinked. Sheba turned the open card to closed and locked the door. “Come on. I’ll put on some tea or make a milkshake or something. Sounds like you have a lot to tell me Feels.”

Felix’ ears fell. “Oh, but Sheba I don’t want to make you close early.”

Sheba frowned at him and planted her fists on her waist. “Feels, just shut up and come up to the apartment. As your friend, it’s my job to stop you from making stupid decisions, and I only succeed half the time.”

“Well that’s because you’re advice is so--”

She poked him in the nose. “It’s because you only listen to me half the time.”

Felix snorted and shook his head, but he was smiling. Good old Sheba. The two cats went upstairs to Sheba’s apartment. Sheba pushed Felix into a kitchen chair. “Whadda want?”

“Shake.” Felix sighed. Sheba pulled out the blender.

“Now, start from the top and don’t skip any details,” Sheba ordered.

“Okay, but some of these are secrets that aren’t mine to share,” Felix warned.

Sheba snorted. “So, more of your stardust I have to take to my grave.”
“Oh come now, Sheba. You don’t work that hard to keep any of my secrets.” Felix huffed. “It’s not like people are knocking down the door to get the scoop on me for some scandal.”

“Like your bunny boy would be?” Sheba pouted. “Which is stardust and moonrocks.” She pulled out the ice cream and milk and so on. Felix rolled his eyes. She really wasn’t going to let that go, was she? “And just because they don’t come knocking, doesn’t mean they aren’t looking.”


The kitchen fell silent for a moment. Felix didn’t really want to think about it. Things were different now. They had been for a long time. But only half of them understood that. He just...couldn’t. He couldn’t get tangled up in all of that again. Not anymore. If he went back, even for a visit, that’s exactly what would happen. Sheba busied herself with the shakes. “Forget it.” She sighed. “Just start explainin’ what’s going on. You know I’m good at keepin’ my trap shut.”

Felix nodded and started from the top with Professor Oddswell. Sheba stayed quiet this time and let the adventurer talk. He only stopped for the blender to go. Sheba planted two shakes on the table and sat across from him. Felix continued with his worries, the changes, the things he wasn’t sure about, the boys’ situation. The cold creamy treat helped. When he was done, Sheba puckered her painted lips and thought.

Felix did his best to not fidget, thus he focused on his treat. A little too much. Pain hit his head. “Ugh.” He winced.

Sheba snorted. “Brainfreeze?” Felix frowned and snatched his drink off the table.

“What do you think, Sheba? What should I do?” Felix asked.

Sheba rested her head on her hand. “Honestly? I don’t know, Feels. It’s a big change. For all of you. One of them is a demon. So you’re gettin’ involved in some crazy magic there.” She shrugged. “I don’t think I can say go for it or don’t. I think you need to think and choose for yourself. Whatever makes you and them fellas happy.” She raised a brow. “Even though one of them is old enough to do his own thing.”

Felix rolled his eyes. “Barely. You remember what we were like back then. I think I needed a little more direction.”

“Hey, you got yourself together eventually, right?” Sheba smiled and slurped.

“I used to think so,” Felix muttered and finished the shake.

Sheba’s shoulders shook in silent laughter. “I think you are worrying too much about this. You’d do great if you decided to go for it. But don’t do it because that old bug-eyed creep said you should.”

Felix nodded. “Thanks. You’re right. And the professor isn’t that bad, Sheba.”

“I’m always right.” Sheba grinned. Felix rolled his eyes.

“Insulting the skeleton?” Felix pointed out. Sheba scowled and narrowed her eyes at him.

“Board games are still stupid,” she muttered into her drink. Felix snickered.

“So, how worried are you for the kid?” Sheba suddenly asked.
“Uh?” Felix’ ears perked, his tail twitched.

“Bendy, the sick kid,” Sheba clarified. “That old coot suggested this whole madness because he’s bad right?”

Felix’ ears fell. “Oh,” he muttered. The sick kid. Felix hadn’t seen Bendy as the sick kid in a while. Sure, he had attacks, but Felix had never been there for the actual attack, just the aftermath. He was so lively the rest of the time that it was easy to forget. Logically, Felix knew. But some small part of him just saw him as this excited youth ready to take on the world. Felix didn’t really want to think about the rest of this quest without him. “Yeah, he did.”

“Kinda annoying of him to push it onto you if it’s his idea,” Sheba mused. Felix snorted a laugh. He couldn’t imagine the professor adopting anyone.

“He just thought we were close,” Felix shrugged.

“Sure, but it’s your life. Kids would tie you down. On the other hand, you always seem to enjoy them.” Sheba rolled her head back and forth as if she was the one trapped with indecision.

“Whatever you decide to do, don’t rush it Feels.”

“Right. Thanks Sheba. I really needed this.” Felix smiled. He stood up to rinse out the glass.

“Hey, I give the best advice.” Sheba smiled.

“I meant the shake,” Felix snarked. Sheba tossed her hat at him. Felix laughed and caught it easily.

“Get out,” Sheba told him, though she didn’t lose her smile. Felix shook his head and tossed the hat back. The smile did slip from her. “So besides this whole adoption thing on your mind, how are you doing Feels? I mean, the book is great and will be ready soon. You sound like your quest is going okay. Is something else bothering you?”

How did Sheba do that? She was always so good at reading him. Ever since they were kids. “Just puzzling over Professor Wiseton again. There’s so much that doesn’t add up. It’s troubling.”

Sheba hummed. “And it’s frustrating that you don’t know more, since you and him were such good friends,” she finished for him.

Felix frowned. “I was in the Dragon Mountains.”

“You’re still unhappy he didn’t ask you for help or come to you.” Sheba lifted a finger. Felix huffed and crossed his arms. He leaned back against the counter. It was annoying that she was right. “You know it’s okay to be frustrated, right? The old coot helped you change your life, and set you on the path you’re on now. You find out he was keeping secrets, disappears, people died, and he didn’t trust you with any of it. Maybe he couldn’t get to you. Maybe he was trying to protect you. Who knows? But it’s okay for you to feel that way Feels. I don’t blame you.”

Felix sighed. It was the same circle he’d been running for a while between his research and work. Now with the quest, he was more involved instead of vainly poking around, hoping to get a hint. Still, the past felt so fuzzy and out of reach. “Yeah,” he muttered.

Sheba sighed and nodded after a while. “So, are you just going to go on these ink quests and dig more into Wiseton’s mystery?”

Felix looked at her. “You already know the answer to that.”
“Yeah, but it seems that most people that were involved in that died. There’s something there that someone doesn’t want to get out,” Sheba stated. “And whoever it is was clever enough to tack the blame on Wiseton for those deaths.”

“But we know he would never,” Felix said.

“Whatever the secret is, getting it out to the public also wouldn’t have stopped the murderers, otherwise he wouldn’t have run,” Felix speculated. “From what Bendy and Boris told me, it has to do with ink illness and the ink machine. Or possibly the Micco in general, since I haven’t run into anyone that I find too suspicious.” At least not when it came to the parts. Cuphead and Mugman were still mysteries to him, but they didn’t seem to know that much about the history of the parts or care for the Micco people. He doubted they had anything to do with the missing relics that Wiseton’s team were able to find before the tragedy. He also couldn’t see the two being a part of a cult.

Working for a demon, most likely Black Hat, sure, but a cult? Felix doubted Cuphead would put up with any philosophy other than his own.

So then, where did that leave him but where he had been before? The professor had tried to spread the warning about ink illness, and this group had wanted to stop him. If it was ancient, how had the illness...Well, wait long enough and anything could go from fact to myth.

Maybe it was time that Felix dared the black market here. He had originally planned to before he met Bendy and the crew and got distracted. It had seemed like a good lead after all. Though, that had its own questions. If this cult or whoever was out to spread ink illness secretly or take anything that talked about the machine, why hadn’t they made a move on the parts yet? One would think that the very machine they were trying to hide would be their ultimate goal, that stopping a cure would be easiest to accomplish by getting the parts.

Not having a map like they did could factor in. But Nightmare Night and now Heela City were public news. The B-Brothers were openly linked to the ink machine and Oddswell thanks to Xedo’s careful writing. Felix would think that these people would know what Bendy and Boris were doing. Be able to read between the lines. The Butcher Gang had, and Felix was certain that they couldn’t be the only ones.

Was something holding them back? And if so, what? Were they waiting for when the boys had all the parts? Or worse. Were they hoping Bendy and Boris led them to the machine itself? With how dangerous the parts were proving to be, keeping them a secret was the only option. So were these people hoping it would have to be that way with the location of the machine? That could be a two edged sword.

“Earth to Felix~!” Sheba leaned into his face.

“Wha!” Felix jumped and banged his hip against the counter.

“Boy, you were gone there Feels.” Sheba chuckled. “Did I scare away one of your nine lives?”

“You think you’re funny Sheba, but you’re not,” Felix groaned and rubbed his side.

“I’m hilarious.” Sheba smirked. “But I feel I should warn you. Time is ticking if there’s anything else you have to do today.”

Felix perked up and looked at the clock. Oh bother. Dinner would be soon. He hadn’t even realized how long he’d been there. “Thanks Sheb’s, I’ll be back tonight.” Felix hurried to the kitchen exit.

“And go visit your boyfriend! He’ll cheer you up with those kiddies!” Sheba called after him.
“Sheba!” Felix cried. He would have to find a way to stop her! He couldn’t deal with this kind of nonsense right now! Her cackle followed him out of the store. Sadly, he had planned to go to the circus to check in on Mickey. But now he felt like Sheba was grinning over his shoulder. The fiend had guessed somehow! Ugh! But it wasn’t to see Ozzy. No.

Things were a bit...odd. And it wasn’t just him now. At least, Felix thought so. He wasn’t sure. He had so much going on that he hadn’t had time to really think about it. His confusing feelings. What it all meant. What in the world he was going to do.

Well the last one was obvious. Nothing. He could do nothing. Of course.

Felix sighed and rubbed the side of his head under his hat. Why? Why was his dating life the worst? What was he doing wrong? Maybe he just needed to stop pinning after people that were just not interested. It was always so one-sided. He had stopped because he was tired of bending over backwards for someone that wouldn’t give him the time of day.

Now, he found himself in the very weird situation of being attracted to a man. That had never happened before. He didn’t understand why it was happening now. Maybe the universe just decided to show him how doomed his love life was. A great, handsome fella that was a wonderful family man, and all Felix could do was sit there and embarrass himself.

Stars. Sheba thought it was funny that he was such a mess. Well...after some of the things he had done to try and get Nastassia Slinky to notice him, he guessed it was a bit funny. Still, Sheba’s view on the situation was more from the place they had come from than the place they were in now.

People here weren’t nearly as...understanding.

Felix was lost in his thoughts as he reached the circus and the apartment complex behind it. A number of the workers greeted him. A small elephant with large ears raised his hat in a friendly hello. Felix nodded himself and tilted his own hat. A bit of snow fell off of it. Oh, it was snowing. He had been so caught up in his own thoughts he hadn’t even noticed.

He got to the door and knocked. There was a racket inside, and then the door was thrown open.

“Well hi there Mr. Felix!” Goofy greeted warmly. “How are you doin’ today?”

“Good Mr. Goofy, is Mickey in?” Felix asked.

“He sure is! Come inside. It’s cold out there.” Goofy ushered him in.

“Thank you.” Felix nodded.

He took off his hat, coat, and boots so he didn’t track water in. He took two steps into the large living. “It’s Mr. Felix!” A squeal crashed through the room. He looked over to see some of the bunny children before a swarm came and tackled him into a cloud of excited fluffy chattering kids.

He was bombarded with questions and found he could only laugh.

It took him a bit to get free of the affection.

“Enough,” Donald quacked. “Let ‘im up.” The lovelies whined but did as they were told. “Whadda ya want?”

“Uh? Oh! I came by to check on Mickey.” Felix forced a chuckle and scratched the back of his head.
“Oh yeah! Uncle Mickey has a wheely chair now!” one of the kids chirped. “He’s fun to ride with!”

“Oh?” Felix smiled.

“Yeah,” another spoke up. “But he hasn’t gone to perform with us yet.”

“He’s not going to.” A third scowled. “He’s a cripple now. He can’t move around the circus sandy floor anymore.”

“Boo!” a few hissed at him.

“Nuh-uh, Damien!” one piped up. “You meany!”

Damien scowled and crossed his furry arms.

“Hey. Knock it off, you lot. Go get your coats,” Donald ordered.

“Yeah.” Damien copied Donald’s frowned. “Knock it off you lot.”

Felix chuckled. Several grumbled before they moved away.

“Coats?” Felix asked.

“We’re going out in a few minutes,” Donald explained. “Groceries and such. Mickey’s down the hall.”

“I’ll get him,” Goofy offered and headed down the hall.

“Thank you, Mr. Goofy.” Felix stepped into the living room and looked around. It seemed a bit messer than before. Was that a new hole in the wall? Where did that come from? Donald caught him looking.

“My nephews,” he said and went into the kitchen. Nephews?

“Felix! Good to see you again.” Mickey rolled in with a bright smile.

“How are you?” Felix asked. The mouse was in his usual street clothes and hat. He had a scarf and a coat over his lap. The wheelchair was a standard hospital brand, which had Felix figuring that he went to get a check-up.

“I’m good. It’s been busy dealing with the police and the news, but I think it’ll calm down soon,” Mickey said. “I hope enough so I can go out with everyone.”

“I still think you’re nuts for wanting to leave the apartment,” Donald grumbled.

“I can’t just hide away Donald.” Mickey gave Donald a chagrined look. “I have to live my life.” The duck huffed and shot Felix a look. Mickey turned back to him. “How about you?”

“Just as busy. We haven’t had the police come over yet,” that would make Felix’ life easier, “but it’s only a matter of time I think.”

“And I heard about the funeral. I’m sorry,” Mickey said.

Felix nodded. There was an understanding in his eyes. Of course there was. His sister-in-law. “How is everyone?” Mickey asked.
“As well as can be. The boys are staying busy. Oddswell is working himself into the ground.” Felix shrugged. “We’re all doing our best until we leave again.”

“Any idea when that will be?” Mickey asked. Felix shook his head. Mickey sighed. “That’s too bad.”

“C’mon papa! Stop dragging your feet!” one of the children said in a high pitched cry.

“Alright, alright.” Oswald sighed. Felix felt his stomach burst with butterflies. Oswald came down the hall with a number of his kids. They must have just finished with one of the kid’s pamper sessions, because Oswald’s ears and hair were glossy. He looked amazing. Felix felt his face heat up, and he looked away.

“Well I don’t want to intrude. I just wanted to check-in.” Felix waved his hand and half turned to go.

“Wait, stay,” Oswald said. “Give me an excuse not to go out in the cold.”

Mickey rolled his eyes. “Ozzy.”

“You lazy c--rabbit,” Donald grumbled.

“Lazy rabbit,” Damien mimicked.

“Well, if Felix wants to stay a bit longer, I don’t see anything wrong with it.” Mickey smiled up at him. “I think the kids, you, and Goofy are enough.”

“Thanks bro.” Oswald slumped into the couch and sighed. Several of the kids pouted and argued.

“It’s really no trouble. I can go,” Felix said.

“Stay,” Oswald said. Felix sighed. He couldn’t say no. It took awhile for the adults to get the kids organized. Three young ducks joined the fray. One with a hat, one in long sleeves, and one in a coat with his hands in the pocket.

“Hey, it’s that famous cat,” one whispered to the other two.

“Berries,” one of the others said.

The last shrugged. “Whatever.”

“You can talk to him later. We need to go,” Donald told them. Goofy pushed Mickey out with the tide of children around them. Only a few of the bunny kids stayed behind with Felix and Oswald. Their father sent them to clean up the mess they made in the back room. They pouted but did so.

How did it end up like this?

Going to go visit your boyfriend? Curse Sheba’s evil grin. Curse her. And curse her insane ideas!

“Thanks. I really didn’t want to go out into the cold today.” Oswald sighed. “I’m exhausted, even if Mick is jumpy as all get out.”

“N-no problem. Glad I could help Mr. Oswald,” Felix said.

“You remember I said you can call me Ozzy, right?” Oswald raised a brow slowly, his lip twitched.
“Oh. Yes. Ozzy,” Felix muttered and looked down. A bomb? Sure. Runaway train? No problem. But drop this gorgeous bunny in front of him, and he was a mess of nerves. Even after sharing a room with the man for four days on a train. End him now stars.

“Is everything really okay Felix?” Oswald asked. “You seem tense.”

“I,” really like you and am terrified to say anything about it. “Have a lot going on right now.”

“Oh? Anything interesting?” Oswald asked. He sounded tired. He looked tired. Felix wondered if it was all the media and police attention.

“I have a research paper that might be published if my colleague can find anything. My next book is about to be published soon too. The usual things,” Felix said quietly.

Oswald hummed. “That’s good. The kids love your books. They also love hearing the ‘adventure in the West’ we went on.” He chuckled. “Some of them are out looking for cowboy hats today.”

Felix chuckled. “They’re precious.”

Oswald grinned. “Aren’t they? But that’s not why you’re so stressed.”

Felix flinched.

“C’mon. You know you can trust us,” Oswald said. There was something in his eyes. An emotion, a question that Felix didn’t quite understand. To save himself from staring, he looked down to the floor.

“I’m just worried about Bendy and Boris,” Felix said quickly.

There was a long stretch of silence. “You’re really close to them, aren’t you?”

Felix smiled. “I am. They’re good boys.”

“They look up to you,” Oswald said. Felix felt his face heat.

“Mickey really likes them too,” Oswald said. Felix looked up. Oswald was glaring at the floor. “I hope it all turns out okay.”

“Me too,” Felix said quietly. He shook his head. “It will. We’ll make it. I believe in them and in our quest.”

Oswald smiled. “I like that determination Felix.” Whaaaaa! Felix’ jaw dropped before he ducked his head. That smile should be illegal! The rabbit chuckled. He was laughing at him! “It’s hard to believe that you and that tail kicking adventurer are the same person. You act so shy.”

Oh no. He was going to be discovered! Escape! Escape! Oswald leaned back. “Guess there are a lot of sides to people we don’t know about, huh?”

Felix blinked and looked up. Oswald was watching him with those light eyes. “That’s a good thing. Life is more exciting getting to know someone little by little. It’s a fun surprise.”

Felix felt himself relax a little. “Yeah. It is. Almost like an adventure.” He smiled.

Chapter End Notes
Mercowe here. It's sort of funny. This week, I'm on the opposite end of Tap. She's melting. I was so cold I got numb and couldn't feel my hands and feet! XD I went tubing this morning and the river was a mountain river, which means it was cold! Not to mention, I didn't think of wearing a swimming suit. Life is funny like that.

This week, the chapter has very much been a fluffy one. I enjoyed it, and I hope you enjoyed it too!
"Welcome ladies and gentlemen to a new chapter of Inky Mystery! Bendy has his appointment with Dr. Scratchansniff. The cup brothers are busy. We'll see what happens! " Mic winked.

Bendy stretched. His spine popped before he stepped into the shower. Cup and Mugs were drill sergeants. Bendy was almost convinced this was how Cup was trying to kill him now. Slowly. With a mixture of back breaking exercise and soul shattering humiliation.

If Bendy didn’t use his strength, he couldn’t get a cussing step over the guy. He had eaten so much snow this morning. And the stupid tail ring was cold in winter! Cuss!

Bendy sighed as warm water helped his chilled body. Oddswell had given him disapproving looks when they had come inside. The lizard knew Bendy hadn’t told anyone about the information he had shared. It wasn’t like Bendy could avoid Scratchansniff though. The guy lived here, and they had an ‘appointment’ today. Stars. A cussing therapist. What good would that do him?

He remembered the two sad attempts the orphanage had made to put him in counseling. The first was a schmuck that tried to convince him to let Boris go, like the demon was forcing him to stick around or something. Ha! Showed how cussing clueless he had been! If anyone had been surprised when that first couple showed interest in taking Boris, it had been Bendy. He had been so sure Boris would go and have parents, be happy, get off the streets, and live a normal life. Bendy wouldn’t have stopped him either. The wolf had surprised everyone when he had started kicking and screaming that they couldn’t take him away from his brother.

Heh. He had even bitten the guy.

The other sad attempt was when they sent Bendy away to another town to live in a house for ‘troubled boys.’ They had tried to get him to think he had anger and control problems. That he was a danger to others. Which is cussing moonrocks to tell a cussing kid that was just trying to get enough to eat. Besides the trauma, he had been ticked that they had separated him from Boris again and thought it was a good thing. He had set their cussing kitchen on fire and run away three days later. It had taken him another four days to get back to Sillyvision and Boris. They were on the streets again that night.
Now here he was, about to meet a guy that thought he knew how Bendy’s mind worked. Cussing wonderful. Bendy sighed.

Whelp. He couldn’t avoid it forever. The water was getting cold anyway. Bendy shut it off and grabbed the towel.

At least dinner last night had been fun. There was still a melancholy around the house from the missing actress and dwarf, but the Warners had been loud. Alice had punned, and Jerry had been mostly silent. Holly had left early for a second job.

Bendy wished it hadn’t ended. It was the most relaxed he had been since getting back. Now, he was stiff as he dressed and tried to not psych himself out over this. He went down to breakfast with Boris. Most of the house was already there. It had started to snow again.

“I’m tellin’ ya, they were there,” Finley said around some sausage.

“Peachy,” Cup grumbled into his glass of orange juice.

“What’s going on?” Boris asked.

“Fin an’ I found some footprints around the house last night,” Sammy said nervously. “We think someone’s plannin’ a break in.”

“They’ll have quite a time of it!” Granny declared. “This place isn’t ever empty. I’d like to see them try!” she declared.

“Let’s not be hasty to declare war on unknown foes quite yet, Mrs. Gopher,” Oddswell interjected. The old woman huffed, but there was humor in her eyes. “We will notify the police. They have already been patrolling more around this area because of the activities we have here.” The lizard blinked. “That reminds me, they want to talk to you again.” Oddswell pointed to Bendy and Boris.

Boris perked his ears. “Uh?”

“Why?” Bendy muttered as he got a plate of eggs and bacon. Cup raised a brow.

“And so does Xedo,” Oddswell continued.

Bendy blinked. Oddswell started looking around the table before he leaned over and pulled out a newspaper. “Because of this.” He passed the paper to them. Boris and Cup leaned over Bendy to see. It was the cussing train.

“Oh stars,” Cup grumbled and rolled his eyes. “Shoulda known.”

“What?” Mugs asked.

“You two aren’t wanted for murder again, are ya?” Finley asked. “If so, we’ll have to tie him up.” Finley pointed his fork at Jerry who jumped in his seat and gave the table a panicked glance.

“No, no.” Bendy waved a hand. “It’s what happened back in the Far West.” Bendy passed the paper around the table.

Jerry’s eyes widened as it passed him. Finley whistled. “Nice.”

The Warners nearly fell over each other to look. They were uncharacteristically quiet this morning.

“They don’t even have you in the picture Bendy!” Dot pouted.
“That was on purpose, ya nut,” Cup muttered around a mouthful of pancakes.

Instead of arguing or starting something with Cup, Dot ducked back behind the article. Bendy wondered if their silence was because of what happened or if something else happened while he had been asleep. He slept a starfallen lot. Long naps plus full nights. Besides a yellow-eyed nightmare here and facing demon-Dot there, the nightmares had been rather peaceful too.

He must have just been really tired lately.

Bendy shook his head. He needed to focus. “So why do they wanna talk to us?” he asked Dr. Oddswell. The doctor shook his head. Great. Add cops to the list of stardust Bendy had to do. He finished breakfast with the usual hub-bub that had become his mornings. Meals had definitely become an event here with so many people in the house.

Then the dreaded time came. Dr. Scratchansniff cleared his throat and gave Bendy a pointed look...or he guessed he did. The super thick lenses made it hard to be sure. The demon glanced at the lizard to see Oddswell with an equally expectant look in his big buggy eyes.

Bendy sighed and pushed back his seat to stand up. Dr. Scratchansniff did the same. The doctor turned and headed upstairs. Bendy went around the table. “Bendy? Where ya going?” Boris asked.

“Just gotta do something, bro. I'll be down in...” Bendy trailed off. He had no cussing clue how long this would take. “A bit,” he finally said. Boris gave him a confused look. Cup was studying him carefully. If that schmuck said anything, Bendy was going to punch him.

“Okay?” Boris said uncertainly.

“Best not keep him waiting.” Oddswell advised. Bendy bristled and gave the doctor a disgruntled look. Several people at the table seemed to pick up on Bendy’s mood. What? Did he flash his cussing eyes again? Starfallen damnit. He marched up the stairs, ignoring the looks. The therapist was waiting down the hall. Bendy followed him through Oddswell’s lab and into his little study with the couch and chairs. The room they used to stash the parts in. Not Bendy’s first choice of rooms to hang out in, but they would be left alone.

The doc closed the door behind him and went to the chair. Bendy plopped down across from him on the couch. The doctor picked up a clipboard he had on the coffee table. There was another pad of paper, a pitcher of water with two glasses, a box of tissues, and a ball about the size of Bendy’s palms. Oh boy.

The doctor scribbled on the clipboard for a few minutes. Bendy leaned back and sighed. What a waste of time.

“Alright Bendy. Zo vat zeems ta be zee izue?” Dr. Scratchansniff asked.

Bendy blinked. “Aren’t you supposed to tell me that?”

The doctor smiled. “I’d like to hear it from you.”

Weirdo. What was he getting to with that question? “You were there. The doc said stress is gonna kill me.”

He nodded. “Un vat do you zink?”

of course I’m stressed!” Bendy snapped.

The doctor nodded and wrote something down. “Do you believe the doctor?”

Bendy jerked his head back. Did he? He opened his mouth, then closed it. Did he? He tried again with the same result. What did he believe? He didn’t want to die, obviously. That’s why he was in this stupid room to start with. He figured something had to change. His attacks were getting worse. He was starting to lose all feeling in his body at the worst points. And with the ink blinding him and his screams deafening him, he really thought he might not come back a couple of times. That he had just...drifted into oblivion. It was something he couldn’t admit to Boris. No matter how steadfast the wolf was, those attacks had to scare him. They had to.

“He’s the expert,” Bendy finally said. “I wouldn’t be bothering with this if anyone else had told me to do it.”

The doctor hummed. “So you trust the doctor.”

Bendy frowned. “No duh. I traveled half the country with cops on my tail to find him.” Such a dumb question.

“So have you told anyone else about this? Since you trust the doctor’s information.”

“No, I haven’t.” Bendy narrowed his eyes. “Why the hell would I do that? It would just worry everyone.”

“But you could die,” the doctor pointed out oh-so-helpfully.

Bendy bristled. “I could die at any minute! I could die from something that isn’t ink illness! And we’re here to stop that, right? So, why the hell would I make anyone worry more!”

“Do you think I can really change that?” His glasses flashed.

Bendy blinked. “Well, yeah.” He furrowed his brows. “Isn’t that why we’re doing this? To get rid of the stress and make the attacks better.” That was what they were doing, right?

The therapist sighed. “That is up to you Bendy.”

“Uh?”

He put down his clipboard. “This is zee zitudzation ve are in right now. I can observe you, zomething not normal for most of mein patients, so I have zee unique perspective of your shtrezerz. Let me tell you vat I can’t do un vat I can do for you Mr. Bendy.” He adjusted his glasses on his big nose.

Bendy crossed his arms and leaned back in his chair. Well, this was where it was either going to help or be another pile of stardust.

“I can’t make your sthtress go away. I can’t make your attacks better. I can’t change your feelings or your mind. Ah! All of zat is up to you,” the therapist listed.

“Then why the hell are we doing this?” Bendy couldn’t help snapping. His stomach turned uneasily at the implications.

Scratchansniff smiled. “I can help you manage your shtress un how to find healthy outlets for your emoziuns. I can help you figure out were zee roots of your problems come from. I can help you find
vays to better your emoziolal health vich in turn vill hopefully help your phyzical health. Ah! But you have to vork vith me un be open vith me. Oddsvell may skirt around zee laws vith his patients, but be azured Bendy, vatever you zay here is schtrictly between you un me.”

“So it’s up to me,” Bendy concluded.

“Ja.” The doctor nodded. Great.

“So what do I do?” Bendy sighed in defeat. “You know what my daily schedule looks like. The newspaper did a good job covering what happened in Heela City and most of the major events up to now. Well, Nightmare Night is a bit different,” Bendy muttered.

The doctor picked up his clipboard again. “I zink ve can vait on zat. I am more interested in your relazionschips.”

Bendy furrowed his brows. His relationships? What did that matter? His brother and friends weren’t the problem. It was all these cussing parts and their damn magic. “Why?”

“Because zey are your zupport...or should be. Zey vill be a big help to you in handling your schtress if you have healthy relazionschips,” he explained simply.

Healthy? Bendy tilted his head. “Okay,” he said slowly. “Well, Boris and I are close. We share most everything. He’s the best.” The doctor nodded for Bendy to continue. Who else? “Felix is also amazing. I look up to him, have for a long time. I read his books before I met him. I never thought I’d get to meet him, let alone go adventuring with him. He’s taught me a lot, both about adventuring and history.”

“But it was embarrassing to say out loud! Ugh. He felt his face heat up. “Fine,” he grit out. “So, I might treat ‘im a little bit like a, uh, dad.” Bendy tripped over the word. Oh stars. He wanted to crawl under a rock again.

All the doctor did was hum. “Un vat about zee Cup brothers?”

“Annoying,” Bendy responded instantly. The doctor raised a brow. Bendy sighed. “Okay, so Cuphead is annoying. Mugs is alright.”

“Aren’t you zee one zat fought for zem to be a part of zee group?” the doctor asked.

Bendy grimaced. “Well you see, Boris and I have a complicated past with them. They were after us at first. And then, a few things happened, and Cup saved my bacon.” Twice actually. There had been that one time he had an attack while Cup was chasing him, and the guy had given him his pills and taken him back to Boris. Why had he done that? Probably cussing pity. Damnit. “They wanted to ‘make it up to us,’ so he asked to join the quest and...I said yes.”

The doctor nodded. “Un how haz zat been going?”

“I dunno, doc. Cup is a schmuck, but he’s saved us a few times now. Mugs and Boris get along great. They’re teaching us to defend ourselves,” Bendy said.
“Would you call Cup and Mugs friends?” the doctor asked.

“Yeah, I guess.” Bendy thought back over the past few weeks with them. “They do a lot for us.”

The doctor hummed. “Vat about the rest of zat house?”

Bendy snorted. “Fin and Sammy are berries. Granny is amazing with her cooking. She’s the one in charge, but I don’t think Oddswell knows that. Red is great unless she’s mad. The Warners are insane, but they’re not bad.” Though they still might get him in an early grave. “Hell doc, the only scum is Jerry.” The doctor nodded, writing something down. “Alice, Holly, and Cala are swell. So’s Mickey and them. It was rough at first with the guy, but it got better.”

“Ja. Okay. Zo, I zink zat vill do for now,” Scratchansniff said. “I vant you to vork on opening up more to your friends. You already do zo vith your brother. Do more with zem.”

What? Really? He had to be kidding. He pulled off a few sheets from his clipboard. Oh no. More cussing homework! Weren’t Hat’s and Felix’s assignments enough? Stars above. “I vant you to fill zeze out. Vrite down wuen you are feeling schtress un why you zink you are feeling zat vay. Okay?” He passed them to Bendy. It was a list of common stress sources in life and reactions. Questions that asked for his opinions and experiences.

“So what? We’re done? You don’t wanna dive into my horrible childhood and tell me how I turned out to be the mess I am? Or tell me the social problem I have with being a demon?” Bendy asked, barely controlling the mocking tone he wanted to use.

“Nien, I don’t zee much point in zat, do you? Ve can get into zee nit and grits of it wuen you vant to. Right now ve are more vorried about your schtress un zee now,” Dr. Scratchansniff said with a smile.

Bendy nodded slowly. Okay. This was less painful than he had thought it would be. “Okay, thanks doc.”

“I vill zee you again in two days.” The doctor held up two fingers. Bendy nodded and stood. The doctor stood as well and shook his hand. Bendy left the room and dropped the papers off in their rooms.

He went downstairs to find Boris and Mugs playing cards. Finley and Cup were having some sort of argument that Cup was obviously losing, seeing the look on his face. Sammy looked like he wanted to stop it and hide at the same time. Jerry was nowhere to be seen. Neither were the Warners or the lizard and Red.

“Bendy!” Boris perked up and laid his cards down.

“Hey!” Mugs waved. “Wanna join us?”

Bendy shrugged and sat down across from them. Mugs dealt him in. Tch. Bad hand. Maybe he could trick them though.

“So what was that about?” Boris asked.

Bendy could feel eyes on the back of his head. Others were listening in. He really didn’t want to say. But at the same time, the doc’s orders were for him to be more open. He didn’t have to say everything either. He bit back his first response, which would have been to play it off as nothing.

Boris noticed instantly that he was considering his words, and the wolf’s tail perked up to show his attentiveness.
“Well…the doc said that I should meet with Scratchansniff. So, that was my first meeting.” He shrugged and tried to downplay it. Still, it was the truth.

Cup leaned over on the table next to him, abandoning whatever he had been griping about to the fox. “Oh yeah? The lizard has you with a shrink now?” There was curiosity and humor in his eyes.

“To help with stress,” Bendy said.

“So you’re not losing your mind?” Cup snickered.

“The only mad one here is you.” Bendy pointed at him.

“Hey, I’m not the one with a therapist,” Cup said.

“You should think about it,” Finley muttered appearing on the other side of Bendy. “You’re the crackpot around here after all.”

Bendy couldn’t hold back the laugh. Cup glared at both of them.

“Hell,” Mugs said. “If he isn’t charging much, I might.” Bendy looked up in surprise, as did the others. “Maybe he can help with sleep problems.”

“Wha–You serious Mugsy?” Cup gave him a confused look. Hell, it was the same look Boris was giving Bendy.

“Yeah, you should give it a try, Cuppy. Why not? We’re all under a boatload of pressure.” Mugs shrugged.

“Think he’d see me?” Sammy wrung his tail at the thought.

“Sam-buddy. I think you should definitely see him.” Finley chuckled and patted the cat’s shoulder. Sammy dropped his tail and gave the fox a disgruntled look. “What does that mean?”

“It means you are one jump scare away from the looney bin,” Cup said.

“Again, you shouldn’t be talking, mister anger issues,” Bendy said and eyed the cards laid out.

“Me! You’re the one with the red-eyed glare this morning,” Cup said. Bendy rolled his eyes. Stupid demon eyes. Cup continued. “‘Sides, whadda I have to be worried about?”

“How ‘bout that little penalty from Oswald?” Bendy asked. Cup tsked and looked away.

“Don’t gotta worry about that if I don’t see him again,” Cup said dismissively.

“You will if you wanna set his little brother up,” Bendy argued.

“No happenin’ with how cussin’ bad we are at setting up the damn thing.” Cup crossed his arms.

Dancing really was the one they kept coming back too. And because of them, Mickey wasn’t in any shape to do that. Damnit! If only Bendy could just build him another leg. Bendy turned back to the stupid game as Mugs and Boris showed their hands. Bendy huffed and tossed his down. Sure, he could build a mock leg, but that didn’t mean he could get the damn thing to move by itself. It wasn’t like he could stick a cussing motor on it to get an ankle to bend or toes to wiggle. Plus the balance corrections and weight displacements needed for standing, walking, running, and of course dancing. He had been thinking about it since the Cupbros had come back with the news, and Bendy was only
getting dead ends. He really wanted to do something like a new leg for the mouse. He had protected Boris and helped in Nightmare Night. He was a good guy.

It wasn’t like he could get something like a fake leg to move for Mickey by magi--Hold the starfallen horses! A puzzle piece suddenly clicked in his head.

Bendy was out of his chair and at the phone before he had the full plans in his head.

“Bendy?” Sammy asked.

He called the shop. “Bimbo and Betty’s, how may I help you?” Alice’s voice came over the line.

“Hey Alice, it’s Bendy,” Bendy said.

“Oh! Bendy, hi!” Alice’s voice lit up. Bendy ignored the butterflies that awoke in his stomach.

“Is Holly around?” Bendy asked. She would know about the right magic, right? Then again, maybe Alice could help in this too? He wasn’t sure. Maybe he should ask both of them. Maybe he should just go over to the shop now.

“Sure Bendy, hold on a moment,” Alice told him. Bendy tapped his foot. There was a totem pole of curious faces watching him in the hallway.

He heard the sound of the phone shifting. “Hello?”

“Holly! Hey, I need some advice. Magic advice,” Bendy said jumping a little at her voice.

“About what?” she said, curiosity in her tone.

“Can you animate a puppet? Like a fake person to walk and move like a real one?” Bendy asked.

“Oh yes. In the past, plenty of people have animated puppets…” She trailed off. “You’re thinking of Mickey!” she shouted.

“What!” Alice’s surprised yelp echoed behind her.

More shuffling. “I need my books.” There was a pause. “I need a library!” she said more distantly.

“So you think it’s possible?” Bendy asked. “I can build it, but I’d need you or maybe Alice for the other stuff.” He felt a bubble of excitement begin to swell in his chest.

“It’s worth looking into for sure,” she said. “The biggest problem is the complex runes needed for movement…and finding a way to connect it to his existing nerves.”

Bendy blinked. “You think he might be able to feel it?” he asked quietly. If that were true, that would be amazing.

“I know it’s possible. The Micco did far more complex things in the past. No. The issue here is if we can figure out how to do it. I need to do research, talk to Oddswell,” she said excitedly. She started to mutter. “If I take a movement rune and combine it with a rune circle involving strength and flexibility…” She stopped abruptly. “I’ll talk to Alice and get back to you, Bendy.”

“Okay, I’ll get started on finding materials and building the thing,” Bendy told her. “See you around. Let me know what you find.” He hadn’t felt this excited for a while.

“Okay!”
Bendy hung up the phone.

“Building? What are we building, bro?” Boris asked with a gleam in his eyes, tail up and excited on the verge of wagging.

“How do you feel about building a leg for Mickey, so the guy can dance, Boris?” Bendy asked.

Boris’ eyes sparkled. “Really!” And there was the tail wagging.

Mugs tilted his head skeptically. “Didn’ we say a peg leg wouldn’t work?”

Bendy snorted. “Like I would make a shotty peg leg.” He snorted again. “Well, maybe for Jerry or Cup.”

“The hell!” Cup snapped. “Why am I on the same cussing level as Jerry?”

“What are we waiting for?” Boris hurried to the closest and pulled out two coats and a pair of boots that everyone insisted on the wolf wearing since it snowed. “Let’s go!”

“What? Just like that?” Sammy asked. “B-b-but you two have never built a prosthetic before!”

Bendy snorted. “Have some faith in us man. We’re gonna build that damn machine. If a leg is too hard, then we’re in some deep stardust.” He went around them and to the door. He shrugged on the coat that was too big and opened the door. Cup and Mugs came up behind them.

“You comin’?” Boris asked.

“We have something we gotta get done today. We’ll catch up to ya though. Where you headed?”

Cup asked while Mugs pulled on his own borrowed coat.

Boris looked to Bendy expectantly. The demon thought for a moment. “The circus,” Bendy said. “They have a bunch of scrap we could use there for parts.”

“Okay, we’ll be there,” Mugs promised. The four went out into the cold and walked together for a short distance before the Cupbros split off to do whatever it was they needed to do.

“Ever worry they’re off causing trouble?” Bendy asked as they walked down the snowy sidewalk. Someone, had finally started cleaning off the walkways and roads.

“Probably.” Boris sighed. “But it’s not like they’re serial killers or anything.”

Bendy hummed. They still didn’t know about whatever issue Cup and Mugs were tangled up in. Probably the mob. Some schmuck group that localized Hat’s casino most likely. Hell, maybe Hat himself. Bendy was curious, but he also respected them enough not to ask. Mugs and Cup had said they were trying to go straight. Cup had been beaten because he helped them. He could see the effort. He doubted they were going after people like they had him and Boris. He just hoped that they trusted them to help if they needed it.

They reached the snowy tents and apartment. There were heaters running in cages to keep animals comfortable and workers running around to protect the tents from collapsing or the snow from building up too much in the area.

“We should keep this a surprise for Mickey!” Boris said excitedly. Bendy agreed with a smile.

They got to Mickey’s apartment and were lucky to catch the duck outside with a trash can.
“Hey, Mr. Donald!” Boris greeted.

The duck quacked when he looked up. “Oh, it’s you,” he said deadpan.

“We were wondering if we could go to the backyard and take some scrap, if that’s alright,” Boris asked sheepishly.

Donald narrowed his eyes at Boris then glanced at Bendy. “Why?”

“We want to do something nice for Mr. Mickey,” Boris said. The hell?

“I think you two have done enough,” the duck quacked and planted his feathery hands on his hips. Oooooh. Okay, Bendy got it.

He sighed as Boris’ ears fell. Bendy stepped up. “Well then, we are going to fix what we’ve done to the best of our ability and then do something nice. Because we can. You can either help us or get out of our way,” Bendy stated the ultimatum quickly.

The duck growled. Bendy hadn’t known that ducks could growl. He squacked something Bendy couldn’t understand at all. Bendy looked to Boris, lost.

“Thanks Mr. Donald!” Boris said. “We won’t!”

The duck tsked at them, or Bendy at least thought that was the noise that came out of his bill before he went back inside.

“What? What did he say?” Bendy asked.

“He said he won’t get in our way, and that we can’t dismantle the equipment,” Boris said and went around back. “And he also isn’t helping us.”

“Oh,” Bendy muttered. So they had no tools to work with. That limited a lot of things. Damnit. They went around and found that everything was under snowy tarps. So much for keeping this subtle.

“Hopefully, he’ll lie for us,” Bendy said, throwing off one of the tarps to reveal the machines and parts underneath. “Berries.”

“What am I looking for, bro?” Boris asked.

“Ball-n-socket joint, anything lightweight, springs, flexible things too,” Bendy listed. They went through one pile after the other, covering and uncovering as they searched. They got screws and a few sheets of metal. They couldn’t find the joint he wanted, but there were several sizes of springs.

“I think that’s all we’re going to find here bro,” Bendy said.

“This is gonna be a pain to haul back without a sled,” Boris muttered. Oh yeah. The old hunk of wood and rope they had used as a sled for years in the snow to get things around town. Too bad it broke.

“Cup and Mugs sh--’

“Hey!” Cup’s voice cut through the quiet. He hoped the mouse household didn’t hear that.

“Speak of the devil,” Bendy muttered.

“You fellas showed up just in time to help carry this back,” Boris said happily. With the cup
brothers’ help, they made it back to the house with little trouble. It was a bit odd though. They were quiet for most of it while Boris chatted excitedly. Bendy looked at Cup’s unreadable face, the thoughts from earlier coming back. They weren’t in trouble, right? They weren’t causing trouble, were they? What was Bendy supposed to do if they were?

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Mugs did his best to respond appropriately to Boris. He smiled, but his heart was far from it.

He had known meeting with the mob bosses was going to be a pain. He had known it wasn’t going to be pleasant. He had known damn well that the marble Cup had pocketed wasn’t going to be a good thing. Stars, he felt sick. He had to keep swallowing, keep smiling, keep it together.

Damn.

He hated this.

The mob bosses had mocked them upon arrival. Of course they had. Cup made sure to come a minute late to annoy them. Still, all of them had come. It was so rare for their mysterious unnamed boss to have a message for the gangs, after all. Mugs knew of the frustration that came to the other mobs with their lack of information. Sure, they had rumors. Tons of them. There was even one that Cup was the leader himself or Black Hat. Only the debtors and a very few trusted number of individuals knew the truth, and they couldn’t tell without serious consequences. So any information from the group that Cup and Mugs came from was treated like gold. Even if they acted like scum to their faces.

Cup knew that too, and he had enjoyed pushing the dangerous criminals buttons before getting to business. He was sure Gaston was going to pull a gun on his brother at any moment. The underlings they all had as guards eyed the brothers, just waiting for the signal. Clayton and Gothel had kept themselves mostly expressionless through Cups’ taunts and jeers. Mugs hadn’t said anything. Those had been the people that had gotten his brother beaten black and blue before they had left for the Far West. He didn’t have any respect or consideration for any of them.

Clayton was in the black market trade of dangerous weapons and ‘unique items.’ Mugs was sure if he ever heard that angels or Cala were in the city, he would scowl every street corner for them. He probably nabbed some of the monsters from Nightmare Night. It made him sick. Gaston and Cruella were more into the ‘parts’ of creatures. Cruella was great at forgeries, thefts, and of course, rare treasures. Hook was the new trade and smuggler now that the Sykes were gone. He wouldn’t have much competition on the docks. Mugs was sure a number of the others were grateful that the void was quickly filled with little blood shed. Though, Clayton probably wasn’t too happy with it.

Then Gothel. She was also a newer face to Toon Town’s underbelly. Mugs didn’t know much about her. She seemed to be climbing the ladder quickly if she was already here as a mob boss though.

Mugs had spared a special glare for Little John though. He, unlike the others, was one of the Devil’s debtors and knew exactly what was going on. Despite that, he had still allowed Cup to take all the heat after the newspapers release. The skinny lion had squirmed uncomfortably in his seat the whole meeting.

When Cup finally got to business, a number of them looked ready to skin him rather than listen. Cup was gifted in hitting where it hurt if he wanted to. The message Cup shared had warned the group to back off. That what happened on Nightmare Night was the boss’s business, and anyone that snooped around would be dealt with. That they would leave Baker Street alone and all those affiliated with it.
Of course, they were scoffed at. Then Cup, the actor that he was, sighed in mock disappointment and pulled out the marble. He told them that he had an example for them from the boss. That if anyone dared cross him or his underlings, they could expect the same to happen to them. He then crushed the marble in his hand and tossed it on the table. There was a flash, and then there was a limb. A hand.

Several of the newbies there had jerked back. Some of the guards seemed extremely nervous. The hand was wearing a gold watch. A vaguely familiar watch.

Gaston had taken it off and told everyone that it was Robert Sykes’ watch.

Cup had smirked. Mugs made sure his grimace was hidden in his scarf. The Sykes had disappeared from the warehouse after the brothers had given the boss their contracts. The police had no leads. The mob probably had known that Cup and Mugs had visited but beyond that…

John paled and whimpered. The table had become quiet after that. Cup repeated the warning that if they interfered, they would disappear like the Sykes had. That no hideout or army or amount of money could save them if they tried anything.

Then, they had left. They had left the hand. They had left the bosses before seeing what they could make of the dismembered limb. And they had gone back to the Bbros.

But…

Cup had looked like he enjoyed it.

That had Mugs worried. It was like all these weeks of him opening up and changing and feeling more like his big brother had been washed away for the return of the cool, cruel killer that Mugs had gotten used to over the last ten or so years. Mugs wasn’t really sure which one was the act and which one was his brother. His brother had gone years being the one or the other. Kind or cruel. Caring or cold. Now with this situation Mugs had been so sure that Cup was returning to how he had been. His real brother, the troublemaker that laughed as he ran away from his latest prank.

Then this happened, and he had enjoyed the revenge. Mugs spared a glance back to Cup and Bendy. At least, he had seemed to enjoy it. Now, he was distant, and it worried Mugs. What was he thinking? Mugs didn’t know, and he knew Cup best.

His heart still hadn’t calmed from seeing it. He felt jumpy. Twitchy. He couldn’t show it, though. He had to keep the smile and act okay. Despite that, he knew some horrible fate befell the Sykes brothers, and he and Cup had a hand in it. He had to smile.

He felt so dirty. Boris grinning at him, chatting off on building plans and tests and surprising Mickey with the date and a new leg. He didn’t deserve to stand next to this good kid that wanted to help everyone he met. He didn’t deserve to go back to that house with a warm meal and good friends that really cared about each other.

They trusted him. A killer.

He had to stop this. If he wanted to be their friend. If he wanted to have a life like them, one that helped people, he had to stop doing this. It was killing him. He wanted to be the hero that Cala treated him as. He wanted to be the friend Boris deserved. The partner in adventuring that could keep up with Felix. The trainer that could shape up Bendy.

He still didn’t know what to do though. Sure, help the group get the parts. That was a no-brainer. Don’t give the parts to the Devil. That wasn’t a surprise either. Even if he had to fight off Cup.
But what about all these things until then? Taking out the Sykes, threatening the mob, and they were supposed to find Fairfax and take him to Dice or the boss. Could he keep compromising himself like that for the bigger goal? What if the demand is too high? If he openly rebelled early, he wouldn’t be around to help, and he could put the rest of the group in danger!

Cup was right in thinking this was a tightrope act.

It would be so much easier if they could just take down the Devil.

They reached the house. Bendy and Boris were quick to take over the front room and start drawing up plans and tests materials. The conversation between the two of them went right over his head.

Felix was there. Bendy and Boris were excited to show their ideas. Mugs was happy to see smiles on their faces. They all needed a break after the past month.

The problem, Mugs was coming to understand, with being content was that time seemed to speed up. The happy times seemed to blur by in a blink of the eye as the dreaded ones seemed to be eternal, never-ending torture that crawled by at a glacier pace. That evening was one that blinked. The morning too. The time spent around the others, telling jokes and stories and puns were too short. The jog and practice with Boris and Bendy. They were still getting tossed around pretty easily, the snow was a good cushion for them, but their forms were getting better. Their reaction times were growing shorter. Soon, Mugs thought the two would be able to stop Mugs and Cup from breaking through their guards.

Now though, now he and Cup were alone again. They were going to Fairfax. The docks. The smell of salt and fish didn’t make it an ideal place to live. It was a mockery of the scent of his Cala, but where she was a bright clear day on the beach, this place was of rot and age. The ropes and crates that lined the docks didn’t add to the view of far off grey waters. There wasn’t a beach or sand here. Just cold stone and creaking wood. The breeze that came off the water was always cool, now in the winter, it was biting cold. It burned Mugs’ cheeks and nose. His head felt sluggish as it usually did in the cold weather. He’d never had it freeze before though. Pouring some hot cocoa in after this would help. But now they had a job to do. Fairfax.

And since it was something he dreaded, that meant that time was dragging, sluggish, creeping. He was starting to shiver from the frosty wind. If they didn’t find the building this guy was living in soon, Mugs was going to start rattling. He pushed his numb hands deeper into his pockets, not that it was helping.

“Here,” Cup breathed. It was a run down building, three stories, a couple of the windows were cracked or boarded up. There were a few that had meager curtains or cloth covering the casual viewer from seeing inside. The bricks were worn by the sea breeze, salt stained a patch here or there. The wooden door was bleached. Whatever shade it once had was long gone. Cup entered and paused at the mailbox slots fixed to the wall beside the entrance. They were numbered, but there were also tabs for name cards. There were only two name cards, the rest empty. To their luck, the newer one said J. Fairfax. He was in room 14. Cup headed up the creaking stairs, the thin bannister that lined the steps didn’t promise to hold any weight if one would dare trust it. The old wallpaper was dull and peeling. To add to the old rot fish and salty smell, there was now dust and something sour.

They climbed to the third floor. They found it down a narrow hallway that barely allowed two thin people to pass one another. There was a single sad picture of a field of flowers, cracked and aged. Cup knocked on the door. At least, if the man tried to run he’d have a hell of a time trying to escape. There was a clack from the other side of the door, then the sound of something scraping the wood floor on the other side, and the turn of a lock. He had barred the door.
“Yes?” He cracked it open, a charming smile on his handsome face. Then, his eyes landed on Cup. He tried to slam the door shut, but Cup’s foot and shoulder stopped that and forced the door open with a loud crash, shoving Fairfax in the room. Mugs followed them in. It was a tiny kitchen and living room combo with a bedroom the size of a closet off to the side. There was a window in the bedroom that seemed to overlook the alley. That was where Fairfax tried to run to. Mugs tripped him and pinned him down, twisting the man’s arm behind his back, and pinning Fairfax’s knees with Mug’s shin and body weight.

“Calm down,” Mugs told him.

“Calm! You’ve come to kill me! I heard about what happened to the Sykes!” Fairfax bellowed and withered in Mugs’ grasp like a desperate worm. Boy, news traveled fast.

“We ain’t here to kill ya.” Cup stepped around Mugs and crouched down next to the man’s face. Cup’s expression was bored, a hint of annoyance in the light of his eyes and the angle of his brow. He sighed. “No man, we ain’t even here to hurt ya.”

“Oh really?” Fairfax sneered sarcastically.

“Really,” Cup stated. “We’re here with an offer. That’s it.” Cup waved for Mugs to let him go. Mugs let go of his arm and stood. Jeremy brought his arm around slowly, rubbing his wrist and eyeing Cup coldly.

“Is this the same spiel you gave the Sykes?” he demanded as he got to his knees.

Cup snorted and pulled out his cigarettes. He stood up and pulled one out to pinch between his lips. “Look, if I wanted you dead, I would’ve shot ya by now. No. Just a cussing offer. Either come if your interested or don’t. Stay here in this matchbox dump.” Cup shrugged uncaringly and lit up his finger. “Either way, no skin off my bones. I’ll just tell them ya ain’t interested.”

“Them?” Fairfax’s brows knit together. He still looked like he was ready to bolt at any second.

“Our employer,” Cup stated. “Guess you impressed him.” He lit the end and dropped his hand. “Think he wants to hire you. Get you outta this dump.”

Fairfax’ eyes widened before they narrowed suspiciously. “The one that killed the Sykes and had you toss Rob’s hand down like a playing card?”

“That’s the guy, but he won’t have you doing things that the Sykes did. He knows your talents. He wants to offer you a deal. You can either come with us and hear him out or not. Hell, even after you hear him out, if ya don’t like the offer, you can go. No one’ll stop you. The boss is fair to let ya make your choice. It’s just an offer, but an offer he doesn’t give often,” Cup explained and took a deep drag of the cigarette. He pinched the cigarette between two of his fingers and let the smoke out slowly from his mouth.

“That’s it?” he asked. Mugs couldn’t decide if Fairfax reminded him of a weasel or a raccoon. Something seemingly cowardly but in reality was dangerous.

“That’s how it works,” Cup said, returning his cigarette to his mouth.

“Do you think I was born yesterday?” Fairfax huffed. Cup shrugged.

“Up to you. Like I said, I don’t care. I am going to go meet with the boss now. It’s up to you if you come or go,” Cup stated and moved. Mugs left first, Cup behind him. Mugs didn’t hear Jeremy get up. They went down the stairs to the front entrance again.
“He’s not coming,” Mugs muttered.

“Give him a minute,” Cup said and let out another cloud of smoke. Then, came the creaks and squeaks. Cup and Mugs went outside and started to walk down the street.

“Wait!” a voice called out behind them. Mugs glanced back. Fairfax, panting with a bag over his shoulder, had caught up. “I’ll at least hear him out.” Cup nodded and started walking. Mugs tugged his scarf up to hide his scowl.

He really hated this.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys! So, these arts were made by Rogue Falcon!

This first one is of the beastly demon from a couple weeks ago.

This second one is from a little joke that happened on Discord involving which Inky Mystery characters would be which characters from Pirates of the Caribbean. I couldn't resist adding it here! It's so adorable! ^^
Alice sighed.

The snow was falling again. They had two feet now. Winter had definitely come. It reminded her of home. She drew a heart on the frosted glass of her window with her finger and a halo over it. She missed home. Grandmama would have warm tea or cocoa out, Isaac would be rushing around, running late for one thing or another. Mary would be sitting with Grandmama while David and Rachel argued in the background. Mom and Dad would have already left.

How were they all doing? Did a report come in for Nightmare Night? Were any of them thinking about her?

She sighed again. No point dwelling on it. Alice got up and stretched. She’d see them all eventually. There was no reason to rush things. The angel left her room and went into the living room. Today was a big day. Holly and Bendy’s project was supposed to be finished today. Hopefully they’ll be able to gift it to Mickey. Alice was proud of them and hoped it worked.

She wished she could just heal him herself, but…

“Alice! Are you ready to head over there?” Cala bounced over excitedly. She had on a wool hat that protected Paul from the cold and snow. They had been having an...interesting time with Cala and the snow. The moment she got wet, she turned back into a mermaid. But at the same time, she was so excited to play in the white fluffy ‘ground clouds.’

This meant her secret was out to Daisy and Minnie now. Well...one of them, at least. She had started working there, and after the first snowstorm, the mermaid hadn’t properly covered herself. Alice was grateful that the mouse and duck were so accepting and understanding. Alice hadn’t wanted to use a forgetful charm on them. That magic was unreliable at best. She really didn’t like messing with
people’s memories or minds either.

“Yeah, I’m ready. Where’s Holly?” Alice asked, her eyes sweeping the living room and kitchen.

There was a thud from Holly’s room. A moment later, she rushed out, frantically brushing her hair as she tried to stick a book in her bag. “Sorry,” she said, reaching over to the table to grab a bagel. “I slept in.”

Alice chuckled. Holly had been frazzled the last few days looking over the runes and history. Alice would have been worried if she wasn’t so glad to see that happy spark in Holly’s eyes again. She came back from the trip revitalized and full of determination. The cloud of depression wasn’t so heavy on her, and Alice was grateful for that. The angel had worried the funeral would make her friends worse. And though the passing of Snow White and Sleepy was heartbreaking, they seemed to push the group to try harder instead of giving up. Holly had gotten very busy lately, though. She was gone in the evenings now with a second job at a diner. Any spare moment was used frantically studying or spending stolen moments at the house.

Alice didn’t quite understand it since the combined paychecks from Alice’s work and Cala’s covered the month’s rent and gave them enough for Cala to find some clothes for herself. But Holly had just frowned when she’d mentioned it and said she wanted to pay her fair share as well before the month’s end. Alice almost wanted to point out that Cala hadn’t been working until recently and had just been staying with them, but she refrained. The mermaid’s situation was different. She had barely been able to walk when she moved in, and Alice understood not wanting to feel like a burden.

She wished her friend could see that any help to the boys and the machine was more than enough. That any money lost to that case was a worthy sacrifice in the angel’s eyes. Holly really didn’t have anything to make up for. She didn’t push it though. Alice was grateful that Holly was up and motivated instead of the days she spent shut away in her room.

There was still one concern Alice had. Holly’s magic hadn’t returned yet. She had gone to Alice when they had returned, asking her to look at her mind again to see what might be wrong. Alice hadn’t been able to really find much. She didn’t make a link like last time, just a look. Holly’s emotions and memories were recovering, slowly but definitely. She couldn’t understand why the magic wasn’t coming. It wasn’t like the cog was tied to her soul! Then again...What had that tower been? The pool of darkness that had eaten away at Holly’s mind was no more than a puddle. A shrinking puddle...but it had left a stain. Alice didn’t know what any of it meant.

Holly had been very quiet after Alice had told her that, but Alice could feel the panic that had overwhelmed her. She seemed to have brushed it off now that she was busy. Which was good. Holly had been through enough and didn’t need to linger on those things. She was recovering, it wasn’t an instant thing.

The three women, bundled up and excited, headed to the door and out into the cold. Cala and Holly started talking about the house and the latest act Finley and Sammy had put on. There had been an afternoon when everyone had to scramble when Mickey and his brother had dropped by to give their well wishes and sympathies. Alice had never seen Bendy and Boris sweat bullets over a surprise before. It was endearing. Mickey also seemed to have grown quite the soft spot for the boys and even Holly. Though it was strange to see the lively mouse confined to a wheelchair.

There had been talk about a free show for the household and friends. Oswald had wanted them to come too for his ‘winnings.’ Whatever that meant. Cuphead and Bendy hadn’t like it. The others found it humorous. She learned later that they had lost a competition and were set for punishment.

Mickey and Oswald proved to be good people, despite the difficult start. Alice was happy to see new
friendships growing. She really wanted the leg to work, like the rest of them.

The girls got to the house quickly, not lingering in the icy air for any longer than they had too. Finley greeted them at the door. Bendy and Boris were at work once again. Alice had to admit, it had a beauty to it. The boys had crafted the light metals, gears, and springs into a machine that belonged in a display almost as much as it was useful. They had added designs and rivites, images of the circus with elephants and lions and fire rings, a sword, stars, moons, and sun symbols, all mingled with the drawn on runes that Holly had suggested. All the runes for the leg were drawn on at the moment, so if adjustments needed to be made they could be. Once they were sure it worked though, Bendy and Boris planned to cut the runes into the metal like they had their other pictures and designs. It almost reminded Alice of that rune at the school Holly had shown her once. But this was more of a history to Mickey than the mythical works of Yen Sid.

They had been very thoughtful with it’s structure as well. The foot length and leg length were adjustable. The foot was also able to detach from the rest of the leg to make it easier for maintenance and cleaning. Really, it was all breathing taking. The two young men were geniuses in their metal work.

Alice had spent hours watching them work when she had come over to the house to visit. It was a different side to Bendy she had never seen before. The same calm he had while reading a book, but there was more to it than that. His hands moved with certainty in everything he did. From the most delicate settings or taps to the stronger turning or banging. His confident, yet careful, hands had mesmerized her as metal scraps and little odds and ends came together into something recognizable.

Now they were there to test the magic and then cut the runes, if it worked. After that, they would present it to Mickey. Alice felt the thrumming excitement in the room like a swinging band’s music in her chest. She couldn’t help smiling as Holly hurried forward. The boys opened the leg to reveal more runes inside, the more delicate ones that they didn’t want damaged from use or weather. Holly tutted over each of the marks, checking and double-checking before she was satisfied. Then came the testing part. Someone would need to strap it to their knee and test the nerves and movement of the ankle, foot, and toes before seeing if balancing on it was possible. Bendy had volunteered, but Holly ended up being the one to try it so Bendy and Boris could observe it from every angle and make any adjustments. She was the same height as Mickey, and she wanted to make sure the nerves were connecting properly.

She yelped when Alice activated the runes and the leg attached. They gave the foot a horrified look. The alarm and pain were a sour taste in Alice’s mouth. “Holly, are you okay!” Alice hovered worriedly. It had hurt her. That wasn’t supposed to happen.

The girl, who had sat down for the connection, leaned over and rubbed her knee, grimacing. “That was a nasty connection, but it was only for a moment. I think it’s the nerves aligning. And there is also the fact that this is my kneecap and not the bottom of a leg,” she muttered. She frowned. “I’m fine though.” Bendy and Boris watched with hawk eyes. The others of the house seemed to be peeking in too. Mugs and Cup in the dining room leaned out. Granny had stopped in the hall and come out. Red and Sammy too. Even the Warners watched quietly.

Holly leaned down, eyeing the foot. After a moment, it started to move back and forth stiffly. Holly’s eyes widened to saucers. “That is the strangest feeling.” She narrowed her eyes, concentrating. The toes wiggled, making a clicking sound as metal rubbed against metal. “The basics seem to be working,” she murmured.

Bendy nodded. “Seems a touch stiff. We might need to loosen the joints a touch more.”

“And the response time is behind,” Holly added. “I think I need to move the direction runes closer to
Eyes brimming with curiosity, she slowly tried to stand, keeping the bottom of her leg out of the way. A ripple of confusion went across her face. She wobbled a little, looking down, but stayed upright. It was a strange sight, leg of flesh at a forty-five degree angle to the leg of metal. She looked at Alice. “I’ll try to walk to you,” she told her. Alice nodded and took a step back, ready to catch her if anything went wrong.

With a nod, Holly took a step forward with the metal leg. It thumped against the floor slightly louder than the other foot. Holly wobbled again as she tried to move her other foot. The metal shifted and slipped forward on the hardwood floor. Holly’s arms pinwheeled. Alice leaned forward and caught her.

Bendy clicked his tongue. Alice glanced up to see his frown and sharp eyes on the leg. “Stand her up, Alice,” he ordered as he reached to the table and grabbed a small wrench.

“I think we need something with grip to keep the bottom of the foot from sliding on the floor,” Holly said, straightening with Alice’s help. Boris hummed and went to the table. Bendy adjusted something at the ankle, his tail flicking above the floor as he knelt in front of the girls, the gold ring swinging a bit with his motions.

When Alice had first seen it, she had been a little confused on why he hated it so much. His only answer to any of her questions was ‘it wasn’t important.’ Later, she found out he couldn’t get it off. His tail spike was in the way. Which only brought her more questions on how it got on his tail in the first place. But again, no answers came. She had learned to just accept it much like he had. She found it looked nice, and it reminded her of a little halo, without magic of course. Or maybe the bangles Abby would wear sometimes. Still, she guessed it would be annoying since he wasn’t wearing it by choice.

Holly shifted, bring Alice out of her thoughts. Holly’s brow went down, and her eyelids twitched as he made the adjustment. But she didn’t seem to be in pain. Alice could only imagine how it felt. He tapped the top of the foot with the wrench when he was done. Holly shivered, rubbing her arms.

“Bro,” he said without looking up. Boris stepped back over.

“What about rubber?” Boris held up some stubs. “We can form them into pads on the bottom. They’re strong enough to last, flexible enough to not mess up the moving foot parts, and have enough friction on the floor not to slide.”

“Wouldn’t a shoe be good enough?” Cup muttered.

“I don’t want to make Mickey wear shoes all the time, and one shoe would cause a small height difference between his feet,” Bendy said, taking the studs from Boris. He motioned for Holly to lift the foot. “These will be temporary to see if rubber will work.” He fitted them on carefully at the heel and front of the foot. “Okay. Try that.”

Holly nodded and made another attempt across the room. Her movements were smoother now. The wobble was gone, but she was still stiff. She made it across the room to Alice without incident and turned back to Bendy. “Should I do a little jig now?” she said with a smile.

“Maybe after we fix the delay on response. Things like running and jumping need perfectly timing. We don’t want you to land on your face,” Bendy said. “It’s still stiff.”

“Unwind a couple of the coils?” Boris suggested.
“We can try that,” Bendy said. “Better take it off so we can open it up again,” Bendy told Holly. The rest of the house went back to their own chores, hobbies, or whatever they were doing. Cala drifted over to Mugman of course. Seemed Felix had given him and Cup a puzzle yesterday, and the two were still trying to solve it. Alice stayed in the front room to watch them work.

Holly nodded, a little grimace of resignation on her face. She sat down, fingers hovering over a little symbol at the top. It glowed when Alice activated it, and the leg detached. “I want to try something to lessen the connection pain too,” Holly said contemplatively.

That was how a good part of the day was spent. The boys and Holly would make adjustments, screwing or unscrewing things here, loosening or tightening things there, moving runes, erasing one to put another, and then testing it with Alice activating the magic and Holly attempting to walk. Finley and Sammy headed out on one of their medicine runs. Bendy asked them to bring back some rubber. They took a break for lunch. Everyone was in a good mood.

Holly had managed to walk with little problem after a few more tries. There was still pain at the attachment, but she only sucked in a breath instead of yelping. She seemed to have dampened it some. They were now trying little hops and jogging in place. She teetered to the left. It was hard to be sure if it was because the leg was heavy or because Holly still had her leg, thus adding to the weight. Still, the foot and ankle responded to push her up and cushioned her landing like a real foot would. They continued to tinker with it after the meal. Jerry had come in and complained about the mess and something about time.

Bendy had snipped at him that he hadn’t believed they were skilled enough to build the machine and that he should be looking at their work. That had quieted the man...or Bendy’s red eyes had. Alice couldn’t be sure. She only knew that Jerry was afraid of Bendy and frustrated for some reason. Finley and Sammy had come back with the rubber. The boys measured it, and Boris went off to shape it into what they needed in the backyard.

With the new pads put into place, Holly tested it again. She could hop leg to leg well enough. Alice was beaming with amazement. Then, Bendy had tested if she could make simple dance steps with him. Nothing fancy, just the back and forth and side to side motions while making a lazy turn together. Easy with normal legs. But now, after watching them work and all the small parts and motions that went into the machine, Alice understood just how complex it really was.

Holly kept her head down, watching their feet as Bendy slowly led her through the steps, first a simple square. Then he turned them both slowly as they did the square step again. He watched their feet too. Well, her foot actually. She stumbled, but Holly claimed that was from her and not the foot.

By the time dinner was being prepared, the boys were carving the runes to the inside and outside of the leg to finish it off. Cala and Mugs, the devious duo, called Mickey and his friends over for dinner. Alice was suspicious that Granny was in on the plan too, because there was a rather large amount of food served for the usual guests to get. Felix arrived and praised the boys on their finished work. Then, the mouse and his company had come. Mickey, Oswald, Donald, Goofy, and three younger ducks all entered the house. Again, it was a shock to see Mickey in a wheelchair.

The dinner was good. Alice did everything she could to make it comfortable. There were a few...distractions though. The Warners and the duck youths, Donald’s nephews, Huey, Dewey, and Louie, attempted to start a food fight, quickly diffused by Felix and Oswald. Felix and Oswald...There was a strange tension there. Embarrassment, caution, worry, respect, confusion, concern, all blended together with a slew of other things. Felix could hardly make eye contact with the rabbit. What in the world happened between those two? A fight? Holly would watch them during these moments, worry and a little fear running through her.
Then, there was the suspicion and agitation that certain members of Mickey’s group felt toward them. Alice tried not to stare at the duck too much, but his anger was slowly inching up as everyone talked calmly. Goofy also seemed to hold some reservations, but he didn’t openly show it like Donald did. Oswald also seemed to have mixed feelings, but that was harder for Alice to figure out since there were all those feelings with Felix.

Mickey, stars bless him, was simply happy. Boris kept swinging between excited and embarrassed. Bendy was cautious, as he always seemed to be around people he didn’t know very well but knew he had to tolerate. His cool aura a tad colder with his stress.

Still, with the Cups, the Warners, Granny, Cala, and Finley; dinner was well balanced with no uncomfortable silences; despite the emotions of some.

After dinner, Boris was doing his best not to be shy as they presented the gift to his idol. Mickey was amazed. Donald was offended. The duck couldn’t hold back on his anger any more.

“You really think a hunk of metal can fix what you did?” he demanded.

“Donald.” Mickey looked back at him in disapproval.

“Geez feathers, that’s some gratitude,” Finley grumbled at the duck.

Boris looked to Donald. “We know we can’t really ‘fix’ everything, but we did wanna help and thank you for everything you’ve done,” Boris said, his ears down even though he smiled bravely.

“Thank you Boris. It’s beautiful,” Mickey said.

Donald scoffed. Several of Alice’s friends’ frustration reacted to that.

Goofy spoke up. “Now Donald. These here fellas are tryin’ ta do somethin’ nice for our pal Mickey. ‘Sides, he told us that it wasn’t their fault, after all.” Goofy put a hand on Donald’s shoulder.

“I don’t care!” Donald snapped. “You lied about them already!” He pointed at Mickey. “Why not lie again! There has to be more going on than what you’ve said.” He gave Oswald a glare too.

The rabbit had found the ceiling to be extremely interesting at that moment. The tension was growing.

“Yeah! Are you people secret agents or something?” Huey asked. Huh?


“Wait a minute. Bendy. He might be ontta something.” Cup snickered. The young duck’s eyes widened. Thank heavens, that seemed to calm most of them down. This wasn’t supposed to be about fighting.

Bendy glared at Cup. “Don’t you go confusing people.”

Donald let out an angry quack. His feelings hadn’t changed.

“Donald. I told you that it was my fault!” Mickey turned on him. “These people are trying to do something good! It’s dangerous. You out of everyone should understand things like that. And now they are even giving me a gift!” Mickey chastised his friend. The swell of mixed emotions from Mickey’s family and friends was dizzying. Oh dear. This was only going to grow. She had to do something. No one here was a bad person. They shouldn’t be fighting.
Alice stepped forward. “W-we are sorry for what Mr. Mickey went through. We truly are.” The room fell quiet at her words. “But you see, Mr. Donald, what we are doing here is important. We are all sorry that he got involved and that he lost his leg, but we also can’t stop in our efforts. It’s to save the sick.” She swallowed, growing aware of all the eyes on her like feathers brushing her skin. “For one reason or another, Bendy and Boris have had to face obstacles and opposition for this goal. None of us understand why. I wish we could explain it all to you. I really do. All I can say is that we’re doing our best with what we have. Mickey has been a wonderful help. To me and a number of the people here.”

If he hadn’t been there on Nightmare Night, she might have been too late to save Cuphead and Mugman after all.

She looked to Bendy and Boris. “Bendy and Boris have spent days working on this for him as a thank you for all his help and kindness.” Boris ears perked. Bendy tilted his head, his brows up in mild surprise, but otherwise, he was unreadable...As usual.

“We hope that we can all be friends here,” Alice said. “You are good people, and in time, maybe all of us can understand why Mickey had to go through what he did.” She looked around at the others gathered. Oddswell and Red, always working so hard. Finley, Wakko, Jerry, Granny and all the other sick that they were so worried about. The other Warner siblings and their guardian trying to support their brother. Nervous Sammy doing his best to help, even with his feelings of inadequacy that cropped up so often. Cala and Holly, already so willing to do anything and both having suffered from those parts. Felix; patient, kind Felix willing to give up his time and energies to go on those quests, to risk his own life for getting the machine built. The Cup brothers, both so complex and so caring, even if Cup was bad at showing it. He couldn’t fool Alice. Then Bendy and Boris. In the middle of it all. “Why so many of us have had to go through so much.”

Her eyes landed on Donald. “So, please be patient.”

The duck’s bill turned into a scowl.

“Ah grash ma’am. Don’t you worry. We may not get all that’s going on here, but we aren’t angry with you.” Goofy spoke up. “Donald here is just worried. Mickey is a long time pal o’ ours, and Donald here can get a bit defensive for his sake. I think he’s just mad he didn’t get to go help save him.” The dog raised a finger like it was a new idea that had just come to him.

“What do you know!” Donald growled at him.

“Aaaw,” Oswald cooed and leaned over the duck, an arm over his shoulder. “Ya big softy.”

“Get off of me!” Donald swung his arms around, ducking out from under Oswald. “You cussing nutcase!”

Mickey chuckled. “Thank you, really,” he told Bendy and Boris. “This was thoughtful, and it’s beautiful.”

“Yeah it is,” Bendy said. Boris elbowed him. The demon frowned at him. “I wasn’t done,” he told his brother. “It’s not just a peg leg. We had some magic added to the mix.”

Mickey blinked. “Magic?”

The brothers nodded. Boris spoke up. “We wanted to get it as close to a real leg as possible, so we asked Holly and Alice for some rune help.” Mickey glanced at Alice and then Holly. “We want to make sure it works for you like it did when we tested it.”
“More mumbo-jumbo?” Donald complained. Oswald put him in a headlock and ruffled his feathers. Donald quacked indignantly and tried to escape. His nephews laughed.

“Of course! Let’s try this leg out!” Mickey said, curiosity in his eyes. There was a new excitement to him now. Huh. Did Mickey like magic? Alice wouldn’t have thought so, since all the magic he had faced around them had caused him problems. Yet there was a new energy to him when finding out it was magic.

The brothers helped Mickey put it on and explained how he could make height adjustments.

“Now there’s a bit of pain when activating the runes. But after that, you should be good,” Bendy said. Mickey eyed the leg.

“Pain?” Oswald asked.

“It’s the nerves connecting,” Holly said.

“Well, let’s give it a go!” Mickey said and touched the top rune. It lit up, Mickey winced but that was it. His friends leaned over him to look at it and then him.

“You okay der, Mick?” Goofy asked.

Mickey looked at the foot, his eyes wide with wonder. The metal toes clicked as they moved.

“Wow,” he murmured.

“Think you can stand?” Bendy asked.

“Is that really a good idea?” Donald frowned at him. Mickey shifted to get up. Oswald and Goofy moved to help him. Mickey wobbled a little but then straightened up. He laughed and took a step, then another.

“Golly,” Oswald whispered. Mickey grew more confident as he continued to move around. He spun around and bent down. He was laughing now. So were the others. Alice could see tears in their eyes as they all came together to hug the mouse. Several people clapped and congratulated Mickey. Now, the thanks to B-brothers were genuine and tearful. Boris was glassy eyed when Mickey went to hug him. Alice couldn’t help brushing at her own eyes.

The house upped in volume again, several people going off in conversations. Alice drifted over to Holly in the corner of the room. She was talking to Cuphead. “Hey feathers. Nice speech,” Cup greeted her.

“Feathers?” Alice asked. Then it clicked. She chuckled. “Oh, why halo there.” She responded. Cuphead smirked. Holly grinned. “I’m just glad everything seems to be working out.”

Holly nodded. “After everything that’s happened,” she smiled softly, “seeing Mickey that happy, seeing the leg work as well as it did.” She looked up, pushing back her hair. “It feels like the break we haven’t had in months.”

“Shocking that it’s only been a few weeks since we came back from the mountains,” Cuphead muttered, watching the circus group. Alice nodded. It really was.

“A lot has happened since then,” Alice commented. “It feels like it’s always been like this though.” She laced her fingers together when Mickey hopped in a circle with the duck nephews and the Warners and Boris.
“Yes.” Holly looked down, shifted, and smiled at the mouse. “It feels like it could go on forever.” But she felt restless. She tapped her finger on the side of her dress and finally let out a long breath. She looked up at Cuphead. “So, you remember that offer you made back in Heela, Cup? I think I want to take it,” she said. She was frustrated and...scared? Alice spared her a worried look. An offer in Heela?

Cup tore his eyes off the energetic house to the girl. “I figured you would.” He stuck his hands in his jacket pockets. “So when do you want to go?” Go? Go where?

She hummed. “Knowing him, he’ll want to know in advance, right? Next weekend?” she said tentatively.

“He...already does.” Cup glanced away, suddenly sheepish. Cup was embarrassed? Who was he?

Holly’s head snapped towards him, eyes narrowed. That seemed to bother Cuphead too. “Don’t waste your time being considerate either! The schmuck doesn’t deserve it!” Cup snapped, still not looking at her.

Holly warred with indignation, a little hope, and a lot of anxiety. Underneath it hid gratitude and warmth.

Cup glanced at Holly from the corner of his eye. “He ain’t Bendy. The schmuck let you and me and her,” he pointed to Alice, “and him and them,” he pointed to Bendy and the Warners, “down. Be demanding. Be mean. Be cussing indignant! That scum shouldn’t have your consideration in anything. He’s too selfish and starfallen pit scum.” The usual spark of anger in him. Let Alice down? Who let Alice down?

“Pit?” Alice muttered confused. What in the world were these two talking about?

“Don’t worry about it,” Cup said quickly to her before turning back to Holly.

Holly’s brow fell. She bit her lip. “Okay,” she said slowly.

“If you want him to give ya a look tomorrow, we can go tomorrow. To hell with his schedule. He owes you this. Besides.” Cup’s eyelids lowered to half mast. “You’re going cussing nuts ain’t cha?”

Now it was Holly’s turn to look away. Her foot tapped on the ground. She made a quiet noise.

“Um, who are you two talking about?” Alice asked, her curiosity getting the better of her.

Holly looked back up at Cuphead. “But, I’ve decided if we’re going to do this, I want Alice to come too.” She reached over and grabbed Alice’s arm. Uh? Alice was going where now? Holly looked at the angel. “Sorry, I’ll explain in a moment.” Alice just nodded patiently. The emotions that charged the area around them hinting at the importance of...whatever this was.

“That’s gonna tick him off.” Cup looked at Alice.

Holly raised a brow. “I’m being demanding and indignant.” Which wasn’t true. Relief was more the emotion Alice sensed from her...and defiance.

He smirked. “Sure, she can come.”

Finally, Holly turned to Alice. “We’re going to see Hat about what’s wrong with my magic.”

“Ah?” Alice muttered. Uh? Uh? Black Hat? Then it all fell into place. “A-are you sure? I mean I know your recovery is taking a while, but you are getting better.”
“She wants her magic back, feathers,” Cup said. Alice didn’t have an answer for that. She didn’t know why Holly couldn’t use magic right now. Still going to a demon like him...

“My memory has gotten clearer, especially when we headed out to Heela City, but not even a hint of my magic. I need to know why.” She frowned. “It’s driving me crazy.” She paused. “Helping build the leg was great. But…I think about using magic every day. Every test. Every idea. It hurts not too. Almost physically.”

Alice knew what she meant. Every time something didn’t happen with her runes, there would be that deep sadness and frustration. Alice sighed. “I understand.” It was her halo all over again.

“Berries,” Cup said. “So again, when are we going? Morning or afternoon?” Cup asked.

“Morning?” Holly looked at Alice. Alice would need to call Betty to let her know she was going to miss work.

“Okay,” Alice said. She glanced out to Bendy. He was watching Boris with a small smile on his face. “Does anyone else know what we’re doing?”

“Just you and Cup. We could tell Felix,” Holly offered.

“I’ll let Mugs know we are going to the casino, but none of the details. You don’t want them shared after all.” The man shifted away and into the crowd toward Mugs and Cala.

“He doesn’t waste time, does he?” Alice mumbled. She looked back at Holly. “I hope this works, Holly.”

She nodded. Her grip on Alice’s arm tightened. “I hope so too. And I don’t mind if he tells Mugs. I just don’t want Bendy to feel bad about it,” she said. “He’s got enough to worry about as it is.”

Alice nodded slowly. “He…is under a lot of pressure.” It was like there was always a weight on his feelings. It was worse since he and the Warners had come back from hell. None of them would go into details. Something about the Warners messing with something, and Bendy and Black Hat had to fix it? There was some social disquiet? Alice didn’t know! Whatever it was, the Warners were acting calmer and more thoughtful than normal. Seemed even they knew that giving Bendy a hard time was a bad idea. “But I don’t know if he’ll be happy with us keeping this from him. Hat is his mentor now, after all,” Alice muttered. Not that Alice understood much of that either. It seemed the demon’s mentoring methods were different.

Holly gave a heavy sigh. “Technically, it’s not Bendy’s business. It’s mine. And it’ll be healthier for everyone if he focuses on the important things, like helping Mickey or figuring out how to get the map to show a new part. And it’s like Cup said, Hat owes us.” She smiled at Alice. “This is why I want you to come. I know that whether this helps me find out what’s happened to my magic or not, we’ll be fine with you there.” She squeezed Alice’s hand.

Alice nodded. It’s true. Hat wouldn’t try anything with her there. She hoped. “I guess you’re right.” The night wore down after that. Mickey and the crew promised a free show with the best seats whenever they were available. Bendy had followed them out for a moment. When he came back, he seemed very pleased with himself. Alice learned Bendy had asked the circus crew if they would want to go to a dance club this weekend for Mickey to put the new leg to use. Oswald had agreed for them. There was a smug pleasure coming from Cuphead and Holly that Alice couldn’t comprehend. What were they happy about? Maybe the trip to the casino tomorrow? Strange.

Either way, with that over with, they headed home with smiles through the cold snow. Alice was
pretty happy all things considered. Things were looking up for them. Everyone was in high spirits after tonight. She hoped they continued to improve. They got back to their apartment. Alice made them all some tea to warm them up before bed.

Cala was almost vibrating with joy. Alice smiled. “What has you so chipper, Cala?”

The mermaid looked up. “Oh! Mugs asked me to go with him to the dance club celebration with him! I’m excited to try dancing.” Her face darkened with her blush, pleasure thrumming from her.

“The plan working for you?” Holly said with a grin, winking at Cala.

“Plan? Oh! Hehehehe!” Her blush grew darker.

“Plan?” Alice asked.

“The plan to go to the dance club,” Holly said, smiling widely at Alice. A surge of excitement went through Holly. There it was again. Huh.

“Well it has been a while since I’ve danced.” Since before she left home. Her heart ached at the memory. A farewell party that Isaac had pulled together for her. No. That wasn’t fair. Alice had gone dancing with the girls not that long ago. She was just home sick. “It does sound fun and with all our friends.” Alice smiled.

“Actually…” One of Holly’s brows went up conspiratorially. “I had a question to ask you,” she said with a brief glance at Cala before looking back at Alice. The weird excitement in Holly almost seemed to jump to Cala. Her eyes widened and glittered as she leaned toward Alice.

“So, I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but Mickey and Minnie are absolutely crazy about each other, but they are both too shy to get into any sort of relationship, or for Mickey to even ask Minnie out,” Holly started. She laced her fingers together and set her elbows on the table.

Alice tilted her head. “Yes…” So this was about them? Helping the two kind mice finally start a relationship? How thoughtful! Alice smiled.

“So, we were hoping to give them a chance to get together by making this whole dance club thing a big group date. That way they would feel more comfortable with it and not feel as much pressure in coupling off for a date. Daisy and Donald are going to suggest it to them.” Holly shifted in her chair.

“Oh! So this is a couple event,” Alice said. “Then, I guess the children and single people won’t be joining?” That was too bad, but the setting would work better with couples there. Alice would go dancing some other time.

Holly tapped her head. “No, no. That wouldn’t be fair. I’m going to ask Finley, since we’re good friends; Sammy said he would be more comfortable at home; Red has plans; Felix should be there; Cala is going with Mugs; Mugs said he was working on a date for Cups; Donald and Daisy are going together; and me and Cala were thinking...maybe you could go with Bendy.” She sat back casually.

Alice nearly dropped her cup.

“Like I said, it’s not a serious thing. Just a group date for all of us to have fun.” Holly picked up her tea cup, taking a slow sip.

Her and Bendy! On a date! Together!
“Oh, please consider, Alice! We’re all adults here, all friends, like you said earlier. It’s not serious! Besides.” Cala scooted forward in her seat. “You’ve heard that he’s a good dancer, right? He deserves a break with a good dance partner! You both would have fun! If he asks, don’t turn him down.”

If he asks? Alice tilted her head thoughtfully. Well, if it wasn’t serious, that was different. And he did need some time to have fun. It would be nice to lift some of that weight off of him. “I guess it’s fine if we go as friends and dance partners,” Alice admitted cautiously.

“Amazing!” Holly chirped.

“Oh! This is going to be flounder dash!” Cala cheered.

“Flounder dash?” Alice held back her chuckle.

Cala stopped. “Um, like berries? I think.” She smiled.

Holly covered her grin with a hand. “That’s a wonderful way to describe it,” she giggled. On those happy notes, the girls went to their rooms to bed. Cala and Paul were asleep almost as soon as their heads hit the pillow. Alice sat by the window for a few minutes. It started to snow again. Little flakes drifted down from the heavens.

What a day. She wished she could tell Isaac or David about it. Mary too. Would they be proud of her? David would probably tell her she wasn’t doing enough. Silly perfect saint. Her smile slipped. What would they think of Bendy? She shivered and rubbed her arms. It wasn’t like they would hate him, right? They would need to know him first. Like she did. Alice was sure that Isaac would at least come around.

No. Mary. Mary wouldn’t judge him. Not like that. Would they be okay with her going on a date with him? Did it matter what they thought? Alice shook her head. This was silly. Of course it was fine! He was her friend and a good person! The snow, it was messing with her head. Her homesickness. That had to be it.

She huffed at her own silliness and went to her bed. She tried to imagine dancing with Bendy instead. His cool aura and mischievous smile as they spun together. There was excitement at the thought. They would have fun. She drifted off into dreams of dancing in the sky with that fanged smile following her into the heavens.

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Cup leaned against the car door as the trees blurred by. Holly was a ball of nervous energy between him and Alice. He couldn’t blame her really. She hadn’t had a common interaction with the demon like he or Alice had. The casino came into view, the ride had felt longer than normal. The longer ride was probably from the continually dying conversation attempts Alice tried. Holly smiled at her with tight lips, making listening noises. She obviously wasn’t listening.

Cup got out, itching for a cigarette. Oh wait. This was the casino. Flug would be here. A corner of his lip tugged up. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his pack while the others got out. The doorman eyed him while he lit his finger and started smoking. “Ready?”

“Is it okay for you to smoke in there?” Alice asked, narrowing her eyes at him.

“It’s fine,” Cup said and walked in.

“You’re purposely doing that to bug someone, aren’t you?” Holly said flatly, looking up at him.
“Maybe.” Cup smirked and pinched the cigarette between his fingers to let a breath out in the lobby. Alice sighed. “There are areas here that are no smoking,” she muttered.

Cup’s smile grew. “I know.” He rang the bell at the desk. The employee looked up with dull eyes until he saw Cup. His eyes widened. “Get me Flug or that crazy girl,” Cup told him. “I have business with the higher ups.”

The guy scurried away so fast he almost tripped over himself. Huh. Wonder if that fella was in on the rumors of the criminal world? He and Mugs had been making the rounds again thanks to the hand stunt the boss had them pull. Infamy traveled fast.

It was in short order that Flug rushed into the room. Upon seeing Cup casually smoking in the lobby, he paused and narrowed his goggled eyes. It was this man’s fault that Cup had taken up the habit in the first place.

“Cuphead.” His eyes locked on Alice, and he went stiff. “What are you doing here?”

“Remember that favor I told you to tell Hat about?” Cup drawled and blew a cloud of smoke into his dumb paper bag covered face. Flug coughed and waved his hand in front of his face to disperse it.

“M-Mr. Hat is very busy!” Flug argued.

“Just take us to his office Flug,” Cup frowned. “Ya don’t wanna waste our time.”

Flug straightened and tilted his bag, probably lifting his chin.

“You know, I’ll win any fight you give me,” Cup stated. The stick thin man deflated and turned. Cup snorted and returned the cigarette to his mouth. He looked at the girls.

Alice was frowning at him. Holly’s expression was neutral. She glanced at Flug curiously as he walked away. “How do you think this will go once he gets Hat?” she asked.

“He’ll complain, argue, and then do it to get rid of us,” Cup said deadpan. It was so predictable it was sad.

Her shoulders eased a little bit. She tilted her head at him, smiling a little. “Sometimes your confidence baffles me.” Confidence? Nah. It was experience. Not that he was going to get into that stardust. Just ’cause Mugs was seeing the shrink, didn’t mean he was gonna hash out his own past.

They went down the hall and into the basement. Cup didn’t even blink as they entered the secret basement on the other side of the wall. Alice wasn’t surprised either. Surprisingly, Holly didn’t blink either. Why did he feel like the little snoop had been down here before? He glanced at her again. Probably because she had. Stars.

They went down the hall to the rich carpet and dark wood. He spared a couple of glances at the walls. 5-0-5 hadn’t cleaned up that old doodle yet? He was surprised Hat had allowed the mess to stay.

Flug huffed. “I doubt he is even here. Seems that there’s a lot going on down below.”

Holly tilted her head at him, her eyes lingered on the bag and goggles for a moment. “What is he doing?” she asked.

“Matters that are beyond you!” Flug snapped. Holly shrugged. Cup glared at him. Flug straightened
again.

“Just knock on the starfallen door, Flug! Stars!” Cup growled. The twig turned and did just that.

“What!” Hat’s angry growl cut through the thick wood. Holly glanced at him and Alice. Alice ducked her head nervously.

Flug jumped. Cup whistled. “He sounds angry,” Cup sang. “Lucky you’re the one that’s interrupting him, huh?” Flug gave him a reflective glare over his narrow shoulders. Cup tapped his cigarette, ash drifting to the ground. “Better answer. Ya don’t want to leave him waiting.”

Flug cracked the door open. “U-uh, hello Lo-Lord Hat! You ha-have visitors.”

“I am not expecting visitors, you imbecile! Tell them to leave and make an appointment like everyone else!” There was a crash as something shattered. Flug ducked back for a moment before sticking his head back in.

“It’s Cu-Cuphead sir!” Flug squeaked. There was silence for a long tense moment. “It’s about that.”

“Let them in,” Hat ordered. Flug opened the door and stepped out of the way. Cup slouched in, winking at Flug as he passed. The scientist narrowed his eyes. As long as Cup irritated and discomforted the man every time he saw him, Cup could be happy. Holly and Alice followed him in. Holly’s eyes widened as she looked at the office room. Then, she frowned, narrowing her eyes. Cup followed her line of sight.

She was looking at one of the objects Hat had displayed. A shell.

“What!” Hat barked. He was sitting behind his large desk in his large leather chair in front of his large portrait of himself. Nice to see nothing had changed. There was a pile of papers on his desk. Cup sauntered up to the desk.

“We’re here to finish that deal you made with Alice and never paid up on,” Cuphead stated.

Hat snorted. “The girl is alive. The deal is paid.” Holly scowled.

“You promised to help separate and fix her soul and mind from that cog. You didn’t do it,” Cup argued. “And she is still suffering from the after effects.”

“That has nothing to do with me.” Hat waved his hand. There was a puff of black fire, and a feathered quill appeared in his hand. “Now, if you don’t mind, I am busy.” He leaned over the desk.

“Hat,” Alice cut in. “Bendy and I did everything you asked. Bendy is even your apprentice now.” Hat glared over at her.

“C’mon, old man. You know we ain’t leavin’ until you at least look at her.” Cup smirked. The glare slide to him.

“I’m sure for a demon of your power, it would only take a moment,” Holly said cautiously.

Hats eye narrowed to a slit.

“You got a lotta paperwork,” Cup pointed out. Hat scoffed and stood up with an annoyed frown.

“Fine!” the demon snarled. “Then, you will leave!” Wow. It must be quite the busy day if this was all the fight he was going to put up. Hat melted into a shadows and appeared in front of Holly, scowl still in place. She blinked, flinching.
“What are the after effects,” he demanded as he looked down on her.

She cleared her throat and put her hands behind her back, straightening up. “I lost my talent temporarily. It has started to come back. But the biggest side effect is that my ability to use magic or runes is gone. It’s shown no sign of returning as of yet,” she said, looking at him with a frown.

Hat rolled his eyes. “Fine. Now hold still.” He reached out, hand hovering in front of her sternum.

Holly immediately jumped back, hands waving in front of her. “Whoa, whoa! Wait a moment. First, explain what it is you are doing. How are you going to check? What signs are you looking for? What do you think might have happened? What will this look like?” The words pelted from her mouth like a nervous semi-automatic rifle.

Hat stared at her, deadpan. His slit pupil slid to Cuphead. The cold room dropped a couple more degrees. Cup sighed and shrugged. The girl had a right to know.

“Wasting my time. Do you want to be fixed from their incompetent handling or not?” Hat said. Alice puffed out her cheeks in offense. Holly gave him a stubborn frown.

“Aw, c’mon Hat,” Cup said, putting out his cigarette in his glove. “She just wants to know what you’re going to do.”

Hat sighed like it was the greatest burden he had ever dealt with. “Looking at your soul you incompetent girl! That’s what you asked for! Now, let me do so or get out!”

“How?” Holly persisted. “You looked ready to reach into my chest and rip something out,” she argued.

“I don’t have time for this! Go!” Hat waved an arm at her and turned to go back to his desk. Stubborn hellsp—Wait a second.

“Hat, were you just going to yank it out?” Cup grumbled with a scowl of his own. Heartless pit scum.

“Hat!” Alice gasped. “That’s rude!”

“Yank it out?” Holly’s jaw dropped.

“Do you want me to look or not? This is the fastest way!” Hat snapped.

“But it’s invasive!” Alice argued with a glare.

“And so was that device! Do you want this done or not! I can go back to my paperwork,” Hat threatened.

Cup glared. Schmuck. He glanced at Holly. “Idiot,” he muttered under his breath. He stepped back to Holly as the angel and demon argued. “Sorry ‘bout that,” Cup told the girl.

“He was just going to tear it out?” She blinked owlishly at him. “Won’t that cause damage?”

Cup snorted in surprise. He lowered his chin while raising his brows. “Do you really think Alice and I would allow that?” he retorted.

“Then you knew he was going to do it that way?” she responded with a frown.

“Not really,” Cup admitted. “I thought he would do something like what Alice did and make a link
with you to look in. Seems he’s too impatient, but he still won’t hurt you with us here,” Cup promised.

Her shoulders dropped. She glanced back at the arguing angel and demon. She let out a sigh and then smiled. “Then, this is fine.”

Cup raised a questioning brow. “You sure? It can feel a bit...invasive.” Did that give him away too much? Hopefully, she missed that.


“So, we’re doing this my way!” Hat barked.

“Fine! But you have to ask her first!” Alice barked back. The room was starting to feel a little charged with their conflicting magics.

“Fine!” Hat growled back, his eye flashing red. He snapped his head back to Holly. “Do I have permission to remove your soul?” he demanded more than asked.

She looked at Hat for a moment, glancing at Cup with concern. Then, she gave Hat a chagrined sigh. “While they are here, yes.”

“Fine then!” Hat marched up to her. Cup shifted half in front of her. Hat growled at his face.

“Gently,” Cup reminded the steamed demon. Hat narrowed his eye, but the red faded. Cup moved to the side and put a hand on Holly’s shoulder. “I’ll be right here.” Alice stood to the side, arms down and ready if Hat tried anything. Holly hesitated and nodded, smiling at him.

The demon rolled his eye. He lifted his hand in front of her sternum again. Hat stared at her face in boredom to see if the girl would really stay still this time. Cup squeezed her shoulder reassuringly.

Holly smiled at the demon. He lit his hand in acidic green magic that waved like smoke. He reached out and brushed the very tip of his claws to her chest. The green expanded a bit.

Holly stiffened, taking in a sharp hiss. Her hands rolled, and a shiver went through her as her eyes widened.

“You’re doing fine,” Cup muttered into her ear. Stars knew how uncomfortable it felt. Alice was as tight as a spring as she watched the demon. Hat drew his hand back, the green lingering in front of Holly. He turned his hand over and a bright light burst from her chest. A glowing white heart about twice the size of the Cup's fist formed into front her chest and drifted in the mini cloud of green.

Holly stared at it with unmasked fascination. Her hand came up, hovering carefully nearby like she wanted to touch it, but didn’t dare. She frowned, looking queasy, her shoulders hunching suddenly. Without warning, she reached out. Cup just barely caught her wrists in time, her fingers mere centimeters from it. “You don’t want to do that,” he whispered. “That’ll hurt. You have to treat it gently. More gentle than anything you’ve ever held. I understand you want to grab and hide it. Don’t.”

Holly grit her teeth. She made an uneasy noise and nodded. When he let go of her wrists, her hands lingered for a moment. She barely brushed it with two fingers. A strong shiver ran through her before she forced her hands down.

Then, the scum had to be a cussing stain and leaned down to look at it closely. Cup bristled, and it wasn’t even his soul being looked at. Alice looked ready to punch him.
Holly’s arm twitched in what looked like an attempt to keep from slapping Hat. She looked even more queasy. Her face darkened with a humiliated blush.

Hat ignored all three of them, his eye only focused on the glowing heart shape in front of him. His monocle reflected it like a mirror. He observed it with a critical eye. It was a similar look that Bendy had while working on that prosthetic leg. Cup always wondered what Hat saw, if the eyes of a demon could see things that were beyond him. Secrets or thoughts, maybe even feelings or dreams. Hat would never answer any of his questions. Hat tilted his head and shifted. He lifted his still green coated hand, not touching the heart directly, the green mist drifting around it shifted the heart a bit to the side. Holly tensed under Cup’s hand. He gave her another reassuring squeeze. Her face was getting darker and darker. Hat narrowed his eye and hummed.

“I see the problem, but to fix it,” he glanced up at Holly, “I have to touch it.” Cup shivered involuntarily. His own memories and trauma scratched at his mind.

Holly looked like she might actually swear at Hat. Her cheeks were puffed out, and a scowl stretched her face like a rubber band.

Hat pointed a claw at the bottom left curve of the heart. “Right there. It’s a stain. Not a full corruption, but I’m sure this is causing the block.” Cup couldn’t see anything there. Hat smiled. “So what do you want me to do girl?”

Holly’s arms pressed against her sides like she was a pole. She looked deathly pale. She swallowed, trying to speak, then swallowed again. “Fix it,” she finally managed to squeak.

Alice’s eyes widened. “Hol--”

“Let ‘em,” Cup cut her off. The look Alice gave him was like Cup had insulted her mother.

“But do you see anything else?” Holly squeaked again, stopping Hat before he could move.

Hat raised a brow and glanced at Cup and Alice. His smirk was unsettling. “A number of things. Things I don’t believe you’d want shared. But in the context of that thing, no. There is the mark, a bit of...other darkness, but that’s yours. If there are any other problems, that would be in your mind.”

Holly blanched and nodded slowly. Cup growled. That had been too much information with her soul out like that! Hat knew it too, with that wicked gleam in his eye. “So, are we doing this?” He lifted the hand that wasn’t covered in green.

“B-Be careful, okay?” Holly said, hands raising and hovering around it to try to cover it from Hat. Cup slid his hands over her forearms.

“Can I help? This might get a bit intense,” Cup asked. He knew that he used to try to fight tooth and nail when he had to have these check ups.

Holly looked at him. “O-okay?” But her voice cracked, and she looked like she wanted to cry. Cup pursed his lips and nodded. He tightened his grip on her arms, lowering them, he could feel her resisting him.

“Do it before she freaks out, Hat,” Cup ordered.

The demon narrowed his eye at Cup’s tone but was too focused on Holly’s soul to comment. He lifted the empty claw to her soul. There was a wisp of darkness around his claw tips. “Now.”

Holly suddenly bucked underneath his grip, her face contorting with anger and fear. “Okay, no, Cup.
I changed my mind. Let’s not do this.” She tried to step back. Cup grit his teeth. Yep, there was the resistance he expected. Few things were as scary as having a demon touch your soul. “No-no. No-no. Stop!” He didn’t. He just kept his tight hold on her. Silently apologizing. “I said stop!” she snarled. Her foot lashed out sideways, catching him in the shin with the sharp part of her heels. Cussing ouch. Cup winced, but didn’t move.

“Cup. She doesn’t want to anymore!” Alice exclaimed. Her eyes were the size of saucers. She didn’t move though.

“It’s a natural response, like a reflex,” Hat said sounding bored. “The minute I draw away, she’ll ask me to try again.”

They both watched Hat. The demon had his claws on the soul, the darkness swathed over it. It seemed to dip into the surface of the soul for only a moment. If you blinked, you would have missed it. Holly’s scream on the other hand, proved she certainly hadn’t. She bucked against him wildly, almost wrenching herself away from him. It sounded like someone was murdering her. Cup cringed as the noise rang through his head.

Hat pulled his hand away. There he held a tiny bit of grey. It was barely the size of a pea, the shadows in his hands danced around it. Holly shuddered and sobbed, going limp. Hat raised a brow and waved his hand. The green cloud turned her soul. The demon gave it a last look before the green magic faded and the soul drifted back into her chest. Now, Cup was holding her up more than anything.

Alice was in front of her in an instant. “Oh heavens Holly! Are you okay!” she fretted.

Holly didn’t answer. She just shook her head, still crying. She gripped Cup so hard that her nails had dug into his arms. He just brushed her hair with his other hand and held her close. Yeah. Having your soul handled was never fun. They were too delicate, too sensitive. Hat was at his desk. He pulled out a glass vile and dropped the grey mass into it.

“And what do you think you are doing with that?” Alice demanded with an artic tone.

Hat, eye narrowed and still on the soul fragment, answered. “Studying it. There is a stained soul, a corrupted soul, and then there is this. Whatever this is. It’s similar, but…” He frowned. “Whatever I discover, I will inform you, since it’s a matter of a soul and not one of mine.” Hat slid his eye to the angel. “I assume that is acceptable, since the information will hopefully be of use to you.” Alice frowned but didn’t fight him on it.

“Then, I think it’s time you go,” Hat dismissed. “I assume you can find your way to the door.”

Cup glared at the schmuck. Even helping, he was scum. “Fine. We’re gone. The deal’s done,” Cup growled. He looked down at the girl in his arms. Holly had stopped crying, but now she was staring blankly into space. “Can you walk, H?”

Holly didn’t respond. She had a lost look that reminded him of when Bendy and Alice had brought her back from the hospital. Stars. Was that only a month ago?

“She’ll be okay, right?” Alice asked nervously. She was biting her lip and looking at Holly with an ashen face.

“Yeah,” Cup said. He bent down and swept her legs out from under her. He held her up princess style and headed to the door. “It’s just the shock to her soul. She’ll recover quickly.”

Alice nodded and followed Cup to the door. Cup paused at the doorway. “Oh and Hat.” He glanced
back at the demon. “I know about the demon blood,” he said and left before he could see the hellspawn’s reaction. They left the casino immediately after.

Holly fell asleep less than a minute into the cab ride back. But by the time they reached the girl’s apartment she was looking around again with tired, bleary eyes. Alice almost deflated with relief. Cup snorted at the pale angel. Still, that had been intense. He hoped he’d never hear Holly scream like that again. He also hoped she wouldn’t remember it, but that was less likely.

The cab dropped them off at the girls’ apartment. Cup walked them to the door. Alice demanded Holly to bed rest for the day. Cup knew the girl would probably feel silly about that in half an hour or so. He didn’t push it though. The angel was frazzled. As he turned to go, Holly grabbed onto the bottom of his coat. “Mmmm, Cup?” she mumbled.

“Yeah, H?” Cup asked and glanced back at her. She was sitting on her bed, practically ready to fall over. Her eyes were closed.

“Sorry...I kicked you,” she managed.

He chuckled. “Just say I deserved it.” Cup left them to it and headed home.
Hell of a Party

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"Come one and all to another chapter of Inky Mystery!" Mic waved a hand out. He grinned. "Bendy is in for one hell of a time!"

Chapter Notes

Greetings one and all!
Well. Today is a surprise double posting! Why? Because I can! And Mercowe is moving away so it's an important time and I'll miss having her a drive away. :( But she's off to do amazing things! I'm so proud of her! Love ya M!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bendy woke up choking. An ink attack was not a fun way to start a day. He lunged over the bed and coughed up ink on to the floor. Bendy tried to get out of bed to get to the bathroom, but he pretty much fell out of the tangle of sheets.

"Uh?" Boris muttered sleepily as Bendy groaned on the floor. He tried to kick the sheets away. Damnit! His chest tightened, and Bendy shuddered. Starfallen damnit! “Bendy? Did you fall out of bed?”

“Bo--” Bendy coughed, hunching into himself as fiery knives attacked his lungs and stomach.

“What’s the ma--Bendy!” Boris’ half awake question was cut short when he came around the foot of Bendy’s bed. He dropped to his knees and helped Bendy up and into the restroom. Boris helped Bendy into the tub. He left and came back with a pill and Bendy’s bracelet.

Simply put, Bendy’s morning wasn’t a smooth one. Because of the attack, he didn’t get to exercise with the others. He got to stay in bed until breakfast. That’s where he noticed the invitation on his nightstand. It was written in fancy cursive with Bendy’s name across it and a wax seal on the back. The insignia in the wave indicated who it was from. What did Hat want now? Bendy opened it and frowned.

How the blazes did it get on his cussing nightstand in his room? The invite was for a party.

In hell.

In the cussing afternoon.

Bendy pinched the bridge between his eyes. When Bendy asked Hat for some warning he had meant a few days. Cussing demon. It was a ‘high demon event’ whatever that meant.

Surprisingly there were two words on the bottom. A ‘yes’ and a ‘no’ choice. Holy cussing stars! A
choice? From Hat? Maybe he was learning. Bendy reached over for a pen and thought. Did he want
to go back to hell? No. Not really. Did he want to see the thing he had been reading about in his
etiquette books? Again no. But these things were his culture, right? It’s where he came
from...possibly. Probably. Like hell he knew. But if he didn’t come from hell, where did he come
from?

It also would show Hat his appreciation for being cussing asked and have his boundaries mostly
respected. It also wasn’t like he had much to do now. With the leg done and the date for the dance
club set, Bendy only had his studies until that starfallen map decided to show them where the next
part was. Bendy was half tempted to ask Holly to look at it again.

Bendy put the pen under ‘yes’.

“Are you really going to a demon party?”

“What!” Bendy jumped and nearly chucked the pen. Angelo raised an inky brow at Bendy’s
reaction. “Stars man! What have I told you about surprises?”

Angelo frowned. “And what did I tell you about me not being able to interact with things?”

“Wakko never told you how he did that?” Bendy muttered. Angelo’s scowl was answer enough.
Bendy sighed. “So what do you want angel?”

Angelo blinked. “Well, I’m just curious. You were really roughed up last time. Why are you saying
yes? I would think you would be against it.”

Bendy snorted. “I don’t have a lot to do today. I’m stuck in bed now until Granny rings the breakfast
bell.” He leaned back against the headboard. “Besides, I’m meeting with that angel judge, and I need
to act like I’ve been in hell for most of my life.”

“You’ve been in the papers,” Angelo pointed out. “Multiple times.”

Bendy blinked. “Hey! You’re an angel. Why haven’t they sent anyone after me yet? Why was the
only person who has asked for my papers a cop in a rinky little desert town?”

Angelo blinked this time. A rivet of ink ran down his face and neck. Bendy tried to ignore it, but
after a fresh attack he felt goosebumps rise under his fur. Angelo sat on his bedfoot and folded her
arms, thinking. Bendy didn’t feel the bed shift at all. “That’s a good question. If it was about the
machine or the funeral, they may have decided to ignore you. But you were on trial for murder.
That’s an obvious break in the Treaty. You should have been dealt with by the warriors or arrested
and taken to the Upper.”

Bendy frowned. “I was innocent of that.”

“Still, it’s odd that the Surface justice system dealt with you instead of calling and reporting you.”
Angelo pointed at him.

“Well...the mayor died and the commissioner disappeared,” Bendy said slowly.

“They would have been the ones to call you in,” Angelo said.

“The detectives said the commissioner was in with the Sykes,” Bendy said.

“Ah, a corrupt city government.” Angelo smiled and nodded. “That would do it.”
“What? Angels don’t read the papers?” Bendy asked.

“Not Surface papers, unless we are down here,” Angelo explained. “Still, I would think someone would at least check this lead. There are enough fallen angels in the city.” Angelo waved out an arm in a frustrated gesture. “And what with Hat keeping those angels hostage with the halos! Why did no one report that after they were given their freedom? Alice should have!”

“Huh,” Bendy muttered. “I guess she figured they were done, and it was a fair trade off or something.” Bendy wasn’t sure. She did tell Bendy that Hat was doing some good giving jobs to the jobless. Still, she had spent months there looking for her halo.

“What in the heavens is the Upper doing?” Angelo muttered to himself more than Bendy.

“Well, the angels that worked for Hat decided not to for one reason or another,” Bendy said and went back to circling the yes on the note before setting it aside on the nightstand again. It burst into green fire and disappeared. Bendy’s eyes widened. “And, uh, I guess I fell between the cracks.” If that explained Toon Town, then what the hell was Sillyvision doing? Those pigs or the orphanage would have gladly reported him. Why didn’t they?

“Amazing,” Angelo said with a disgruntled frowned. “I wonder if the court has been suffering just as much.”

Bendy looked Angelo up and down. That sounded oddly specific. “Court? Did you used to work in the court or something?”

The ghost angel waved at hand. “I used to be a representative in the hearings. Either defending or accusing. I was good at it back in the day. Before I fell.” He almost looked bored saying it. “That was a long time ago though. I hope things have changed.”

Bendy was surprised by that. “Changed? Really? Isn’t a city of angels supposed to be, I don’t know, perfect?”

Angelo snorted. “Hardly. That might be something they stick on the billboard. No. The Upper has its own set of problems.”

“And you want them to change?” Bendy asked.

“Maybe to be more considerate of others.” Angelo sighed. “Let go of the past and look at the situation instead of the history.”

“Huh?” Bendy muttered.

Angelo snorted. “Don’t worry about it. It’s history as old as me. Besides, Alice is proof enough that angels are better than they used to be.” He didn’t sound very convincing, and now Bendy had to think. Angelo was talking about demons now. History instead of situations? Bendy opened his mouth to ask when the bell for breakfast rang out. Bendy glanced at the door as the Warners rushed past. He knew it was them, since it sounded like a herd of elephants went down the hall. Bendy looked back to Angelo to see the ghost was gone. Huh. So much for his questions then.

Bendy sighed and went out to head down stairs.

Halfway through breakfast, Bendy shared the news.

“I’m going with Hat this afternoon for some shindig,” Bendy said.
The table went quiet. “Are you going to be okay?” Boris asked with wide worried eyes.

“Yeah. Sounds like a dinner thing, and then I’ll be back.” Bendy shrugged.

Cup and Mugs shared a look.

“I-I don’t know if that’s a good idea Bendy. You always end up for the worst with Hat,” Sammy stuttered.

“He’s no worse than the ink machine parts,” Bendy stated deadpan.

“That’s not a bar Bendy,” Finley argued. “That’s like saying a shark is less dangerous than a lion because it’s in water...and you’re in the cussing ocean.”

Bendy snorted. “C’mon fellas! Have a little faith in me.”

“Faith in a demon,” Jerry muttered into his glass. “Ouch!” He winced when a roll hit his eye. He glared at the Warners. The three weren’t looking at him though.

“Want us to come along?” Yakko asked.

“Hell no,” Bendy stated instantly. Wakko and Dot pouted.

“I zink zis could be a good zing, Bendy. Zee demonz are somezing you are trying to understand better, yeah?” Dr. Scratchansniff asked.

“Yes. Exactly,” Bendy said. “And Hat isn’t going to let me get killed. It’ll be fine.”

“If he gives you any trouble, you just tell me dear. I wasn’t too happy with him the last couple of times he has come by the house,” Granny told Bendy.

“Sure Granny,” Bendy smiled.

“Then, I guess that just leaves us with one problem.” Cup sighed.

“What’s that?” Boris asked.

“Who’s gonna tell Felix?” Cup asked. Bendy winced. The cat adventurer was not pleased with Hat at all. He’d be against Bendy going at all. All eyes went to Bendy. “Because you aren’t going to be around for him to stop you, are you?” Cup guessed.

Bendy scowled. “I-I can tell him!” Cup smirked at him which only bugged Bendy more. “I will!”

“You’re okay with disappointing him?” Cup asked.

Bendy bristled. Starfallen scum! “Shut it, Cup!” The others laughed as Bendy got up to make the call. His tail flicked nervously as he dialed Sheba’s number.

It rang for a bit, then Felix picked up. “Sheba’s bookstore.”

“Hey Felix,” Bendy said.

“Bendy!” Felix’ voice brightened. “How are you?”

“I’m good.” Bendy swallowed nervously. “Uh, listen. I’m not going to be able to make it to today’s lesson.”
“Oh? Something came up?” Felix asked.

“Yeah, that’s right.” Bendy nodded even though Felix couldn’t see it. Why the hell did he feel nervous?


“Fine! It’s just...some stuff with Black Hat,” Bendy said quickly.


“No. I’m okay. I don’t need someone to come with me. I’ll be fine,” Bendy said.

“You were beaten last time!” Felix argued. “And you had the Warners with you.”

“I wouldn’t have been in that shape if they hadn’t been there in the first place!” Bendy retorted.

“It’s not safe! Hat’s Casino, you remember how things went when we tried to get Alice’s halo back,” Felix said. “He sent a killing curse after us.”

“We’ve gotten past that, Mr. Felix.” Bendy’s brow furrowed. Where was this coming from? That was forever ago. “Besides, I’m not going to the casino. It’s a party in hell.”

“Hell! Again!” Felix barked in surprise. “So soon! You’re willing to go back there after just a week?” Bendy held the phone away from his ear for a moment.

“It really wasn’t the worst thing I’ve dealt with,” Bendy muttered. Dot...his body...was the scariest thing that happened. Bendy swallowed and shook the memory away.

“It’s hell, Bendy! It’s dangerous! More than dangerous!” Felix warned. “It’s not worth it.” Not worth it?

“It’s learning about the demons. I have to answer that angel’s questions and how’s it going to look like if I don’t know a thing about my apparent home.” Bendy tried to sound light about it. That was an excuse though. He didn’t care what the angel had to say right now.

“The books are enough, Bendy! Then just ask Hat for anything the books don’t cover! Please, don’t go back down there,” Felix said.

“Because it’s dangerous?” Bendy asked, feeling frustration replace the confusion and hurt.

“Exactly!” Felix said.

“Like going after the parts?” Bendy asked. “That’s dangerous.” Felix’ side went quiet. “But we have to, because people are dying.”

“This is a party in hell, Bendy. You can say no to this. No matter how Hat pushes. You have a say,” Felix said.

“Hat didn’t push! And I have some news for you, demons don’t have it easy either!” Bendy snapped, his frustration growing. “He asked, and I said yes!”

“Why?” Felix asked.

“Because Hat can introduce me to others, I can figure out why the hell they act all pompous. I
already got a lot of things from that first trip,” Bendy said. They could stop him for one, if he lost it.

“We can do that here,” Felix pushed. “Stay here, and we’ll talk.”

Bendy scowled. “Books can only teach you so much. I want to see it for myself, Felix.”


Unnecessary? “The angel judge will give you your papers, then you don’t ever have to go there.

Whatever scheme Hat is trying to tie you up in won’t end well for you. He is just using you Bendy.

He’s gotten you hurt a number of times.”

“Oh sorry,” Bendy growled. “I didn’t know I needed to be safe from unnecessary risks.”

“Bendy.” Felix’ voice grew harder. “You can’t trust Hat. We both have looked at those books. The

laws down there--You could be killed! They kill without a second thought!”

“Yeah? Have you ever been?” Bendy growled. “Cause that’s not what I saw! Sure they’re violent,

but they’re no different from growing up on the streets!”

“Of course there’s a difference! They have power to--”

“They’re demons like me!” Bendy shouted. Felix went quiet. “They get what’s happening to me

better than any of you could!” His eyes burned. “They can help me! They’ve offered to help me!

And sure, they’re kinda messed up, but so am I! I-if they have power, good! Then, maybe they can

do something if I--” His throat felt tight. His hands were shaking.

“Ben--”

“I’m going.” Bendy hung up. He didn’t notice it, but the dining room had gone quiet too. He looked

over to see Boris and Sammy poking their heads around the doorway.

Boris’ eyes were wide. “Bendy wh--”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” Bendy said quickly and turned to go upstairs. “I have some papers to

do.” Bendy half expected Boris to follow him and sit him down or for Oddswell or Scratch to walk in on him. To his mild surprise, everyone left him alone. He sat down at the desk and pulled out the
damn etiquette book. If he was going to a party full of high demons, he better make sure he didn’t

accidently challenge anyone to a fight to the death or something.

It was a few minutes into reading that a knock came to the door. Bendy sighed through his nose. “I

said I don’t want to talk about it, Boris.”

“Good thing I ain’t Boris then,” Cup came in. Bendy gave him an annoyed look over his shoulder.

Cup ignored the look, shut the door and plopped down on the foot of Bendy’s bed.

“I don’t want to talk to you either,” Bendy stated and turned back to his book.

Cup snorted. “Then don’t.” Cup leaned back on an arm and turned his head to look out the frosted

window.

Bendy tried to ignore Cup’s presence. He was halfway down the page before he realized he hadn’t

absorbed anything he was reading. Cup was distracting him without even trying! Cuss!


“Nothin’.” Cup shrugged, not looking away from the window. “Just thought you wouldn’t mind the
“I do mind! I’m busy!” Bendy barked.

Why?” Cup asked.

“Because I’m busy! Are ya deaf?” Bendy said.

“We both know that’s not why you came up here;” Cup stated and slide half-mast eyes to him.

“I don’t have to explain myself to you.” Bendy crossed his arms defiantly.

“No, you don’t. Not askin’ ya to either,” Cup said. “Just thought you could use the company.”

“Why?” Bendy growled.

“Because I know what it feels like ta be alone and have all the responsibility on your shoulders.” Cup’s lip twitched into a small smile.

Bendy snorted. “Yeah right.”

“I have a cup for a head,” Cup said. “And it’s my cussing name. What the hell do you think my life has been like?”

“I have no cussing clue! You’ve never shared much,” Bendy snipped and turned back to the book.

Cup sighed. “It’s hell! We get stared at. A lot. Most think we’re zanies—”

“You’re not?” Bendy snarked.

“You puttin’ me on the same list as those damn Warners?” Cup frowned. Bendy smirked without humor. Cup sighed and rolled his eyes. “Forget it. It’s not like I’m a demon.”

Bendy paused. He glanced back at Cup. The guy wasn’t a demon...but he had grown up around one.

“You grew up with Hat…”

Cup raised a brow. “Partly, yeah.” He tilted his head. “Why?”

Bendy was probably going to regret this. “What...do you think of demons?”

Cup stared at him, his eyes wide. Cup probably had more exposure to demons than most on the Surface. Cup’s face relaxed, and he dropped his gaze to the floor. “In general or specifically?”

“Both?” Bendy guessed. Cup sighed.

“Cuss, I need a smoke.” He sat up and rested his elbows on his knees. “Alright. I’m going to be completely honest with you, Bendy. Until recently, I cussing loathed every one of those hellspawns I had to deal with.” His eyes were sharp as he pinned Bendy with his gaze. “Demons have never seen me as an equal. I’ve always been below them. Never good enough, never strong enough, never smart enough. I hated it. I hated them.”

Cup looked out the window. “I was even the best at what I did, didn’t cussing matter. Hell, Hat turned me into a cussing play thing, and now I have demon blood in me.”

Bendy frowned.
“And then, I meet this annoying little pipsqueak,” Cup muttered. Bendy bristled. What! Did he just--
“And he ruined everything.” Cup smirked at him. Bendy’s eyes widened. “This starfallen demon and
his pet dog were making me look like a fool. It ticked me off.” He chuckled. “And I worked and
worked, and he kept getting away. Then, he turns around and cussing helps me! I was so steamed! I
was sure the guy was laughing at me!”

Bendy’s frown softened into confusion.

“I was so sure I was gonna roast him when I saw him next!” Cup lifted a fist before he dropped it,
and it went slack. “And then, I get him, and I can’t do a cussing thing.” He smiled. “After that, and
to my complete horror, I find out the damn hellspawn is actually a decent guy. An idiot, but a good
guy.”

“An idiot?” Bendy growled.

Cup laughed. “Well yeah! He goes and spares me! I was trying to kill him, and the moron spares me!
Says he cussing respects me. Me!” He put a hand on his chest. “The scumwad that had been chasing
him all over the damn country!” Bendy chuckled. “He had to have a loose screw, I tell ya!”

“Ah shut up!” Bendy waved a hand at him. “You’re the one with a loose screw.”

Cup grinned. “My point is Bendy, you’re a good schmuck. You can’t compare yourself to those
others. You’re better than that.” Bendy smile slipped. Cup sighed. “But I also know that they’ll treat
you better than they would any of us ‘cause you’re a demon.”

“That’s not w--”

“It is a little Bendy.” Cup cut in. “If you didn’t think it was about your species, you wouldn’t have
snapped at Felix. You’re crazy about the guy, and he’s just worried for you.” Cup chuckled. “I think
he forgets you are a demon.”

Bendy dropped his head. “I...screwed up, didn’t I?”

Cup tilted his head, thinking. His straw rolled to the other side of his head. He raised a hand to his
chin. “Nah man. It’s cussing, Felix. He’ll forgive you at a drop of his damn hat.” Cup smiled. “And
anyway. You aren’t wrong either. Demons are where you came from. Of cussing course you’re
curious. Who the hell wouldn’t be? Go on. Learn what ya need to learn, but remember to stay a
decent schmuck,” Cup warned. “Don’t let them get you wrapped up in their insanity.”

Bendy nodded slowly. “I’ll remember.”

There was banging on the door. “Bendy!” Felix voice came through the door, breathless. Bendy
looked at Cup in surprise. Cup smirked and raised a brow at the door. “Bendy! Can we talk? I’m
sorry! I didn’t mean anything against you Bendy, I just don’t want you to get into trouble down there
and none of us be able to reach you.”

Cup grinned and gave Bendy a ‘told-you-so’ look before gesturing for Bendy to go to the door.
Bendy stuck his tongue out at him and got up. He opened the door to see the panting, sweating cat.
He didn’t even have a coat on. Snow was melting on his hat and shoulders.

“M-Mr. Felix! Did you run all the way here without a coat!” Bendy’s jaw dropped.

Felix clapped his hands on Bendy’s shoulders and leaned down to gasp for air. His grip was tight,
fingers digging into the fabric and to the narrow collarbones and shoulder blades, like he was fearful
that if he let go, Bendy would vanish. His hands were still cold from outside. “Co-Couldn’t let you
“No, I’m sorry Felix.” Bendy lifted his hands to cover Felix’ hand. “I know you didn’t mean it like that.” Bendy dropped his head a little. “You’re just worried. I get it, but I still am going. I need to learn for myself.” Bendy pleaded with is eyes. He could see the trepidation in Felix’ own dark eyes. Then acceptance.

The cat nodded. “I understand. Sorry I pushed.”

“You should be,” Cup said from behind Felix. Bendy jumped. He had forgotten the guy was there for a moment. “Bendy has been learning how to fight from us. He’s gotten better too. This kid will be fine. ‘Sides Hat knows if he doesn’t bring him back, he’ll have hell to pay for it.”

Bendy blinked and looked up to see Cup smiling. He raised an eyebrow at him. “What’s with the look? Am I wrong?”

Bendy snorted. “Course not. I’m the best.”

Cup rolled his eyes. “Whatever shortstack.”

Bendy went to punch him, and Cup jumped back laughing. “Don’t call me short!” Bendy chased after him.

Cup dodged him again. He got to the door and blew a raspberry at Bendy. “Your legs aren’t long enough to keep up with me, peewee!”

“I’ll show you who’s a midget shrimp too small to even see behind a grain of rice!” Bendy charged. Cup raced down the hall, laughing.

“I didn’t even say that!” Cup wheezed. “That’s the best!”

Felix caught Bendy before he could go further. Bendy shook a fist at Cup’s retreating back. “I’ll get you, glass brain! When you least expect it!”

“Heh.” Felix smiled. “You two never change, do you?”

“He’s a schmuck.” Bendy crossed his arms.

“Well, since I’m here early, you want to squeeze in a lesson before you have to go to this party?” Felix asked.

Bendy perked up. “Is that okay? You’re not busy?”

Felix shook his head. “I’m free. Go get your brother. Let’s use the time we have together.”

Bendy smiled. “Alright.” He left to find Boris, grateful for Felix and secretly Cup. His whole life, he had been judged for what he was except for Boris and later on Sasha. If anyone had told him even a year ago that he’d have people like this in his life, he’d call them crazy.

Bendy and Boris worked on studying the ancient language with Felix instructing them as normal. Time flew, and before Bendy knew it, there was a knock at the door.

It was Hat. Bendy told the others goodbye, smiling despite the worried looks.

“Hat,” Granny called to the demon. Hat stiffened. “This is a party. A rather nice one with people of authority in your community, I understand.”
“Yes madam,” Hat answered curtly.

“Then, if Bendy comes back any worse for wear, you and I are going to need to sit down and have us a talk.” Granny smiled up at him pleasant. “Do I make myself clear?”

Hat’s brows furrowed. He seemed stuck somewhere between confused and disturbed. “I understand. We’ll be back before it gets too late.” The old gopher nodded as Hat shut the door and the black and green flames took Bendy to Hat’s office. There, Flug and the huge bear 5-0-5 were standing with a suit Bendy’s size.

“It’s formal, so you best change quickly,” Hat said. Hat waved a hand and a wall divider appeared from the shadows. Bendy glanced at it then the older demon before shrugging and accepting the clothes.

He went behind the screen and quickly changed his clothes. While he worked on buttoning up the shirt, there was a loud bang from the door being thrown open. “I’m ready!” a female voice proclaimed proudly.

“Demencia! Stop bouncing around!” Hat barked. “Now, we are heading to Lady Nightwing’s party. Be on your best behavior. If you get in a fight or killed I will not be responsible.”

“Okay!” she agreed happily. Bendy came round the screen, fiddling with the tie.

“She’s coming with us?” Bendy glanced over at the strange woman. She was in a strapless dress, the bodice hugged her form, six clean buttons on either side glinted, lining down to the loose sash she had pinned around her waist with a pin that look like a skull. The black skirt came down to the floor, the hem lined with a pattern to look like flames. One of her arms was wrapped in black strings like a mock long glove. A spiked bracelet circled her wrist. The other hand had a black fingerless glove on. She had a skull choker on and black earrings.

She grinned at him, her mismatching slitted eyes bright with excitement. “Oooh, you clean up good, mini man.”

“Don’t call me small!” Bendy snapped. She giggled. Her hair was pulled back with a spiked band like the one on her wrist. She had a tiny hat pinned to the side of her head.

“Yes Bendy, she is.” Hat grimaced. “The demon hosting this requested us and Demencia. Lady Nightwing has a fascination with half demons.”

Bendy blinked, his eyebrows flying up in surprise. “Half demon?”

“You! That’s me!” Demencia sang. “Mom’s a human, Dad was a demon!”

“I didn’t know you were part demon,” Bendy muttered. She didn’t have the same feeling that Hat or the other demons Bendy had met. He just thought she was a really odd toon. Maybe even a zany.

Hat nodded, a bored look on his face. “Yes, yes, ask questions later. If we don’t leave now, we’ll be late.” He waved his hand, and then Bendy was in hell. He felt a little dizzy and stumbled at the sudden change. He was never going to get used to this kind of travel.


Bendy looked around. The cave ceiling high above, the smell of sulfur, smoke, and earth in the air. The building appeared to be some kind of mansion, three stories tall with tile roof and large
windows. The ‘lawn’ was decorative rocks and pebbles. Wait a second, were those glittering ones jewels? The door opened. A hulking demon with warts and spikes looked down on them.

“Name?” His voice was high pitched. Bendy bit his lip to stop from laughing.

“Lord Hat,” Black Hat said.

The demon lifted a clipboard and riffled through it a bit. “Ah. There you are. Welcome Lord Hat. Bendy. Demencia.” The huge demon stepped aside and a grande hall opened up to them. It was a good sized group of demons inside. Bendy followed Hat in slowly, eyes wandering over the room and other guests. The rooms were tall, huge, which was good since some of the demons there were over ten feet tall themselves. Bendy was able to spot Lord Aku and the Black Knight easily in the wide room Hat led them into. Demencia nearly dove into the snack table. Hat’s growl stopped her from picking up a whole platter. She sheepishly lowered her arms and took one of the smaller plates that were set to the side.

Bendy blinked. “So, if she’s a half demon, why does she act like a zany?”

“It’s common for half demons. There seems to be a slight...imbalance in their minds. Many of them are more durable than their human family, so they get this invincible mentally that a lot of your ‘zanies’ have. But they aren’t as strong as a middle class demon. Most don’t have magic either.”

“So what does she have?” Bendy asked curiously.

Hat hummed. “Demon strength, silence in her movements, stronger senses, though we still aren’t sure if she can sense a soul the way a demon can. She also can climb on walls and ceilings like her father. He was a lizard,” Hat added at the confused glance Bendy gave him. “She also eats almost anything. Rather annoying, really.”

“Oh,” Bendy muttered.

Hat nodded. “She was an interesting find on the Surface. The usual outcast you can expect for a half demon.”

Bendy opened his mouth to ask, but a voice cut in, “Lord Hat!” Bendy looked over his shoulder. A demon with the face and snout of a pig approached them. He had horns that curved back, a scar over his right eye. His eyes were as sharp as his smile, and he looked at Hat and Bendy. “Good to see you’re here. I didn’t expect you, since Prince Asmodeus and Lord Azazel weren’t able to make it from the Surface.”

“Duke Bune,” Hat greeted. “I had a bit of free time, and I felt the need to introduce my new fledgling to the society he will be a part of if he finishes his development.”

“Oh! A fledgling! I had heard rumors, but I was sure that they were a load of hogwash!” Bune laughed showing large tusk like fangs. He looked at Bendy the way someone would observe a strange bird.

“Duke Bune, this is Bendy,” Black Hat introduced. “He--”

“Is the fella that ripped up half a block of downtown. I know.” Bune chuckled. Bendy felt something unpleasant turn in his stomach. “Killed that one fella, what was his name?”

“Wasn’t he one of Taffy’s?” Hat sighed.

“That’s right! One of his underlings.” Bune chuckled. Oh stars. Don’t make him think about it.
“Anyway, Bendy. Duke Bune is in charge of some of the districts in the city. He is also well known for his work on souls,” Hat said. Bendy nodded to the pig. He didn’t care much for the pig demon’s loud, boisterous voice nor the way he kept looking at Bendy with those sharp eyes. He also didn’t understand what the hell ‘work on souls’ meant, but he didn’t think he would like the details.

“That is all old news.” Bune waved him off.

“Lord Hat! Duke Bune!” A strangely round woman with tiny four sets of legs approached. That was a good chunk of Bendy’s afternoon. Being introduced to demon after demon, forgetting their names and having Hat explain Bendy and what happened the other day again and again. All in all, it was a rather boring party, which surprised and relieved Bendy at the same time. Demencia would get into trouble every once in awhile, and the demons would eye him and her like they were circus exhibits. He understood that he was the talk of the town, but with these people, he felt like half of them would have tried to eat him if he wasn’t linked to Black Hat.

There was also Hat explaining away his behavior and the apology Yakko had given Lady Nightwing the other day as his stand-in. Lady Nightwing herself was still as lovely as that day. She even winked at Bendy and complimented him.

There were a few other highlights to Bendy afternoon, good and bad. First, the snack table. He learned to be very careful at the table very quickly. He didn’t want to insult the Lady of the house or the other demons, so he couldn’t show the feelings of horror or disgust he felt for some of the offerings.

They had normal things, like little ham sandwiches, apple slices, some berries and dessert cakes and pies. There were other things though. Eyeballs in dip. Strange fruits that Bendy didn’t recognize. And some meats served that Bendy wasn’t sure of. He had asked about one of the plates to Hat.

Beastly meat. He didn’t ask about the others.

Then, there had been a pair that were an experience. It was that owl demon from the other day, perched on the shadowy, spiked shoulder of a rather tall shadowy demon. His form was like inky black smoke that circled sharp limbs and angles. Bendy considered this might be what a giant living thorn bush would be like with shadows instead of leaves. His head was a bit more like a helmet with no obvious mouth. But that might have been because of the smoky shadows. He had piercing white eyes that flowed out from the darkness of his being.

“Hat,” the owl greeted. “And you must be Bendy. It’s a pleasure to actually meet you this time.” Bendy felt his eye twitch. The bird twittered with laughter. “That must be annoying at this point. You are a patient young thing, though. You were frustrated an hour ago and yet no outbursts, no rebellion, no threats.”

“Hat has taught you very well,” the shadowy demon stated. His words were precise and voice deep. Taught him! Yeah right! The bird twittered again, covering her beak with a wing. Bendy did his best not to stare at her when she spoke. Her beak was a small hook at the bottom of her face, but her mouth spread up and over her reflective round black eyes. He didn’t see any teeth in that smile either. It took up most of her face. It was both disturbing and interesting to watch her talk. He half wondered what it looked like if she opened her mouth wide, but he didn’t want the nightmares.

The owl’s feather’s suddenly puffed up a bit. “Ah! Where are my manners? I am Prince Stolas. And my companion here is Lord Night Thistle.”

“A prince?” Bendy muttered surprised. He knew that the Devil was their king, but he didn’t ever imagine the Devil had a family. He was also a bit confused. He was sure the owl sounded female and gestured like a woman with her strange hand-like claws. She also was wearing a jewel around
her neck instead of a bow tie or collar like a lot of the other male demons did when they weren’t in full suits.

The bird’s eyes brightened. “It’s just a title, fledgling. I am not related to the king. I work at the palace and manage a number of affairs. I am higher up the chain than a Duke or Lord. But because of that, I don’t get to enjoy working on the Surface like some of the Lords do.”

Huh. He hadn’t quite gotten the differences in all these titles. “But not a princess?” Bendy couldn’t help himself.

The two burst with laughter. But it wasn’t malicious like others had been that evening. “No. No Bendy. There are no princesses in hell.” Stolas sighed away from her humor. “But I am indeed a woman.” Bendy nodded, not able to do much else than that.

“Hat, I must know. Why is there a death curse on your fledgling?” Thistle asked, his glowing white eyes narrowed.

The group went quiet. The demons around their group went quiet. All of them looked at Hat and Bendy.

“I have a what!” Bendy exclaimed, his tail going straight in surprise.

“He still has that!” Hat exclaimed at the same time. They both turned and stared at each other in shock.

“What do you mean still!” Bendy snapped.

“I thought you got that taken care of like I told you to,” Hat snapped back.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about! What the hell is a death curse doing on me!” Bendy growled.

“It’s a deep one,” the shadowy demon said. “Very potent. What in the world did you do to get it?”

Hat scowled. “It’s that damn basilisk, isn’t it?”

“A basilisk!” Stolas gasped. “You have a basilisk curse, and you’re still standing?”

Bendy opened his mouth. By this time, the whole room was watching them. “Can we talk in private?”

Stolas swiveled her head around. Completely. Bendy jumped at the sudden and terrifying move. Several demons looked away instead of meeting her gaze. “Yes.” She brought her head back around. “I think that is for the best. This way.” She tilted her head, and the shadow demon walked out of the room. Bendy practically ran to keep up. Hat wasn’t far behind. They went up to the second floor to a room that was like a living room. Stars this place was huge.

“Explain,” Stolas ordered as soon as Bendy shut the door.

“I fought a basilisk a month ago and looked it in the eye.” Bendy sighed.

“Amazing,” Thistle stated and sat down. Stolas hopped onto the back of the couch. “Basilisk eyes have a death curse. They usually kill instantly. How are you still alive?”

“I’d cussing like to know!” Bendy snapped and glared at Hat.
Hat threw his arms up. “Like hell I know! Why didn’t you dispel it!”

“How!” Bendy barked. Hat smacked his own forehead.

“I don’t think he could have Hat,” Thistle said slowly.

“But I have a guess at what happened to him.” The shadowy demon stood up and approached Bendy, circling around him. He narrowed his white light eyes. Bendy felt a chill dance over him.

“What are you doing?” Bendy stiffened.

“I am a subspecies of demon called a dream demon, Bendy,” Thistle said as he circled Bendy. “The curse seems to be held back somehow, but it’s slipping through your subconscious. Into your dreams. That’s how I was able to sense it. It’s still killing you, just very slowly.”

Bendy shivered. All his nightmares about yellow eyes. He glared at Hat.

“You told me not to think about it, and it’d go away,” Bendy accused. Hat narrowed his eyes at him.

“He isn’t wrong,” Stolas piped up. “Memories of dark things are strong, and even the memories can be dangerous. But with it fading, you would normally be okay. It’s different with a basilisk’s eyes.”

“So Hat’s just an idiot.” Bendy crossed his arms with a deadpan look.

“Hey!” Hat barked. The other two laughed.

“Yes, well, that matter aside, I can get rid of it. But the protection that you have will also be destroyed,” Thistle said.

“What is the protection. Lord Thistle?” Stolas asked, her black eyes glittering with interest.

The dream demon leaned over Bendy. He bristled at the move and glared up at the other demon. The shadows shifted around him. They weren’t bloodthirsty or angry, just...invasive. He was too close for comfort. “Hard to say. I can’t tell if it’s a spell or charm or what. It’s old and unfamiliar to me, whatever it is.”

Stolas hummed, her throat thrummed with the odd noise. Bendy looked away, trying not to feel disturbed. “Some form of magical protection. Can you tell where it came from? Is it demon or something else?”

“I can not say Prince Stolas,” Thistle informed her.

“That is too bad.” Stolas sighed.

“Bendy, do you wish I remove this?” Thistle asked. “It could leave you vulnerable to other things none of us are aware of.”

“This is killing me. I think I can handle whatever else comes.” Bendy scowled. The shadowy demon chuckled and nodded. The shadows closed around Bendy and there was an odd pressure before something cracked, and then the shadows were gone. Bendy suddenly felt dizzy and lightheaded. Thistle grabbed his arm and had him sit.

“There. It’s gone. You may feel a bit off for a few days. Be wary of whatever that thing was protecting you from,” Thistle warned.
“Yes, and do let us know if you learn what it was.” Stolas narrowed her eyes. Somehow that disturbing smile cussing grew wider. “I would love to learn what it was.”

“Wi-will do,” Bendy said. “Th--” Hat smacked the back of his head. “Ouch!” Bendy lifted his hand to the spot.

“We will see you both downstairs shortly.” Hat told them. Stolas grinned at him and nodded. Thistle bowed and the two left.

Hat waited a beat and then glared at Bendy. “You humiliated me,” Hat hissed, his scowl was fiery and the room chilled. For a moment, Bendy thought he was going to attack. “But. The longer I am around you, the more interesting you become.” Hat calmed and magic’s pressure dispersed. “And you are quick to become the talk of hell.” Hat smirked. “Which is good. Keep that up.”

“What’s up?” Bendy grumbled.

“With the basilisk talk and everyone knowing you didn’t really use much of your magic during ‘your’ ramage.” Hat chuckled and made finger quotes. “None of them know how strong you really are. With my narrow selection of fledglings and daring to bring you here, that shows confidence in your potential. That will get the assumption that you are strong. Your cool demeanor for most of the night is also a testament to your self control.”

“You mean selection as in ‘just me’ and the self control was absolutely not something I learned from you.” Bendy snorted. “You fly off your handle more than I do.”

Hat snorted. “You ready to go back?"

Bendy sighed. “How much longer?”

“Not much,” Hat assured. Bedny sighed and got up. He felt tired, and his head was still swimming; but he could walk and think straight, so he’d deal with it.

Now though, all of them were watching him. He was itching with all the unwanted attention. Luckily for him, he was saved.

“Hey shortstack,” he was greeted.

He nearly snapped at the person, too used to Cup doing stardust like that. What stopped him was that the voice was female. He turned and found he had to look up. And up. To the fanged grin of the fox demon from that other day.

“Hello,” Bendy said flatly. “Don’t call me short.”

“Or what?” she challenged happily. “And the name is Ava. Lady Ava.”

Bendy turned and walked away. She laughed. “Okay, okay, okay. I get it!” It took her two long strides to catch up to him. “So, you’re Bendy, ‘the big deal’ demon.”

“Don’t wanna be,” Bendy muttered. She chuckled again.

“And you’ve been running around the Surface like you own the place. When is your interview again?” She snickered. Bendy glared at her. Her smile grew. “It’s fine. We’ve all done it. Though, I would love to hear how you explain all those newspapers about you to them.”

“What the hell are you on about?” Bendy growled.
“You know ‘up there’ better than ‘down here’ right?” The fox leaned down. Bendy fought the urge to snap. Stop making him feel cussing short!

“So, how about we be friends? I’ll pull a few strings ‘down here’ for you to seem more legitimate than whatever Hat is doing.” She offered.

“What’s the catch?” Bendy demanded.

“You help me ‘up there’ when I call,” Ava suggested.

“Only if I get a say in whatever the hell your asking for,” Bendy stated.

She giggled. “You didn’t even consider saying no! Do you not trust your master?”

“He’s missed things before,” Bendy grumbled. That, and he was learning that relying on only one demon here was dangerous. Everyone was using everyone else to get what they wanted. Bendy would do the same, at least for these papers. Staying on the Surface was too important, and he couldn’t have Hat mess it up for him.

Ava snorted. “Then, we shake on it?” Bendy offered his hand. “Hell’s fire. I look forward to getting to know you, Bendy. You seem like an exciting fella.”

With that, Bendy ended his time in hell. He was relieved to get back into his own clothes and then back to the house. He, sadly, let his guard down upon appearing at the front door. Hat had one last surprise for him.

“I will be back tomorrow to take you to your interview. I’ll have all the details. Be ready in the morning,” Hat said before disappearing in a whoosh of black and green fire.

“HAT!”

Chapter End Notes

Awwww, thanks Tap. I'm terrified...and a little excited. So much packing. It's been less than a year since I last moved! Anyways, here is some amazing art that I know some of you have seen, but not all! XD

The first one here is by fantastickingdomus. Her art is amazing as always!
This next two are by kix-and-company! Kix' art makes me think of watercolors. Very soothing.
Chapter Summary

"Two in one day! The boss is sure on a roll!" Mic declared. "But boy, is Bendy busy! First to hell and now to the Upper? Hope everything goes well for the fella!"

Chapter Notes

Yep!
Two in one! Like I said! Now if only finding a job was this easy! I hope you guys have fun with this chapter! I sure did! XD And remember you can also find us on tumblr and discord! Have a good one and enjoy!

Bendy groaned as he got up the next morning. He didn’t want to. He knew he needed to, but he didn’t want to. This felt like the court case all over again, but this time it was so much worse. This time, it wouldn’t be just sent to prison on false charges of murder. No, it would be condemned to hell. Legally never allowed to see the sun again or his brother or any of the people here that he had come to care about. All because of what he was more than what he did. That shouldn’t be such a big difference, but it was. He’d rather face false claims on his actions. Actions were a choice. Actions and inactions were a part of life that he had control over.

Species wasn’t. No one chooses their species. No one picked if they were born as an angel or a demon or a zany or a monster or a human. If they could, no one in their right mind would pick certain species. Who would want to be born in hell, after all? Who would want a body cursed to kill or destroy like a monster’s would? No one in their damn right mind.

It was with slight resignation that Bendy went through his morning routine. Exercise with the boys. Training and trying to finally best Cup or Mugs without using his strength. Shower and breakfast with the rest of the house. Felix and, surprisingly, Xedo and Wiston were there that morning. Xedo was still careful, like his every move was an apology, even though the house had forgiven him. Cup being reluctant, but he had come around the last few days. Bendy was grateful. Xedo was a great source of information on the city and a strong support, despite his mistake. Wiston also was a good distraction for the Warners, but an adult always needed to keep an eye on all four of them, lest they burn down the house.

He was only slightly surprised at the lack of a pranks this morning. Then again, everyone was walking on eggshells. Well, everyone but Jerry. They hadn’t told Jerry anything. Of course not. The schmuck couldn’t keep his cussing mouth shut. That, and if Jerry knew he was a rogue demon...Well, best not to repeat history. Because of this though, none of them could really talk about it openly. Bendy had to deal with concerned looks all morning instead of any conversation.

Boris being the exception to that. The wolf was so sure that it’d turn out okay. He refused to be worried. It was both reassuring and concerning. Reassuring that there was someone who was so sure
that he could act normal around Bendy, regardless of everyone else’s mood. Concerning, because Bendy wasn’t certain if it was confidence or denial that was the root of Boris’ mood. He was already painfully aware that Boris was denying the thought of him succumbing to the illness, so much so that Bendy couldn’t even talk to him about it. They had dropped the subject a long time ago, and whenever someone tried to bring it up Boris would throw a fit and fight.

Boris wouldn’t acknowledge it. Bendy didn’t know what to do about it. Now, there was this other threat, one where they could be separated. But again, Boris refused to acknowledge the possibility of Bendy being taken away from him. Kinda weird to see it that way for once. Bendy had always figured it’d be Boris being taken from him, not the other way around. He was selfishly thankful and secretly worried for Boris. Because Bendy’s mind was always considering the worst outcome. It was how he got that panic attack back in the Far West. What would happen to Boris if he didn’t pass this interview today? He would have to continue the quest. He would be the only one that could see the map. Would the state find out and try to take him, though? Bendy might need to figure out some kind of backup plan. If Boris didn’t want to talk about it, fine, but Bendy would prepare. He didn’t have time now, but if this went wrong…He just hoped he’d be able to do something.

Then, there was the ink machine. Would he be able to get to it when it was completed? Get the cure? Or would he be forced to suffer in hell until he finally gave out to the ink?

Or this would all go over fine, and he wouldn’t need to worry. Hat assured him that he had nothing to worry about. Ava had promised to pull some strings. Not that Bendy knew what strings she could pull in one night. Had she known when his interview was? How?

A knock at the door had them all jump. It was Hat. Bendy forced a smile and headed for the door. They wanted to stop him. Hell, he wanted them to stop him too. But no, it was something that had to be done. “We are going to their office for border passes. We will be meeting with Judge Zadkiel. He will conduct the interview and submit your papers to the Upper for processing as long as things go well,” Hat said. Bendy nodded. He had dressed in his button up dress shirt and nice slacks for this. They weren’t as fancy as the suit from yesterday or the outfit Hat was wearing, but they must have been passable, because Hat didn’t comment on them.

There was the usual black and green flame before they were standing in an entrance way. It was white. Hat stepped into a waiting room that was also white. There were no windows in the room. The couple of paintings were of people, the wings and halos obviously meaning angels. It was sparse. There was an angel sitting at an elevated desk so that he was a bit taller than Hat. He had light curly hair and a weak chin with big ears. His halo hung openly in the air. His wings were a bit smaller than Bendy would have expected. They were white but otherwise looked like regular bird wings.

“Name?” he asked in a nasally voice.

“Bendy,” Hat said. “Here for his interview.”

“Fill these out.” The angel pushed a clipboard over the desk without even looking at them. Hat took it and led Bendy to the waiting area that had a circle of uncomfortable looking chairs. Hat passed the clipboard to Bendy. It was the usual information a government document asked for. As he started to fill it out, Hat would stop him and provide him with other information.

He had a false address in hell. One of Hat’s territories, Bendy was sure. His history was normal except for several names Hat had Bendy switch out to demons that Hat claimed would vouch for them if ever contacted. Hat also had a few sections to fill out.

Then, they got to family. Bendy nearly wrote down Boris. But again, Hat stopped him. With a
heaviness in his chest, Bendy put N/A in the family section. With a few rules about interviews and a couple signatures, they were done. Hat went back up to turn in the falsified documents. He came back, and the two waited for them to be called in. Bendy’s tail twitched nervously as they waited, the stupid tail ring glinting in the cussing light. Hat’s darkness and silence didn’t help Bendy’s nerves. The room was empty except for them.

Bendy’s eyes drifted to the angel behind the counter. He couldn’t help but compare the fella to Alice, the only other angel Bendy really knew. He didn’t seem to hold the same presence as her. Sure there was a sort of light coming from him, but it wasn’t the warm comforting blanket that seemed to drift around Alice. He found himself missing that comfort or any comfort at this moment. The angel’s features were also rather plain. More of an average joe Bendy would expect at a bar than an angel. Bendy guessed that angels came in all types like everyone did. Well, not as much as demons, but that was another matter entirely.

Bendy wondered if those wings were what everyone had or if the feathery limbs were as varied as the angels. He tried to imagine what kind of wings Alice would have. Something bigger than those and softer looking. That would suit her better. He wondered what the judge looked like. An old man? A handsome man? Or a normal person like that guy.

There was the sound of a bell. “He is ready for you,” the nasally angel announced. Hat stood. Bendy followed. They went through the door on the side of the table and walked into a white hall.

“Strange,” Hat commented.

“What is?” Bendy muttered. “That there are no windows and barely a picture?”

Hat rolled his eye and shook his head. “Hardly! They don’t want to tempt you to run since this is supposed to be your first time on the Surface.” Hat smirked, but it fell quickly as they walked. “No, last time I was here, it was packed. Not only demons, others too. I wonder why it’s so empty.”

“Gee, th--” Hat gave him a warning look. “It’s sarcastic!” Bendy barked as the hand twitched up. “Stars!”

They didn’t have time to have at each other, though. They reached the doors at the other end of the hall. “Just answer the questions,” Hat told him.

Bendy nodded. He pushed the door open. It was a white room, buzzing with energy. Hat grumbled under his breath. Something about ‘birdbrains’ and ‘magic,’ but Bendy wasn’t paying him any mind. The room was circular with an ascending arch for a ceiling, clouds and the sky were painted beautifully in a spiraling pattern. The white rug had pressed patterns of fancy knotwork with flowers and vines. There were three chairs against the wall by the door, one in the center of the room and another raised desk. It reminded Bendy of the judge’s podium in Toon Town. But it wasn’t Judge Heart sitting behind it.

The man was handsome and a bit older, in his late thirties if Bendy had to dare a guess. He had a strong, chiseled jawline, darker hair but not the midnight black of Alice’s hair. It was swept back, showing a sharp window’s peek. His line thin lips sat it a stern frown under a straight nose. Piercing light eyes scrutinized Bendy through. They were like fire. The halo over his head gleamed brightly, and his wings were much closer to the ones Bendy would expect of an angel. Large and a pure white that almost gleamed sharply in the room’s light. The wings of a bird of prey.

Bendy was sure feeling like prey at the moment. A terrified mouse that just noticed the shadow that fell over him. It didn’t help that the angel was seated well above the chair Bendy was meant to occupy. His robes or the shoulders that Bendy could see from where he stood, were as white as his
wings and broad, hinting at a strong physique underneath. The energy coming off him was heated and not the gentle warmth Bendy had hoped for. This was a different heat. An unwelcome ray of sunlight on a hot day. A pressure filled the room. Not a humidity, but Bendy did find it a bit more difficult to breathe. Hat moved around him and sat in one of the seats off to the side. He crossed his arms and slouched ever so slightly, the scowl on his grey face an indication of how pleased he was to be there. He was a stark contrast to all the white the same as Bendy, he was sure. Two dark shadows in this strange world of white.

“Take a seat,” the angel ordered in a deep voice that matched his intimidating eyes. Bendy swallowed and stepped forward. His eyes went back up to the ceiling. Hat said they didn’t have windows so he couldn’t be tempted. He guessed that made sense. If demons followed the laws, then they wouldn’t have seen sunlight or the sky yet. So what the hell was with this painting of the sky here? Was it to hint at what he could have? A warning of what he could lose if he failed this? A reminder at what was at stake? Any of those answers were cruel in Bendy’s opinion. Just as he was sitting down, he realized he didn’t see an obvious source of light. No lightbulbs, no chandelier, no torches, no windows, nothing. How was the room so lit up?

“Bendy the demon here to request an interview with Judge Zadkiel for permission to walk the Surface,” a voice chirped. Bendy flinched and looked over. There was a booth next to the angel podium. A little woman with small glasses on her nose read from a typewriter. Her light hair was in a tight bun. She had to be in her fifties with wrinkles and grey streaks in her hair. Unlike the judge, she was in a business suit; and she didn’t seem to be an angel. No halo or wings on her.

“Ah,” the judge said, pulling Bendy’s attention back to him. Bendy sunk a little more into the cushioned chair. “Then, we best begin. I want to be out of here on time for lunch today. I hear Master Samuel has a new addition to the ancient war collection, and I hope to see it privately today if he is in a good mood.” Zadkiel sighed through his nose like he was already there instead of in this white room. Bendy didn’t get what he meant, but the angel sure as hell treated his fate lightly. A lunch? A collection? Seriously?

“Demon!” Bendy flinched and straightened up. “It says here that you are a fledgling demon.”

“Yes sir,” Bendy answered in a mutter. The woman’s hand clicked away on the keys of the typewriter.

“Fledglings are rather unstable with their magic and emotions,” Zadkiel said, lifting a paper in his hands. Bendy didn’t know what to say to that. It wasn’t really a question. “There is also a report here from below that states last week you were involved in an incident that endangered several city blocks and even resulted in a death?” Shock shot through Bendy.

“What!” Hat barked.

Zadkiel slid a sharp glare at him. In his booming voice, he declared. “You will not speak unless spoken to.” Hat stiffened. He seemed to be seething.

“Uh, e-excuse me sir,” Bendy said, lifting a hand. That seemed to get both the angel’s and the woman’s attention. They both paused and looked at him. “Where did you say that report came from?”

The angel raised a brow slowly before looking down at the paper. “It was an incident from a ‘High Lord Taffy’ in hell, it appears,” Zadkiel said. Hat hissed. The angel’s glance silenced him again.

“Ah, well I can explain that.” Bendy swallowed. He hoped he could, at least. “You see, the demon that was killed was harassing my friend, then me.” The angel raised both his eyebrows and leaned
over to look at the woman. They shared something in that silent look. Hat in the corner had dropped his head in his hands. Bendy continued regardless. “I was trying to get her away, and things escalated. It was unfortunate, and I’m glad for the demons that showed up and subdued he--me. I’m glad no one else was killed.”

There was a stretch of silence. Zadkiel cleared his throat. “I see. We can’t have that kind of violence on the Surface. Any death is inexcusable.” His light eyes narrowed. Bendy nodded.

“I understand,” Bendy said softly. He didn’t want to remember what happened to that guy. He was a schmuck but--Stars. “You don’t have to worry about me.”

The woman snorted. Bendy gave her a questioning glance before Zadkiel got his attention again. “It says you’re unsure of your power limit thanks to the fledgling state but that you have a good grasp on your emotions.”

“I do,” Bendy said.

The angel hummed. It went on like this for quite some time. Zadkiel asked about his job, the ‘friends’ he had, his work with Hat. It went on and on. Zadkiel would share looks with the typing woman every once in a while too. Bendy ignored the groans and sounds of annoyance coming from Hat. Then there was a question he wasn’t expecting.

“So, you have no family. Does that mean you take this one as your family?” Zadkiel asked.

“No!” Bendy snapped without thinking.

“No?” The angel angled his chin down to gaze a Bendy.

Bendy pursed his lips. “No, he’s my mentor, my...guardian, but no. I don’t see him as family.” He lifted his chin definitely. He had a family.

“What happened to your family?” Zadkiel asked curiously.

“I wish I knew sir.” Bendy quickly corrected himself. Did he though? Not really. After seeing hell. After growing up with Boris and meeting people like his friends, he wouldn’t trade it for anything. Where he came from, whoever left him up there for whatever reason, he was more grateful for the life he had than the one he could have had.

“And the reports of you coming to the Surface. You know coming to the Surface is illegal,” the angel stated and turned his piercing eyes on Bendy.

“I was summoned,” Bendy muttered reluctantly. He still didn’t agree with Hat about this. He hated it.

“Summoned?” Zadkiel glanced up at him.

Bendy cleared his throat. “Yes, summoned. For a contract, sir. I was helping this wolf, and some of the things he wanted in his contract demanded my presence.”

The angel frowned. “Contracts,” he muttered under his breath. “Coming to the Surface is still illegal, but it also seems you cleared his and your name of murder, correct?”

“Yes sir.” Bendy nodded.

“Did you kill the owl? Or anyone?” The judge pinned him with his sharp eyes. Bendy suddenly felt
that pressure more. The air felt thick, difficult to inhale, heavy.

“No sir.” At least Bendy was able to answer that honestly.

Zadkiel hummed and put down the papers. He sighed and rubbed his eyes. “Stars, I need tea. Bendy, we’ve finished with the list of questions.” Suddenly, the stern regale gave away to annoyance. “Ms. Walker, can you get me a cup of chamomile?”

The little woman seemed surprised. She paused in her tap-tap-typing. “But sir, the minutes! This interview is almost over! We just need--”

“I know how these go, Ms. Walker. I have done enough of them! I am requesting tea to save my pounding head so we can finish and go to lunch!” The angel’s unsettling light eyes turned coldly toward her.

“But sir! We have four more cases befo--”

“Tea, Ms. Walker! Tea! It is the only way!” he boomed. The small woman jumped up startled and scurried out of the room. Zadkiel dragged his hand down his face. “I thought she’d never leave! Stars! How hard is it for people to follow requests now a days?”

Bendy stared at him, unsure if that was a rhetorical question or not. “Now, before she gets back, demon, you need to understand a few things.” Zadkiel leaned his chin on his hand in a bored manner. His frown and voice echoed with dull annoyance. “Most angels that are judges have talents that pertain in some way or another to detecting truths or lies in some capacity. Demons are usually hard to read, but you.” He raised a brow. “It’s like looking through a rain splattered glass. A little distorted, but I can still see right through you.”

Bendy’s stomach dropped. His limbs went cold. He was sure he had to have gone pale.

“And you are a liar,” Zadkiel stated. Oh stars.

Hat stood up. “Uh, your H--”

“Silence.” Zadkiel’s voice boomed and the room brightened. “Sit. I have not given you permission to speak!” Hat sunk back into his seat, fangs twisted in a grimace, eye wide, and his pupil a thin red slight. Hat looked like he was ready for a fight. Zadkiel scoffed and glared down at Bendy.

Bendy stared back with horror. This was it. He lost everything. They were going to toss him into hell. The rest of the questers would have to go on without him. He was going to lose his home. His friends. His brother. If he dared to return, these angels would kill him. Oh stars. How was he going to tell them? What was he going to do now? It was gone. Everything he cared about. Bendy felt his chest tighten, his breathing quickened. No. No! Boris!

“Now then.” Zadkiel’s bored tone returned. “Usually, this would be grounds for immediate rejection. And if I wanted, I could put you both under investigation to see why you were lying and what you are hiding.” The angel’s unsettling eyes cut to Hat. “And I am tempted, knowing your reputation, Hat.”

Investigation? As in looking into their backgrounds? No! Bendy felt his stomach fall even further at the thought. They’d go after Boris! They’d find Alice! They wouldn’t like that, would they? Bendy didn’t know! He never asked! Now, he might never get the chance. They’d learn about the machine pieces too, and Bendy doubted they’d just leave those alone! Powerful magic like that? No way! He had to do something! Fight? How! This was an angel. His damn voice made Black Hat back down.
“Please,” Bendy begged. What else could he do? “Please.”

Zadkiel narrowed his eyes on Bendy. “See, I don’t understand you. You lie, but then you do this. Almost like a decent person! I’ve never met such a polite demon before. You are quite the conundrum. But if you have something to say, this is your chance. Before she comes back and puts our words on record.”

Bendy’s eyes widened. “I-I-I…” What could he say? Say something! “Please don’t investigate. I have a little brother! I’m just protecting him.”

“Bendy!” Hat snapped. Zadkiel’s glare silence him again.

“I’m just protecting someone I care about. I want to be on the Surface. There is so much for me to do up here. Things I think are important! Things that I hope will help people. Not just demons but everyone! So please,” Bendy’s heart lurched at the unchanging, bored expression on the angel’s chiseled face. “Even if I don’t get the papers, please don’t investigate.”

The angel smirked. “And that just told me that you’ve already been doing things on the Surface. Things that had nothing to do with a contract. Naughty, naughty.” Bendy stiffened. “I wonder if this brother is up here? Who could he be, hm? What is so important that you want to do? You do believe that whatever it is, it’ll help people. How very interesting.” Bendy was shaking. What had he done? They were going to get Boris now!

“Please no.” Bendy felt tears prick at his eyes. It was getting hard to breath. No hard. He was gasping. Was he going to have a panic attack? An ink attack? Did it even matter at this point?


“I wasn’t going to fail you, even though you lied to me,” Zadkiel said flatly. Uh! “No. I was going to pass you unless it was obvious you couldn’t be on the Surface. I just wanted to see what you would do when I called you out.”

Bendy stared flabbergasted. He--he what?

“What kind of sick game is this too you!” Hat raged. He exploded in a cloud of darkness. Hat stretched ten feet tall with claws, and spikes, and teeth, and fire and--

“What? I think your faces were worth it. Besides, I’m stuck here for most of the day except for my lunch. I might as well have a little fun. You have no idea how dull it gets.” The angel shrugged and yawned, uncaringly at the towering demon and the freezing arua that had washed out the heat. The angel gave Hat a small smirk. “Why, are you angry? I am going to give you what you want demon, unless you attack me.” His eyes narrowed. “Then, I’ll have to have you killed.”

There was a tense silence in the room as the two stared off. Bendy was still trying to process what happened. What was happening? Zadkiel’s uncaring amusement dared Hat’s outrage to act. The demon finally shrank back. The darkness that had dimmed the room and the buzz of bloodlust diminished as the uncomfortable warmth returned.

“Good boy,” Zadkiel said. “Now, you,” he looked to Bendy again, “you passed the last test. You do have a fantastic hold of your emotions.” Yeah right! Bendy’s head was spinning and felt a little too light! He feared he would pass out any minute now.

“That’s not part of these interviews!” Hat snapped.
“It isn’t?” Zadkiel asked in mock innocence. “I was sure an emotional response test was normal for fledgling interviews.”

“Why?” Bendy choked out. He passed? He would get to go home after all? It was all going to be okay? The angel turned back to him, his face back to boredom.

“There are a few reasons, ones I am not going to discuss. Just be happy you have better companions than him.” Zadkiel pointed at Hat. Bendy frowned in confusion. Better? Who?...Alice? No. Ava? Had she done something?

The woman returned before Bendy could ask another question. Zadkiel dropped the hand and sat up again. The regale returned like a shroud. The woman came around and offered the angel the cup and saucer of tea. “Thank you, Ms. Walker. Now if you don’t mind, we can finish.” The angel accepted the tea and sipped it. Bendy couldn’t tell if he liked it or not. The woman sniffed and went back to her seat, a glare at the angel and then at Bendy.

“On the information provided and on the testimony of the demon known as Bendy, I, Honorable Judge Zadkiel, twelfth judge of the Upper courts under Archangel Master Hannah Angel pronounce he has passed and is found acceptable to receive his papers. Bendy thereby is allowed to travel and live on the Surface world and among its people as long as he accepts the laws and limitations placed upon him by the law.” The angel looked down at him. “Bendy, do you accept the terms and expectations the law permits to you as a member of the Surface community?”

“Yes sir.” Bendy’s voice cracked. His eyes stung in relief. He lifted a hand to wipe at them. Cuss. He didn’t need to cry. It was fine after all.

“Congrats!” Zadkiel’s sternness went back to the laziness from before. He seemed to deflate in his robes as he continued to sip his tea. “You’re now a Surface dweller. The papers will have all the details for you. They will be mailed to you in two days after processing. Have them signed by your king, and they will be official. Don’t break any of the rules or you’ll be dead or arrested and on trial, m’kay?”

“Sir,” Mr. Walker said disapprovingly.

“Oh, it’s fine, Ms. Walker. He passed. We can loosen the belt a bit.” Zadkiel shrugged. “Hope to never see you again Bendy, because if we do, it’ll mean you’re in trouble. Don’t bring me any extra work now.” Zadkiel waved his hand. Was that a warning for him to not get caught in his lies? Probably. “Bye now.”

Bendy stood up. He had done it. He was safe. He could still live with Boris after all. Thank the sun, moon, and stars. He could still go back to everyone. “Thank you,” Bendy said. That really seemed to shock the whole room. A tear escaped his eye. He quickly went to brush it away.

Zadkiel chuckled. “Well, well. Not everyday a demon thanks an angel, now is it Ms. Walker?”

Hat grabbed Bendy by the back of his neck and dragged him out of the room. Bendy didn’t care what Hat had to say or how angry he was. Bendy was too relieved to care. Bendy completely tuned out the older demon. Hat passed the desk. The angel there watched with a curious tilt of his head as the two left in a flash of black flames.

They reappeared on the doorstep to the house. Hat was still going. “--and this is the last time I go with you on any matters that involve angels! You insufferable cur! You embarrassed the entire demon race with your sniveling begging!” Hat half tossed him away in disgust. “I have never seen something so shameful! You were a pit stained dog at his feet! And that angel! We’ll see if I don’t
mount his wings in my office! Messing with us! With me! How dare he! When I get the thr--"

The door was thrown open. Everyone was on the other side, Boris in front with wide eyes. “Well?”

Bendy grinned. “I passed. I’ll have my papers in a couple days.”

Cheers rang out as Bendy was tackled by Boris in a tight hug. Then Felix. Finley and Mugs followed. The Warners piled in. Bendy slipped and they all ended up in the snow laughing in a heap.

“We are celebrating with a feast tonight! Sammy, be a dear and get the roasts out of the freeze, will you?” Granny asked the cat. Sammy nodded and hurried away.

Hat didn’t seem like he was done complaining. but with all the happy people around him, he refrained from ripping into Bendy further.

“I will be back in a few days for you to sign the papers and get them official, understand? I also expect you to still get your assignments done!” Hat snapped before disappearing.

The rest of the evening was congrats and celebration. They did have to be careful when Jerry returned. If the rat knew that Bendy was up there illegally, he’d call the angels so quickly and complicate things. The rat was confused on why they were celebrating. Granny covered, claiming it was her birthday. Still, ignoring the wet blanket, it was the greatest evening Bendy had.

Granny’s amazing cooking was a roast so flavorful and good. It melted in his mouth. He thought he’d have to fight Finley for the last piece. Red brought out good wine for the adults. Yakko kept trying for it, but Red was good at keeping him in his place. Wiston was also curious, but he didn’t push it. This was when Finley suggested a drinking game.

For a second, Bendy was worried that it would be something with penalties. Luckily for him the penalty was the drinking. Shots.

The game was called Never Have I Ever.

The rules were easy enough. You went around in a circle. When it was your turn, you state something you’ve never done. If there were people that had done that thing they had to take the shot. Simple enough.

They sat in a wide circle. It was a big crowd, so Bendy was sure they’d be drunk before they got second turns. Everyone under age was given fizz wizz to play.

Granny started. “Never have I ever flown a plane.”

“Man, at the start,” Cup grumbled, taking a shot. Mugs, Felix, Xedo, Oddswell, and Red did too.

“You’ve flown a plane?” Holly asked Xedo curiously.

“Yes, it was a small biplane. I was doing a field report investigating the illegal black market trade of unicorns at the time. I had to go pretty far off the beaten path sometimes,” Xedo said.

Oddswell was next. “Never have I ever worn a dress,” he said calmly.

Bendy and a number of others groaned. “Now, that’s not fair to the women here Odds!” Red grumbled and took her shot. Alice, Cala, Granny, and Holly too. Holly made a scrunched face before she slowly drank.
Bendy sighed and took his. As did Boris. The Warners all had one. Cup and Mugs did too. Finley and Scratchansniff. Felix chuckled and took a shot. Xedo’s raised a brow. “I feel there are some stories.”

“I will die before you hear it fox,” Cup promised with an icy glare. There were a couple snorts of laughter.

Bendy glanced at Finley. The Fennec fox shrugged. “It’s all part of acting. What about you two?”

Bendy and Boris sighed. Boris explained. “Public punishment at the orphanage after we chased away any families that were interested in me.”

“What about you, Mr. Felix?” Wiston asked.

Felix shook his head. “That would take some explaining.”

“My turn,” Red claimed. “Never have I ever been in the men’s restroom.”

“Oh come on!” Cup threw up a hand and took his shot. All the fellas did. And Alice. Cala gave her a concerned look.

Alice blushed. “I accidentally went into the wrong one.” Holly giggled at that. As did a number of other people.

“Okay Sammy, do something clever.” Finley patted his back.

Sammy hunched his shoulders. “Uh, um, oh, I don’t know. Been in the news.”

“Ah!” Bendy groaned. “That’s just cruel man.” Sammy ducked his head, but Finley was laughing. Felix, Bendy, Boris, the Cupbros, Oddswell, the Warners, and Red all took shots.

“Alright! My turn!” Finley grinned deviously. “Never have I ever been in a serious relationship.”

Holly tilted her head, looking at Finley curiously. Red scowled and took her shot. Granny too. Oddswell took one. Bendy’s brows flew up at that. Felix took one, and so did Xedo. All the Warners. Bendy doubted that. Cala blushed and took one. As did Alice. Mugs hummed but took it. Cup looked at him, surprised. Boris and Wiston pulled faces of disgust.

Now, it was Bendy’s turn. He smirked. “Never have I ever gone to school.”

Nearly the whole table groaned.

“Does homeschooling count?” Wakko asked.

“Yes,” Bendy said.

“You are the worst.” Wiston complained. Boris was the only other one that didn’t drink.

“Nice job, brother,” Boris chuckled.

Boris thought carefully. His ear twitched before a smile spread across his face. “Never have I ever owned a lease or property.”

Bendy gasped. “You traitor!” All of the adults had to drink. The Warners and Wiston were safe. Bendy looked over and was surprised he had been wrong. Neither Cup or Mugs had taken the shot either. Huh.
Mugs cleared his throat. “Okay. Okay. Never have I ever had a nine to five job.”

“Are you serious?” Red growled and took her shot. Bendy and Boris took theirs. Xedo did too. Scratchansniff, Felix, Oddswell, Alice, Holly, Cala, Granny, Finley, and Sammy did too.

Cup thought for a few minutes. “Never have I ever written a love letter.”

Bendy choked.

“Man,” Finley muttered. “You are evil.”


“I bet yours was nice,” Xedo told Felix.

Felix shook his head. “It was a mess. I hadn’t figured out how to write well back then.”

Felix smiled. “Never have I ever, uuh.” He fell quiet. “Golly. This one could be difficult for me.” He scratched the top of his head. “I’ve done a lot.”

“There has to be something,” Cala said. “You haven’t been to the bottom of the ocean.” She giggled, her face flushed. Oh boy. She had to be drunk.

“But I have,” Felix said. “Um, I don’t know.” He shrugged.

Bendy frowned. “Have you ever starved?”

“Yes.”

“What about having magic blow up in your face?” Alice asked.

“Yes.”

“I guess there’s one,” Felix muttered. “Though it’s sad for this game.”

“What?” Xedo asked.

“Never have I ever eaten in one of those roof restaurants around here,” Felix admitted.

Red, Oddswell, Cup, Mugs, Xedo, Wiston, Scratch, Granny, and the Warners all drank.

“We need to help your people’s party lives.” Red pointed to the ones that didn’t drink.

“But I like the little ground floor cafes,” Holly said mournfully, looking at her glass. Red shook her head.

“Eh, they ain’t all that,” Cup muttered. Red frowned at him.

“I believe it’s my turn then,” Xedo said. “Never have I ever used magic.”

“That’s a low blow!” Mugs said. “Your brother has a magic bird thing!”

Holly started giggling, her body shaking a little. “Fireball isn’t magic. He’s just flaming!” She threw back her head, taking the shot with gusto. She grinned.
“That thing has a deer head, a bird body, and sleeps on cussing fire. How is it not magic?” Cup grumbled.

Holly gave him a deadpan expression. She poured more into her cup. “You’re right. Let me go get the bird. I’ll hold him, and you pour the shot.”

“No thanks.” Cup chuckled. “I don’t need to be on fire today.”

“You have a cup for a face,” Bendy said. “You don’t have room to talk about magical people!” He took his shot. As did Boris.

“And I’m starfallen magic!” Cup declared and took his. Mugs too. Granny, Felix, Cala, and Alice took theirs. The Warners did too.

Oddswell took his. “You too, Ms. Hood, Finley.”

“What!” Finley barked. “I haven’t!”

“It’s around your wrist,” Oddswell stated.

“Oh…” Finley looked at the Joy bracelet and laughed before taking his shot.

“My turn!” Wiston laughed. “Never have I ever had a first kiss!”

Damn it kid! Bendy’s face exploded with heat. He wasn’t the only one suffered either. Alice suddenly couldn’t make eye contact with anyone.

Oddswell, Red, Granny, Finley, Mugs with a strong blush, Felix, Xedo, the Warners, Scratch and Cala all took shots. Alice did quickly. Bendy did too.

Holly scowled, muttering something that sounded like ‘dumb rabbit’ under her breath before drinking.

Cup snorted. Bendy raised a brow. “Have you not?” Bendy asked.

“Nope.” Cup popped the ‘p’ and leaned back.

“Nice job, Wiston.” Boris smiled. Bendy’s head was swimming. Oh boy.

Yakko cleared his throat. “Never have I ever been anything but zany.”

The table groaned. “Th-that’s hardly faaaaair,” Cala muttered. She took a shot and swayed.

Everyone but the Warners drank. Felix moved his drink...Wait. He didn’t drink? Bendy blinked. Or had he just refilled it already? That had to be it. Bendy was sly with his too. Thanks to them, he technically had been a zany.

“Never have I ever,” Wakko declared and then paused. He stuck out his tongue and hummed. “Oh! Yeah! Never have I ever been on the quest for a part!”

Cup scowled. “Pick on us, why don’tssss ya.”

The questers and Holly all took a drink. “Too bad Mickey isn’t here,” Mugs muttered. “He’d count now.”

“F ya wanted someone ta count,” Holly hiccuped, “you should have said so.” She started pointing
around the circle. “One, two, three…” She slowly, haltingly counted all the glasses on the table.
Then, she hesitated and pointed at Mugs’ head. “Eighteen.” Then at Cups’. “Ninteen.”

“Oh dear,” Alice murmured.

They shared a look and chuckled. “Don’t shink we dishes are light weights.” Cup chuckled.

“But you’re a bubble!” Holly replied, giggling. She leaned forward and jabbed at his hair, fruitlessly
trying to pop it.

“Rude!” Cup frowned and swatted her hand away. “Stop messing up my hair!”

“But ish sho bouncy!” Holly argued. Cup growled and leaned away from her. Mugs was laughing so
hard he nearly fell.

“Never have I ever published something,” Dot said.

Oddswell, Xedo, Scratch, and Felix all took shots. The doc hiccuped. Scratch nearly fell back.

“I think you’re done champ,” Yakko said.

“Vait! It is unt mine turn!” Scratch slurred. “Neva haffe I unt ever spoken only une language.”

“You’re tryin’ ta kill us!” Red declared. Felix, Oddswell, and Holly didn’t drink. Neither did the

“Woah, the table is tilting,” Mugs muttered.

“We might be getting to the limit everyone,” Boris muttered.

“Naaaah,” Bendy chuckled. “We’s fin-hic-fine!” Boris sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose.

“We j-j-just have da girlssss left,” Cup pointed out.

Holly hummed. “Never have I ever…” An evil smile spread slowly across her face. “Drinka ‘fore
now.”

“You have lived waaaay too dull a life.” Cup pointed at her and took the shot.

“Ts not that exciting,” Holly argued. “It smells.” She wrinkled her nose at her cup. He chuckled and
rolled his eyes.

Mugs, Oddswell, well, all the adults really. Even Cala. Scratch tried, but he fell back. A number of
the others laughed. A few got up to check on him. He was fine. Bendy took his too.

“Cala go!” Alice giggled. “It’s your turn.”

“Uuuuh, mine? Oh! Uuuh, Neveeer have I had, uh, what haven’t I done? Oh!” Cala brightened up.
“Done a handstand!”

“Cala!” Mugs gasped.

The girl giggled as everyone had to take a shot. Granny had to stop there, as did Oddswell. Red was
slooshed, but she was determined to get past Alice.

Alice hummed, her dark lips puckered in a thoughtful pouted. “Never have I ever driven a car.”
“Alice!” The table burst with laughter. Everyone but Wiston, Cala, and Alice drank.

“Okay! That’s enough! You drunk idiots are all going to bed,” Boris declared.

“Boo!” Cup jeered. “Killjoy!”

“That’s right!” Boris laughed. With the Warners help and a call to the cabs, Boris and the kids started on getting everyone to their rooms or the cab to be taken to their homes. They almost missed getting Holly in the cab, because the moment they finished, she had drunkenly followed Bendy and then Cup and Mugs around, pelting them with question after question.

“But how does your head work?” she whined. “Is dat milk? It can’t be milk. I shink you’re black tea.” She pointed at Cups. “And you’re hot chocolate.” She pointed at Mugs.

“What are you even talkin’ bout?” Cup frowned. “Tea?”

“And Bendy!” she continued. “What does it feel like getting so tall?” She whipped around, eyes burning as she looked at the demon. “Doesn’t it feel weird having your body change like that?” Her hands clenched into fists. “I mus’ know!!” She proceeded to turn and try to tackle Mugs, who had started walking away.

“Wha! What are you doing, crazy lady!” Mugs jumped and looked down at his new belt.

“Don’ go away, hot chocolate!” she said, holding onto his waist. “You’re tha awkward conversation drink!”

“I’m Mugs,” he said. “I ain’t awkward! Lets go!” He tried to pull her off.

She looked up. “Yeah, you are. Awkwardly adorable,” she said with an expression that mimicked soberness.

“Nnnnooooo,” Mugs moaned.

“Nice belt,” Bendy winked. “Bet I’d wear its better.”

“Then, take her!” Mugs pouted.

“Guys, what in the world are you doing? Holly. You need to go home! Cala and Alice are already in the cab.” Boris sighed.

She gave Boris a teary-eyed look. “But I’s need to know the secrets of the universe,” she pleaded.


“What Bendy?” Boris sighed, glancing at the demon.

“I needa ask Alice a question,” Bendy said.

“Then ask her later, when you’re sober,” Boris said as he pulled Holly away and headed to the door. Bendy pouted and followed.

Holly wriggled, arms waving. “Nuuuuuuuuu.”

“B-b-but its sooo important. I gots ta knooow,” Bendy whined.

“Why am I suddenly surrounded by little kids!” Boris grumbled looking over his shoulder to give
Bendy a deadpan look.

Holly turned towards them. “Are ya gonna ask Alice out?” She gave him a lopsided grin.

“Yesh!” Bendy brightened. “I needs a girl! And yous done said no, soos I gots ta ask! I needs ta right now!”


Holly gave Boris a sour look. “You shaid no Boris? Rude. He’s your brudder.”

Boris screamed into his hands. Bendy paused. “You okay bro?”


Holly pouted. “Booooorrrrrrrrrrriiiiisssss.” She got up and stumbled towards the car. Then, she paused. “Which door?” she asked, blinking at the open cab.

“Here! Come here Hol.” Alice waved at her.

Holly brightened and stumbled inside. “Hey Alice,” Bendy heard her start. “I have a question for you.”

“Just go home!” Boris called. He pushed Bendy back and went up to the cab. Bendy pouted.

Wiston promised in the cab to get them all home safely.

Bendy and Cup rebelled and started singing a drinking song with Mugs and the Warners. Bendy thought they sounded amazing, so he didn’t understand when Yakko clamped his mouth shut.

Everyone else disappeared, and Bendy somehow ended up in his room with Boris. Bendy pouted.

“I don’t wanna!” he declared.

“But it’s bedtime now Bendy.” Boris sighed. “Everyone else is going to bed.”


Boris’ ears fell. “I’m sorry, Bendy.”

“Nuu, don’t be sad!” Bendy plopped on the bed and kicked off his shoes and threw his vest to the ground. Boris sighed and leaned down to pick it up. Bendy pouted. “See! I’ll do it. Jush don’ be sad! We can be to’ether and shafe now!”

“Oh Bendy.” Boris smiled, but it was still sad. “I am happy about that. I just wish things were easier for you.”

Bendy blinked. “As long as I has you, it’s worff it.”

Boris smiled and hugged him. “I love you, Bendy.”

“Love ya Boris,” Bendy muttered and yawned.

“We better get some rest,” Boris said softly.

“Didn’ asksh Alish,” Bendy muttered.
“I’m sure she’ll say yes when you do.” Boris shook his head and smiled as he got up to hang the vest away in the closet.

“Iff she don’t, you be ma girl.” Bendy pointed at Boris and smiled.

Boris snorted. “Yeah sure, Bendy. Sure I will.”


“Night Bendy,” came Boris’ soft reply before sleep overtook the demon.
The Group Date

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

"Greetings and welcome to Inky Mystery!" Mic announced. "It seems there is going to be music in the air!"

Chapter Notes

Hello all!
Thanks as always for your support in comments and kudos! All the art on tumblr and the discord! And for reading too! I'm so excited for the next few chapters! Please enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After weeks back from Heela City, Mugs found himself and the others falling into a routine. The mornings would be a nice cold run and then self defense training with Bendy and Boris. Mugs was pleased with both of their work. Each of them had their own strengths and weaknesses. Bendy had quick reflexes and good counter moves, but he had a weak guard and lost track of things around him when he was too focused on the fight in front of him.

Boris had better spatial awareness but was clumsy in his movements and balance. After the hour was up, they’d have breakfast. Red, Finley, and Sammy had taken over Snow White’s volunteered chores and helped with Granny’s cooking and cleaning. Then Cup and Mugs would train themselves. Sometimes the others watched, sometimes they didn’t. Cup was still a tough guy to beat in hand to hand, and it was still fifty-fifty on who won when they didn’t use their powers. If Mugs used his dodge, the win usually went to him. That would trade off with shot practice. It mattered if they had junk like empty cans to shoot off the fence or not. Cup was always the better shot. Mugs would have to repair the fence someday…

Bendy had work from Hat to do in those odd books. Finley and Sammy would go off running errands. Sometimes Mugs and Boris went with them. They would chat the whole cold walk. Mugs learned a lot more about Boris this way. Like why Boris had kept the pipe Mugs had given him. That he wanted to arm himself since he didn’t have magic like the others but that he didn’t want something lethal, so a knife or blade wouldn’t work. He also didn’t want to use a gun. The blunt pipe was strong enough it probably wouldn’t be destroyed on their quests and was most likely nonlethal, as long as he didn’t aim for the head or neck. Mugs warned him of the disadvantage that would be for him. Boris had told him it was fine. He’d rather have a disadvantage than a death on his conscience.

Mugs also learned more about Finley and Sammy on these walks. That they had been homeless in Warnerburg while trying to get an acting job, even after they ran out of money. Finley had been determined to not go home until he found success. They had both grown up in a small town called Kokomo in Indiana. They and Sammy’s younger cousin had dreams of fame. Finley’s father was
very much against it, as was Sammy’s mother. If Mugs put the pieces together and read between the lines, it seemed Sammy’s mother was critical of Sammy’s writing ability. She rather he go to college and get a reasonable job. As for Finley, his father wanted him to get into the successful family restaurant business instead of leaving. Both of them had run the moment they were old enough and had saved enough money.

Even though things hadn’t worked out yet, both of them were still hopeful for their dreams. Mugs also met other sick toons and their friends and families. The charming Robin Hood, his wife, their young pup, and a bear named John. An eccentric dodo bird, grinning cat, and two tumbling twins in an apartment complex of equally zany characters. A family of really welcoming elephants. The grumpy python that worked for John the coward. The lion didn’t give Mugs any eye contact while they were there. Seemed what happened at the meeting was still at the forefront of his mind. A number of others. Some friendly, some less so. Finley’s charisma though didn’t waver for any of them while they dropped off pills and talked about how the sick were doing.

The more people and families Mugs met, the more he thought about what Cup was planning to do. His brother still hadn’t shared any details. Or anything at all. Mugs hoped he had something and wasn’t just pulling his leg. Mugs’ determination to help his friends was growing to unshakable levels. Even if he had to fight Cup or the boss. Even if that meant he’d break his contract. These people didn’t deserve to suffer like this.

Mugs also got to meet the shop owners of the places that Finley and Sammy visited often, Daisy and Minnie, the mouse woman Mickey was interested in. Mugs found out that Cala had started working for them. She had a good eye for the herbs and loved learning about the plants. The women also had learned one of Cala’s secrets, that she was a mermaid. They were helping her keep it covered though. Mugs guessed it would be hard since the whole world was covered in frozen water right now. Mugs also made sure she was coming with him to the dance club that weekend. She got excited and invited the other two to come. Daisy had given him a confused look before he winked and dropped Holly’s name and that she was going too. Daisy seemed to get it, because she pushed harder for Minnie to go. Seemed they had been wearing her down for a while. She agreed easily enough with a shy blush.

When they got back, Boris went with Bendy and Felix to look at those old symbols. That was when Mugs would check with Cup, see if they had anything they needed to do. If not, he would busy himself helping Granny. Eventually, the girls, Xedo, and Wiston would come over. Mugs would drift over to Cala to talk with her and say hello to Alice and Holly.

Xedo would give an update on the news. There was a bunch on the questers and ink illness now that someone famous died from it. The news about Heela City had also reached the city, so they were being called heroes again. Mickey’s return and injury was also in the papers. There were questions on where the police had been in all this and why the questers were involved with Mickey’s second disappearance, if he was a quester himself and so on.

Felix would also bring up anything more he’d been able to find about the ink machine or the Micco people. Mugs admittedly didn’t pay close attention to that stuff. He had a general idea though. The Micco were an ancient people that used a bunch of magic. They had ink illness and thus built the ink machine. Then, they all died for some reason at some point and the machine was taken apart and hidden. Probably by the Micco before they died? They weren’t sure. It was a long time ago. With how scary the parts were, Mugs could understand why they hid them.

They would chat for a while, mock Jerry if the man shared an opinion, and then had dinner. It was a comfortable living, if Mugs said so himself. He’d laughed more in that past month than he had in a year. The only frustration was with the map. Every time someone in the house had an ink attack, the
tension would turn up a couple of notches.

That was one of the many reasons Mugs decided to also start seeing Dr. Scratchansniff. Cuppy had been against it, but Mugs wasn’t an idiot. He knew he couldn’t talk about some things, but there were others he could share. He could talk about his worries for Bendy. His frustration and worries for his brother and how to get Cup to open up to him more. What he could do about his nightmares, though he had to lie on what his nightmares were about.

Dr. Scratchansniff was a sharp man, and his advice wasn’t what Mugs would have expected. A dream diary and some calming tea before bed. Acting with kindness and patience to Cup but being firm in his own beliefs as he has been. He also told Mugs to spend more time with Bendy to help both of them.

Mugs decided he liked the weird therapist guy. He was pretty sure that Mugs wasn’t sharing things, but he didn’t push for more.

Today though, Mugs was on a mission. A personal mission. No, that wasn’t right. A meddling mission? That was probably closer to the truth. Mugs entered the hospital and looked around the facility.

“Can I help you?” a little doe asked.

“Is Nurse Fanny and Nurse, uh, Dovil around?” Mugs asked, almost forgetting the bird girl’s name.

“I believe they are busy with patients,” she said.

“Well, could you let them know I need just a couple minutes with them when they are free? The name is Mugman, if it isn’t too big of a problem,” Mugs asked. “I’ll wait.”

The doe looked a little surprised but nodded. She disappeared for a few minutes. Mugs went to the waiting room and sat down. There were a few people also waiting, a couple, a family with a kid in a cast, and an old man reading a newspaper. All of them looked at him. It was something he was still getting used to. The kid with the cast tugged on his mom’s dress.

“Why is his head a cup, mommy?” the boy asked. “It’s funny.”

“Shh,” the woman hushed, embarrassed. Mugs chuckled. He knew Cup would kill him if he knew that he was here. But...Mugs couldn’t help it. Mugs could count on one hand how many times Cup had a crush on someone. This would go nowhere, Mugs knew it. Cup knew it. But his brother could at least have a dance with her. Besides, Fanny was a friend of Minnie’s...or Mugs thought so. She and Dovil had been the ones to return her kitten after all. Jackpot. Oh, wait. That wasn’t its real name.

The doe came back. “They’ll be with you in a moment,” she told him. Mugs nodded appreciatively.

Anyway, it was a night to celebrate. His brother deserved to celebrate too, and if there wasn’t someone there to drag him around, he’d tuck himself in a corner and spend the whole night watching everyone else have fun.

Mugs wondered what the others would think of him doing this. They’d probably be mad. They’d accuse him of trying to start a scandal, though it really wasn’t like that. Cup and Mugs had to take any joy they could, even if it was a lie. It’s the only way they could be sane after all these years working for the boss. Little moments, little things to make them smile, just a few minutes to pretend everything was okay. Those snippets of time were why Mugs could still smile. Even though he knew a few of them were as fake as what Mugs was going to try and set up for his brother.
Just one dance. Just a few happy minutes.

Cup deserved that much, didn’t he? Mugs thought so.

The door opened and Dovil stuck her head out. “Hi Mugman!” she chirped and came in.

Mugs smiled, “Hi Nurse Dovil, how are you?”

“Oh, I’m good.” The bird lifted a feathered hand to her beak. “What do you need?”

“Well--”

“You.” Fanny strutted in and took his scarf with force. Oh boy. He had forgotten how intimidating this rabbit was. She dragged him out of the waiting room and into the hall.

“Nurse Fanny!” Dovil fretted behind her. Fanny pulled Mugs into an empty patient’s room.

“What happened now?” Fanny demanded, tossing Mugs’ scarf in his face. “Is it your idiotic brother again? You? Who cracked their head open this time?” she demanded, her fists on her hips.

“Uh, n-no one ma’am! We’re both fine!” Mugs stuttered. Cup actually did look a lot better too. The crack on his face and his black eye were gone. “I’m not here because someone’s hurt.”

Fanny blinked then her eyes narrowed. “Then, why the hell are you wasting my time?” she demanded. Dovil sighed behind her.

“I’m inviting you both to a dance club this weekend. We’re celebrating Mickey’s safe return,” Mugs said bringing his smile back.

“I have nothing to do with him,” Fanny said flatly. “Sounds stupid, get out.” She made a shooing motion with her hands.

“Oh dear,” Dovil said under her breath.

“Well, uuh, there’s another reason.” Mugs smiled uncertainly. “See Daisy asked us to help set him up with Minnie.”

“Oh my stars, yes!” Dovil gasped.

“We wanted to invite a few of Minnie’s friends too, to balance it out a bit.” Mugs scratched the back of his head.

“No,” Fanny stated deadpan.

Dovil grabbed her arm and shook her. “Ooooooh! C’m on Fanny! I’ve been waiting two years for them to finally hook up! We have to go!”

“Why!” Fanny tried to pull her arm back. “Minnie is fine, but I don’t care for that mouse. I don’t have a reason to be there.”

“Would you rather that rat Mortimer get her instead?” Dovil puffed out her cheeks and pouted.

“Would you really condemn Minnie to him?”

“Why the hell is my going or not weigh into Minnie’s choice?” Fanny’s eyes widened in angry surprise. “She’s a big girl. Let her decide.”
“Nooo!” Dovil wailed. “She’s so shy when it comes to him! She needs someone as blunt as you for
the ultimatum! I can’t do it! Daisy can’t either! Minnie brushes us both off! Please Fanny! Please!
You can get to her! Your bullheadedness will get through to her!”

“Bullheadedness!” Fanny exclaimed in offense.

“I mean that in the most loving way possible.” Dovil lifted a finger while explaining.

“How the sun is that loving in any way?” Fanny grumbled.

Dovil ignored her and turned to Mugs, a bright gleam in her eyes. “So what’s the setup? I’m
guessing it’s formal?”

Mugs blinked out of his stupor. “Uh, yeah, kinda formal, and a lot of us are coming in couples, but
that’s not everyone.”

“See! It’s a casual group, Fanny! C’mon! It’s no different from our nights out! It’ll be fun with more
people.” Dovil hopped a little, still not letting go of her arm.

Fanny scowled, her tied ears fell. “More people? You mean that mad circus and these nutcases?” She
indicated Mugs. “I’m guessing it’s your group going? The demon and cat author?”

Mugs nodded. “The adults, yeah.”

“Oh please, Fanny! There will be so many guys! And if it’s couples, I wanna bring Puphead!” Dovil
pouted. “They’ll need more girls there!”

“That should be fine,” Mugs said.

Fanny groaned. “Fine! Fine! Only so I can save Minnie from you idiots if it all goes downhill, got
it?”

Dovil squealed and threw her arms around Fanny in a hug. The rabbit grumbled, but Mugs noticed
she didn’t push the bird away. Maybe she and Cup had more in common than Mugs had thought.

“Thank you. I’m sure Minnie will be happy to see you there.” Mugs grinned. Fanny snorted, and
Dovil giggled excitedly.

“Oh! We’re going to have to find something good to wear!” she gushed.

Mugs left shortly after that, successful in his meddling mission. His brother would kill him if he
knew. But after a dance, he was sure that Cup would feel better. If only for a little while. Mugs
would consider this a win.

Bendy wrung his hands after dinner. He had put this off, and now he was regretting it. Tomorrow
night was the dance club, and he still hadn’t asked Alice yet. He knew he didn’t need to. Cup wasn’t
asking anyone. Neither was Red, Xedo, or Felix, but they were all going. The doctors and Sammy
had opted out for their own reasons. Boris was also staying to help Scratch keep an eye on the
Warners and Wiston.

Bendy didn’t have to ask, because he knew she was going. She was going with Holly and Cala,
even though both of them had ‘dates’ with Finley and Mugs. She didn’t seem bothered to go alone
but…

Stars, why was this so hard? He’d asked out tons of women before. He was rejected a hundred times
over! It was all water off his back!

But this was Alice. There was a difference. Somehow. He couldn’t put his finger on it. Either way, he was as nervous as all get out. Now it was the night before, and he still hadn’t worked up the nerve to ask yet. Cup was getting annoyed with him. The guy had made a jab at him during training this morning. He had no idea how Cup knew he was planning to ask her, but it was what it was. The cupman had given him a pointed look at dinner too.

After dinner, Holly invited everyone out into the backyard. People brought out chairs, and the group set them in a circle. Then, in the semi-darkness of the light coming from the back door, Holly summoned a small baseball-sized ball of glowing multicolored light. It was weird seeing all the colors shuffle through. First red, then orange, then yellow, green, blue, purple and back to red again. Any day, it would have been a sight to see, but with the blanket of white on the ground and the black in the sky, the colors stood in stark contrast, brilliant and bright. It was so great to see Holly so happy again too.

People talked quietly in the cold, enjoying the show. Holly, Finley, and Sammy sat on one side of the circle, talking. Cala, Mugs, and Cup were in another small group. Alice sat in a chair next to them.

Bendy could feel his palms sweat in his gloves, despite the cold. This was it. This was his chance. Stars, his heart was already racing. Okay. He could do this. C’mon Bendy. You got this! He walked up to Alice and smiled. “Hey Alice.”

“Oh, halo Bendy,” Alice grinned. A pun? Bendy could work with that.

He chuckled, trying to cover his nerves. “So I had a bright idea thanks to Holly’s magical show.”

“Oh?” Alice hummed.

“Y-yeah, I was wondering.” Bendy swallowed. “Holly said you were practically flying when you dance, and I was hoping you and I could go to the dance club together.”

Alice’s mouth made a little ‘o’ of surprise. “S-she did?” Alice glanced over at Holly. The girl was engrossed in her conversation with Finley.

“Well yeah, I mean, I can imagine you’re a great dancer, and I’m always looking for a good partner to have a swinging time with,” Bendy rambled and clamped his mouth shut before he could embarrass himself. Alice looked back at him. “So whadda ya say? Willing to take a step with me?”

Alice furrowed her brows. Her cheeks darkened a bit, but Bendy wasn’t sure if she was embarrassed or it was the cold. She bit her lip. “Okay, as dance partners. It sounds like fun.” She smiled up at him.

Bendy had to stop himself from cheering or throwing an arm up in the air. Sadly, he couldn’t stop the dumb grin from spreading across his face. “Berries! Okay! Yeah! I’m excited.”

“Me too.” Alice smiled a little bigger. The shifting colors from Holly’s magic danced across Alice’s pale skin and made the angel look even more unearthly in her beauty. Bendy felt his face heat up.

“Hey Bendy, why is a journalist always successful at ballroom dancing?” Alice asked.

“Why?” Bendy blinked at the sudden change in topic.

“Because they can follow the most difficult lead.” Alice grinned. Bendy chuckled.
“You’ll have to tell Xedo that one.” Bendy sat down next to her. “How many line dancers does it take to screw in a lightbulb?”

“How many?”

“Five, six, seven, eight,” Bendy chuckled. Alice burst into giggles.

“How does a dancer multiply a number by itself?” Alice asked.

“How?” Bendy asked.

“She jazz squares it up!” Alice waved her hands.

“That’s terrible!” Bendy laughed. Alice grinned proudly and lifted her nose. “Okay. I got one. What classical ballet did the pigpen perform?”

“What one?” Alice’s face was glowing at this point and not from the lights but the joy in her dark eyes.

“The Swine Lake,” Bendy declared.

Alice laughed. “And you said mine was terrible!” They went back and forth with terrible jokes and puns until it was getting too cold for everyone to stay out. They went back inside and warmed up with cocoa or tea before everyone headed home. After Alice left, Bendy couldn’t help the little bubble of glee in his chest.

“Cussing finally, Bendy. I thought I’d have to ask her for you!” Cup complained.

“You can’t say anything to ruin my mood right now,” Bendy declared.

“Jerry’s right,” Cup stated with a raised brow.

Mugs gasped.

Bendy smirked. “What a Jerry thing of you to say.”

Jerry stuck his head into the room, annoyed. “I’m right here.” He narrowed his eyes. He was coming back with a cup of cocoa.

“Did you just accuse me of being a Jerry?” Cup narrowed his eyes in mock accusation.

“If the terrible silk slippers fit!” Bendy declared.

“Hey! What’s wrong with my slippers?” Jerry looked at Bendy, offended, then down at his night footwear. He didn’t seem to notice that Wakko and Yakko had snuck up behind him with a pickle jar.

“That sir! Is too far! I think if anyone is a sniveling Jerry, it’s you! Always moping around and your nose buried in a book! When was the last time you’ve willing gone out to see sunlight?” Cup accused.

“What!” Jerry truly looked offended now. He didn’t notice Yakko carefully pouring pickle juice into his mug.

“I saw it this morning!” Bendy refuted.
Nu-huh! That don’t count! We had ta force you!” Cup shook his head. “You are such a Jerry,” he snickered. Mugs covered his mouth, his shoulders shaking.

“Well! I never! I’m certain that your the Jerry here!” Bendy lifted a finger in the air. “After all! The only thing you know how to do is complain.” Bendy snickered. Boris, Finley, and Sammy were watching from down the hall.

“Why you!” Cup stood up now, laughing. “Those are fighting words!”

“Then this can never work!” Bendy was laughing now. “Jerry doesn’t fight! You have to buy your way out!” They were both wheezing at this point. It wasn’t really that funny. But Jerry’s offended sneer and the snickering of the Warners backing away was too funny not to laugh at.

“Well then! I never!” Jerry lifted his weak chin. “I am turning in for the night.” He lifted the mug and took a drink only to spit it out. “Again! Can I not have a drink in this house! Every time I pour something!” he raged. Everyone lost it. Jerry marched into the kitchen, abandoned the tainted mug and went upstairs.

“Oh stars! His face!” Bendy couldn’t breathe.

“You are geniuses,” Fin told the Warners. They grinned proudly.

“I think we also found a new insult.” Cup grinned, his face flushed from laughing so hard.

The dance club was a large two-level room with a balcony. There were booths around the edges and a stage at the front where a group of cats were playing jazzy music. The curtains were velvety soft, and the walls were lined with that old-style flower and vine pattern that were in the classier places. Large windows on the balcony level showed a clear view of the crescent moon against the darkness of the fading sunset. The open dance floor was so clean that it reflected the room in the wood’s polish like a still lake. The lights were soft and smartly placed, so it seemed to glitter around the room. The energy of the room was as vibrant as the decor, a happy hum underneath the music. The room was coated in a mixed scent of floral and food that made Bendy’s mouth water.

The group was given a long table near the stage and the dance floor. It was the perfect view of the moon and the band. Bendy pulled a chair out for Alice. The girls looked amazing tonight. Alice was in a beautiful dark dress that flared out at her waist and ended below her knees. Beads in the dark fabric glinted in the light like stars. Her short sleeves showed more of her shoulders than usual. She had long dark gloves that matched her dress. Half of her hair was pinned back with a jeweled pin, the rest tumbled down her back. Bendy swallowed and fought to stop himself from tugging on his collar. Was his bow tie too tight? Was it harder to breathe?

Cala came in a flapper dress full of light beads that came down to strips around her legs and a wide headband around Paul. The beads almost reminded Bendy of her scales. Red was in a tight strapless dress that went to her ankles and a fur wrap around.

Holly wore a dress layered with black and white, a large white bow at the back of her waist, with black stockings and shoes. The dress sleeves went to her elbow, ending in black. The hem went to her knees, ending in white. A black band with an array of black and white feathers was over her hair. She had on short white gloves that ended at her wrists, and she held a small black handbag in her hands.

All the fellas in the group dressed smartly. Xedo was in a full suit with a tie. Felix was in a suit with a thin tie and dress shoes. Mugs was in a sweater vest and bow tie, something Bendy would think
was cheesy, but he actually pulled it off. Cup had opted out of a tie and bow tie, instead leaving the top couple buttons of his shirt unbuttoned and his dress-coat open. Bendy tried to look his sharpest in his pinstripe vest and button-up. He had a borrowed white bow tie, and his dance shoes were cleaned to a shine. Finley had suspenders, a tie, and grey slacks. His hat was a good addition to his large ears.

“Drinks while you wait for the rest of your party?” a waiter asked.

“Sure,” Finely said. They only had to wait a few minutes for Minnie and Daisy to show up. Minnie was in a wide skirt that had lace trim and wore a glittering brooch around her throat. Small white gloves were on her hands. Daisy was in a simple yet tasteful glam strap dress, the strings dancing with her every move.

“Oh! Hello everyone! I don’t believe I know everyone here,” Minnie said. Introductions went around for those that hadn’t met Minnie yet. The waiter returned with drinks, and easy conversations started up. It didn’t take long for the circus crew to show up.

Mickey gave Bendy a bright smile before approaching Minnie. “Hello Minnie, how are you?”

“I’m doing great Mickey, and you? Are you recovering well enough?” Minnie asked.

“Swell!” Mickey grinned and sat between her and Bendy.

With that, Donald, Oswald, and Mickey joined them. Goofy had stayed back to watch all the kids. They ordered food and enjoyed each other’s company.

“So Mickey, really, how is the leg holding up? Any problems?” Bendy asked.

“None at all. It’s been great! I even performed with the kids a couple of nights ago,” Mickey said warmly.

“Huh?” Daisy asked.

“Oh! You know about my prosthetic leg. Bendy and Boris made it for me,” Mickey said with a smile.

“With Holly’s help,” Bendy added.

“Really? My how talented,” Minnie smiled. “I wouldn’t expect something like that from you.”

Alice leaned forward a bit to talk around Bendy and Mickey. “Bendy and Boris have many talents.” Bendy flushed at the compliment.

“It was nothing. Mickey’s been great to us. It’s the least we could do,” Bendy muttered. Cup, Mugs, and Cala across from Bendy snickered. He gave Cup a warning look.

“Ah shucks Bendy, I should be saying that about you!” Mickey chuckled.

“I think you both are fantastic;” Felix said from beside Cup. It was getting too hot in here. Where was all this praise coming from?

“Eh, that will change when Mick falls on his face tonight,” Donald quacked from down the table.

“Have a little faith Donald.” Mickey pouted as the others laughed.

“Well, if you do ever run into a problem with it, let me know,” Bendy told him.
“Thanks, Bendy.” Mickey smiled back at him.

“What else have you built, Bendy?” Minnie asked curiously.

“Oh, just this and that. I used to be a mechanic for Pete in Sillyvision,” Bendy said.

Daisy leaned forward, a look of disgust on her face. “Pete? Are we thinking of the same Pete?”

“Yes Daisy, we are.” Mickey chuckled. “I used to work for him too. I understand how it is with him.”

Bendy raised his brows. “Well anyway, I’ve fixed televisions, radios, furniture, a few toasters too.”

“Wow, you really are a handyman,” Donald quacked sarcastically. “Maybe we should ask you to replace Goofy as the fix-it guy.”

“Donald hush.” Daisy brushed a feathered hand down his arm. “We’re here to have fun.” The duck grumbled but quieted down. Bendy guessed he still didn’t like them.

“What was it like working for Pete?” Finley asked Mickey.

“Oh brother,” Oswald grumbled. He had taken a seat near the end between Donald and Felix.

“Well, he was a hard boss, but I was paid, at least, and steering his boat was fun,” Mickey said with a smile.

“Underpaid and high work demand?” Bendy muttered.

Mickey chuckled. “It really wasn’t that bad. I was young back then.”

“That was all before the circus,” Minnie hummed.

Daisy snorted. “Of course it was, Oz was still getting into trouble back then.”

“Hey now, no need to bring that all back up.” Oswald pointed at her.

“You blew up a bank,” Cup stated with a smirk. “I don’t think anyone here has to guess at your younger years.”

“You what?” Daisy quacked. Minnie and Donald also looked surprised.

“Oh no,” Oswald groaned and covered his eyes with a hand.

“And when did this happen?” Minnie asked.

“Forever ago! It doesn’t matter,” Oswald defended, dropping the hand. “Can we just drop it?”

“Oh no, there’s a story there. Spill,” Donald demanded.

“Yeah Oswald, tell us the story!” Red chuckled from the other side of the long table next to Xedo and a couple of empty chairs.

Oswald sighed in defeat. “Fine, okay so I was being an idiot, walked into town with two schmucks. I don’t even remember their names. We were all acting tough, and they decide that robbin’ the bank in such a small place would be fine since no one was around.”

“Oh Oswald.” Mickey sighed. The rabbit scowled at him. Mickey chuckled.
“Anyway, next thing I know, they hand me a bomb and shove me in there.” Oswald shook his head. “Cussing idiots used too much explosive, and the place went sky high! I didn’t take a thing! I booked it,” Oswald stated. “This cop ran me right out of there. Never saw those schmucks again either.”

“You were such a troublemaker.” Daisy shook her head. “It’s a miracle Mickey or Felicity put up with you.”

“Felicity?” Alice asked tentatively.

“Our sister,” Mickey explained.

“I didn’t know you had a sister,” Cala commented.

“She’s a homebody,” Oswald said. “She still lives in Mouseton with her husband and sons. She’s a real soccer mom.”

“She was the only sane one in your family,” Daisy said with a smirk.

“Nah, she was never one for adventure was her problem. She’d rather stay home and read a book or bake.” Oswald shrugged.

“Our nephews give her a run for her money.” Mickey smiled.

“Stars, I hope they don’t become as bad as we were,” Oswald said.

“So Alice, what about you? Do you have any siblings?” Minnie asked.

“Oh yes. I have three brothers and three sisters,” Alice said.

“That’s a big family,” Mugs said.

“Bet it’s nuts,” Cup added.

“It can be,” Alice agreed with a chuckle.

“Where are you in age?” Felix asked.

“I’m in the middle,” Alice said. “Number four.”

“So, not too old but not too young,” Oswald said.

“Something like that,” Alice replied. “My brothers Isaac and Luke have jobs. They’re the oldest. Mary is still at home. Then, there’s me, and I’m out here.” Alice smiled. “Abigail might come out here to join me. She’s a year younger than me and almost done with her schooling.”

“That sounds like fun! I’d love to meet your sister.” Cala grinned.

Alice smiled back at her. “And then Rachel and David, both of them are still in school too.”

Bendy wondered what angels learned in school. Kindness 101? Flight school? Spear wielding? Anything from the paintings that Hat had in his office? Bendy realized he hardly knew anything about Alice’s past and family. What was it like? He wanted to ask, but not with everyone here. She still had to keep her secret after all.

“What are your sisters like?” Holly asked.
Alice chuckled. “Rachel is a lot like me. She likes getting into trouble and testing our parents’ patience. She really likes painting though. She’ll go out and paint people or scenes in the city. She gets in trouble when she tries to go somewhere she’s not supposed to to get the ‘perfect view’ or she paints a spot that’s supposed to be closed off. She’s a really good artist. Abigail is a bit more,” Alice fished for a word and bit her lip, “regal?” She chuckled. “Let’s just say she has a strong opinion. She’s great in her studies, but she sometimes expects unreasonable things from others. I used to fight with her a lot since I wasn’t ‘proper.’” A devious smile came to Alice’s painted lips. “I used to drive her crazy with puns.”

“She doesn’t like puns, and she’s related to you? Poor thing,” Cup muttered and laughed.

Alice straightened proudly. “If I could make her scream, I considered it a win for the day.”

“Oh my,” Minnie giggled.

“And there’s my older sister. Mary. She’s the most patient out of all of us. She has an amazing voice and loves to sing. She is around the gardens a lot of the time. I would say I was closest to her out of my sisters. She’s wise for her years and would always listen to my complaining.” Alice sighed. “She’s also a bit...delicate. She’s never had great health.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. She sounds wonderful,” Minnie said.

“She is.” Alice grinned.

“And what about your brothers?” Felix asked.

“Yeah, they troublemakers like that guy?” Cup pointed a thumb at Oswald. Oswald scowled at him.

Alice laughed. “Luke definitely is. He would rough house with Isaac and Michael all the time. Sometimes Jake and I would get dragged into it. Oh, Michael is my eldest brother’s best friend, and Jake is a friend of mine growing up. He and I used to get into all sorts of trouble together.”


“Isaac is the eldest. He’s great! The perfect big brother. He can just be forgetful sometimes, and he’s really busy with his job. But he could wrestle with Luke, sit with Mary, or talk with Abby and be completely comfortable with all three. He and Mary have a lot in common with their kindness.” Alice smiled, but Bendy swore he saw sadness there. Her warm aura a little dimmer.

“Man. No wonder you handle all the craziness at the house so well,” Bendy said. “You are used to a noisy house.”

Alice looked over to him, her smile grew. “Yeah. It’s fun at Granny’s house.”

“Isn’t that house on Baker Street Oddswell’s?” Daisy asked confused.

“It is,” Red spoke up. “But Granny Gopher has done a wonderful job taking over. She’s the one that makes the meals and lets everyone feel at home. Oddswell doesn’t mind.”

“He’s probably thankful for the help,” Xedo added.

“I’m sure he’s grateful to everyone who pitches in.” Felix smiled and hunched his shoulders. He seemed a bit tense for some reason. Dinner started, the food smelled amazing. Bendy had gotten a steak with mixed vegetables, his mouth was watering as he cut into the meat. He’d have to bring home some for Boris to try.
Bendy had been worried at first, but everyone was having fun and conversations were going good. Finley was just starting a joke when the first black mark on the night appeared.

“Sorry we’re late!” Bendy looked up in surprise as did a number of other people at their table.

Dovil and Fanny walked up with a dog in a suit that Bendy didn’t know. Fanny was in a long backless light dress that hugged her curves and was held up with a loop around her neck. Dovil was in a strapless dress that went to her knees and flared out. “Fanny took forever to get ready.”

There was spurting. Bendy glanced over to see Oswald coughing and putting his glass of water down. Donald grimaced and Mickey tensed. Um...what was going on?

“Fanny, Dovil! What are you doing here?” Red asked in surprise.

Dovil brightened up. “Oh we wer--”

“We’re here to save Minnie if we need to,” Fanny gave the circus a cold glance over. Her eyes stopped on Oswald. “Oswald.”

“Fanny,” he acknowledged in the same arctic tone. Uuuum, what was the tension?

“Oh don’t worry Fanny! We’ve been having fun!” Minnie spoke up with a kind smile. If she noticed the tension in half the table, she didn’t acknowledge it.

“Who’s your friend Dovil?” Daisy cut in.

“Everyone, this is my boyfriend, Dr. Puphead,” Dovil introduced.

Greetings and introductions went around. “Well here, sit. We have room,” Red said and waved to the empty seats between her and Cala.

“Oh, bro, switch with Cala,” Mugs suggested warmly. Cup gave Mugs a glare that was scary. Bendy hadn’t seen the other cupman that angry in a long time. What was going on? Too much was happening too quickly for Bendy to keep up. Cala got up and Cup silently did the same. Mugs winced when Cup sat down on his other side, hinting that Cup had done something under the table. Fanny sat next to him. Then Puphead and Dovil next to Red.

Turned out that Puphead was one of the doctors from the hospital that was working with Oddswell for the sick. He was very excited about the research Oddswell had shared and even seemed to have respect for the Joy bracelets that Oddswell had sent the hospital.

“That was all Holly’s doin’.” Fin grinned from next to her.

Holly beamed at him and then smiled shyly. “I just wish I could do more,” she mumbled.

“Dear, that is more than a lot of us have done, sadly. I was of the mind that ink illness was a psychosis of some kind not that long ago. The idea that someone could melt and then stop and seem fine was far out there for me. I’m ashamed to say I was of no help to the sick,” Puphead confessed.

“Well, you’re makin’ up for it now doc.” Fin grinned. “That’s gotta count for something.”

Holly nodded in agreement. “You can only control what you do now.”

Bendy’s tail twitched. He really didn’t want to talk about work or anything related to the quest right now. This was a night of fun.
“So how long have you known Mickey, Minnie?” Bendy asked.

“Oh, I grew up around him and Oswald.” Minnie smiled. “We’re from the same town,” she explained.

“Oh yeah, it was a madhouse whenever I came to visit,” Daisy muttered.

“You too, Daisy?” Alice asked.

“Min and I have been friends forever,” Daisy sighed.

“Oh the horror,” Minnie teased.

“It was whenever you got into trouble. You are so accident-prone it’s scary,” Daisy said.

Donald and the rest chuckled. “I remember when Mickey was stuck at home sick, and you got stuck up a tree.”

“Oh yeah,” Oswald hummed. “It was a dog that seemed like a bear with how big it was. Chased me right up there.” Minnie blushed.

“Yes. Ortensia had to chase it away so Oswald could get the ladder and get her down,” Donald explained.

Mickey stiffened like he had been shocked. Bendy gave him a confused glance, but the mouse was looking at Oswald warily. The rabbit was smiling though and nodded. It seemed everyone in that corner except Donald was watching him for a reaction. Oswald ignored the stares and spoke, not looking up. “She proved to be king, er, queen of the beasts that day.”

Even Felix looked just as wary as Mickey.

“Oz,” Minnie said quietly.

Oswald smiled at her, but it was a sad smile. “It’s alright Min. No point in pretending she wasn’t there.”

Ortensia, his wife. Oh. Right.

Minnie smiled back. Whatever tension was there relaxed. Bendy almost sighed with relief. “So what about you?”

Bendy blinked. “Uh?” Daisy was looking at him.

“How long have you two known each other?” She indicated him and Alice.

“Oh! Not long,” Alice smiled her movie star smile.

“Just a few months,” Bendy added, feeling a little shy. Wait. Why!

Minnie hummed. “So, you aren’t from the same area?”

“No. I’m from a tiny town called Sillyvision,” Bendy said. “There is hardly anything there.”

“We met here in Toon Town,” Alice said. “Bendy helped me find something I lost.”

“And it feels like Alice has helped me with most everything else.” Bendy chuckled. She ducked her
head and looked away.

“Alright, the foods great and the companys swell, but this is supposed to be a party!” Finley stood up.

“Oh no, what is he doing?” Cup muttered warily. He had gotten pretty quiet after switching seats.

“Oh come on, Cup. We’re here to have some fun. Relax.” Holly smiled at him. She turned to Finley curiously.

Fin approached the band and talked to the fella with the trumpet. They chatted back and forth for a moment.

“If he gets us kicked out,” Cup grumbled.

Mugs chuckled. “It wouldn’t to the first time we’ve been streeeted from a place like this.”

“I’m almost afraid to ask,” Fanny muttered offhandedly.

Then Finley sang a note. The other band members stopped and whispered to each other. Of course, the music cutting out like that got people’s attention. A number of them turned to the stage to see what was going on.

“Think he’s doing it on purpose?” Red asked. Xedo shrugged, unbothered. The band told him something. He looked back at them and grinned. Then he was heading on the stage.

There he stepped up to a microphone. Bendy smiled as the piano started. He turned to Alice. “Can I have this dance?” he asked. Alice grinned.

Finley’s voice ran out over the room with the piano. Bendy led Alice out to the dance floor and placed his hand on her hip. The step was a touch tricky but not impossible. The drum joined in, and it picked up in tempo. Alice followed his direction perfectly. She seemed to glide in his hands, following the slightest suggestion effortlessly. Bendy twirled her out and followed around.

They spun around the room in a wide circle. Soon other couples started to join them. Alice’s grin was glowing as they twirled. Bendy was sure his smile was ridiculous as they went.

Finley was snapping his fingers and singing proudly on stage. His hat shadowed his eyes as his fanged grin gleamed in the stage lights. Bendy spotted Cala and Mugs on the edge of the circle, shuffling as they went but looking at each other warmly. Bendy tilted Alice into a low, swinging dip, bring her half around him until he pulled her up laughing. The drum crescendoed and then cut out. Bendy let Alice go in a spin and tapped his own fancy footwork back to her. She saw it, and a challenge came into her eyes. He came back to her side, but she tapped her own feet away from him.

Oh? So she wanted to play it that way? Bendy grinned and followed her. They played cat and mouse across the dance floor until Bendy caught her and gave a last spin before dipping her at the end of the song. They were breathless and laughing as they straightened up again. People were applauding. Finley bowed proudly and waved out at the crowd.

A more bouncing number started. Finley jumped off the stage and grabbed Holly’s hand. Bendy and Alice hurried over too.

“C’mon fellas! This is a dance club!” Bendy told them.
“Oh good stars above,” Red muttered rolling her eyes.

“It’s not that bad,” Xedo said. “Let’s swing.” He offered her his hand. Red rolled her eyes but smiled.

“Yes let’s!” Dovil dragged Puphead out.

“Go on Mickey! You wanted to test that leg,” Oswald pushed.

Daisy was forcing Donald, but the look in his eye hinted that he really didn’t mind. Mickey and Minnie shyly went up.

“Well, dishbrain?” Fanny asked.

“What?” Cup’s eyes widened. He looked back at the dance floor. “Oh! No, I don’t dance.”

“Well, you do now. I’m not just gonna sit here all night.” Fanny looped his arm. Cup looked shocked as he was pulled from his seat. Bendy laughed as he and Alice rejoined the dance floor. It was the Charleston, a good one.

Bendy lined up with the others and followed the steps added a few his own steps to it once in a while.

“Show off!” Cup called to him.

“Jealous!” Bendy called back. The poor guy was stiff and awkward on the dance floor. Bendy had no idea he was bad at dancing. He winked at Alice and then slid over to Cup and Fanny. “I finally know how to pay you back for our mornings! I’ll teach ya and Mugs how to dance!”

“What!” Cup gasped.

“Please do!” Fanny laughed at him. His face heated up. Bendy chuckled as he slid back to Alice. She was showing Cala and Mugs the steps slowly and then matching it to the tempo of the music. Her legs swinging across and then out. Arms going left and right, a smile on her face.

Holly and Finley were doing better. Finley was showing her the swinging arms and steps to the charleston. It was a pretty high energy dance. Holly seemed a little stiff, but she was keeping up with him mostly.

The music changed again.

Bendy perked up. “Wanna do the balboa dance?” Bendy asked Alice. She nodded. Bendy wrapped his arms around her and she around him as they started the quick turn steps. She was a dream to dance with. He didn’t need to be considerate or slow. She didn’t just keep up with him, she complimented him. This was the best night of his life.

Chapter End Notes

And on that party note, we got some art from a different party in Heela City not so long ago! XD

These were drawn by Lythecreator!
Shorry, your highness.

Don't talk to her too!

I'm drunk Af.

also drunk Af.
Noooo! He has to stay!
He's my frieeed damn it!
Aww, Cuppy!

Oh no...

Eeen!
Get off!
Yu gross!

Noo, Friiend
Forever!

I surrounded by
 drunk idiots!!
Walk You Home

Chapter by ThisAnimatedPhantom

Chapter Summary

A ghost drifted onto the stage. "Due to certain events, Mic is taking a few days off. So I'm here to give you the summary instead! The date continues and the night ends but is everything smooth sailing for the questers and their friends? Find out!"

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone!
As always, thank you for the comments and support! I don't want to stick around long. I have a bit of a headache. Good luck to those of you in school and enjoy the chapter!

Cup was gonna die.

He wasn’t sure if the embarrassment from not being able to dance would do it. Or Fanny laughing at him. Or having to face Bendy, some dancing king schmuck, offer to teach him or what. But Cup was gonna shrivel up and die.

Where was that kind of grace and confidence when they were sparing, huh? The pipsqueak was holding out on him.

Still, it was weirdly nice. Fanny’s tense shoulders relaxed after they got on the dance floor. There was something between her and Oswald. That much was obvious. Something bad.

Whatever it was, Cup hoped they all could still have a fun night. With this, it just might be possible.

If only he stopped tripping over himself.

To his luck, Fanny stopped to watch Bendy and Alice as they started up on some hopping, twisting, fast step so they could just stand to the side. Thank the stars. He glanced at the table to see it was just Oswald and Felix there still. He was pretty sure that until more people returned to the table, Fanny wouldn’t be going over there.

She said she came in case Minnie needed saving. Obviously, they were invited. It had to be Mugs. He asked for him and Cala to switch. The little mook had planned this! What the hell Mugs! Why? Why had his brother invited Fanny and Dovil?

“They are way too good to be casual dancers. Are they pro or something?” Fanny asked him.

“I don’t think so,” Cup told her. “I don’t know about Alice, but Bendy’s never gone to school. I doubt he’s ever had anyone teach him how to dance.” Oh wait. “Well, I guess there’s Sasha, but I have no clue on her dancing ability either.”
Fanny hummed. “He works as a cussing mechanic? With moves like that, they could enter competition and give the snobs a run for their money.”

Cup snorted. “I don’t know if he’d love it or hate it.”

“Well, the guy likes dancing,” Fanny reasoned.

“But he hates dealing with snobs,” Cup pointed out. “Maybe to put them in their place, but I don’t know if it’d be worth it to him.” Cup smirked. “Might suggest he give it a try after this quest junk.”

Fanny shrugged. Finally, the song changed and Dovil, Puphead, Mugs, and Cala returned to the table. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHANNkKBSNU

“Wanna go back to the table?” Cup suggested.

“Sure, I might want a slow dance, but I think your glass feet are just going to trample mine,” Fanny said, following his line of sight. Cup sighed and gave her an annoyed glance. “What? You should be able to dance!”

“Oh? And why’s that?” Cup asked.

“You look like the type that could.” Fanny shrugged her bare shoulders.

“The type? There’s a cussing type?” Cup raised a brow.

A small blush came to her face. “You know what I mean!” she snapped and started walking to the table, her ears down.

“No, sorry. No clue. You’ll have to explain it.” Cup smirked.

She scoffed and rolled her eyes. “It’s the way you walk or something, okay! You just seemed like someone that’s aware of how they move!” She waved a hand at him dismissively. “I was wrong, obviously.”

They got back to the table in time to hear Felix and Oswald laughing about something. Fanny gave them a dirty look.

Cup decided to distract her. “So, you watch the way I move?” He leaned around her, putting himself between her and the view of the other rabbit.

Fanny snorted. “Of course I do. It’s the only way to figure out if you idiots have hurt yourself again. Ya know, since you don’t cussing tell anyone?”

Cup grinned. “What? Hurt myself? No! Those were battle wounds.”

Fanny rolled her eyes and took her seat. Cup slid next to her. “Well how are those ‘battle wounds’ of yours? The one on your face looks better,” she asked mockingly.

Cup nodded. “Yeah, that damn cream helped.”

“And the others?” Fanny asked. Was that a small smile on her lips? He thought so.

“Good enough.” Cup shrugged.

“Don’t make me check,” Fanny threatened.
Cup raised his brows. “Wouldn’t that be scandalous in a place like this?”

“The only scandalous thing here is your weird jello hair,” Fanny stated.

Cup gasped. “Jello? You think this is jello?”

“Or foam,” Fanny said. “Don’t look at me like I’m nuts, bubble head! You are literally a cup.”

Cup chuckled and held his hands up in surrender. “Well, it’s not the craziest thing people have told me.”

“No? What is?” Fanny asked.

Cup hummed. “I remember this one guy on a train a few years back. He asked a bunch of questions we ignored, and when he figured out that we weren’t talking, he just started guessin’.” Cup chuckled. “I think he ended on the idea that our heads were lungs, straws were like noses, and that there was something wrong with mine.”

Fanny frowned. “Cussin’ rude.”

Cup shrugged. “It’s better than when people try to touch. Anyway, Mugs had enough and said somethin’ like ‘if that’s true then why do we have noses?’ and that really stumped the mook.”

Fanny chuckled. It was rich and deep in her chest. Her smile made butterflies take flight in his stomach.

Bad Cup. No!

Cuphead: 0

Brain Damage: 98

Stars. This was ridiculous. He really needed to get control of himself. Maybe he should ask the dog doctor if he could get Cup a brain scan. Obviously he was crazy.

“People have tried to touch?” Fanny asked. “Good heavens.”

Cup rolled his eyes. “The hair, our heads, straws, and so on.”

“How cussing rude.” Fanny shook her head. “Not just kids either?”

“No! Not just kids! You would think, huh? Have you ever had to deal with annoying people like that?” Cup asked.

“Besides a few pervs, the most that bother me are little kids. They always want to pull my ears.” Fanny sighed. “So glad I don’t have to work with them much.” She flicked her fingers at the table. “Annoying little brats.”

“You don’t like kids?” Cup asked a little surprised.

“Not little ones. They’re loud and annoying, demanding and smelly.” Fanny wrinkled her nose. “You never have any peace, and you can’t get anything done. Plus, the little monsters are always trying to hurt themselves or each other. So you always have to watch the fiends.”

Cup laughed. “I’m shocked. I would have thought a nurse would love kids.”
“I’m not some well of patience! They make the second worst patient.” Fanny crossed her arms.

“The second? What’s the first?” Cup rested an elbow on the table.

Fanny smirked. “Idiots like you.”

“Ouch. Oh c’mon. I follow your orders.” Cup chuckled and put a hand to his chest in mock pain.

“Until I tell you to stop getting hurt!” Fanny waved a hand at him. “And only after a mountain of complaining.” Cup shook his head at her unbelievingly. Fanny huffed. “Okay, seriously though. Other medical personnel are the actual worst patients. They think they know everything, so they want to direct things while being the patient. We can never do right by them.”

Never do right, huh?

“I think I can understand that,” Cup muttered.

Mugs leaned around him. “Yeah. You’re a great fighter, but it’s everything else in life you just can’t get right.”

“What the cuss Mugs.” Cup looked at him deadpan. Fanny burst with laughter, and Cala giggled a bit.

“Oh shush Fanny. You are just as bad.” Dovil chirped.

“Dovil!” Fanny frowned.

“What? You give the worst life advice.” Dovil giggled.

Fanny huffed. “Well, see if I ever give you advice again.” Cup’s smile was quick to return. Fanny’s words were harsh, but Dovil seemed unaffected.

“How long have you two been friends?” Cup asked.

“Uh? Oh, ever since Fanny moved here. I’m a local, and I met her at little boutique in town. We were both after the same sweater, and there was only one left in the right size. She fought me for it, and after it got heated, we realized how silly we were being and went to a restaurant for lunch.”

“I couldn’t get rid of her,” Fanny muttered behind her hand.

“She eventually became my roommate, and we went to nursing school together.” Dovil beamed. “It was so much fun back then.”

“All before it became actual work.” Fanny rolled her eyes.

“And before that pain showed up,” Dovil muttered behind her wing. Cup furrowed his brows. Pain? Red came back with Xedo, a bit breathless, and sat down with a smile.

“And we learned the hard way that patients weren’t always going to say ‘thank you’ after you’ve helped them.” Fanny gave her an annoyed look. Dovil glanced away. Okay?

Cup hummed for a moment. “Thank you.”

That seemed to surprise her. Fanny’s dark eyes widened. A dusting of a blush came her furry cheeks.
“What the hell?” she muttered. “It’s far too late for that stardust.”

Cup chuckled. “Stardust? You just said you work a thankless job, so I wanna do my part! You can’t say I haven’t thanked you now.”

Dovil giggled. “You’re welcome.”

Red laughed. “What is with you, Fanny? You complain about getting no thanks, and when you get it, you complain more!” She picked up her drink. “There’s no pleasing you.”

“That’s right,” Dovil agreed.

“You’re both terrible,” Fanny stated annoyed, the blush still evident on her face. It was cute. Cup caught himself smiling without deciding to. He was happy, having fun even. Maybe he wouldn’t kill Mugman after this.

Oswald narrowed his eyes. Oh, that wasn’t good. No good at all. She was doing that stardust again. Damnit!

“Ozzy?” Felix asked and followed his glance to the other side of the long table. “Is everything okay?”

The rabbit sighed. It wasn’t his business. It really wasn’t. He was having a good night with his friends and brother. He was enjoying watching Mickey and Minnie on the dance floor. They were adorable. A perfect match. The harpy at the table shouldn’t ruin that for him. He was talking and joking with Felix. He should have a great evening and mind his own business.

“Oh hush! Like you could even do that,” Oswald heard Fanny scoff. His ear twitched.

“You’re doubting me? Well, I’ll just have to show you then.” Cup chuckled.

“That sounds like fun,” Mugs added.

“We could have a contest between us,” Cup said.

“You’re always the better shot,” Mugs argued.

“You need to get better then. Give me some challenge, bro,” Cup teased.

“I won’t believe it until I see it.” Fanny shook her head with that infuriating smirk.

“Oswald?” Felix shifted. The rabbit ripped his attention back to the worried cat. Felix was frowning, his eyes big with concern.

“Sorry, what was that Felix?” Oswald asked.

Felix’ eyes glanced back down the table then to Oswald. “There’s bad history, isn’t there?” Oswald didn’t want to get into it. “Don’t tell me. It’s fine. I understand, Ozzy. I’m just sorry it seems to be ruining your evening.”

Oswald sighed. “It’s not. Really. This evening has been great.”

Felix didn’t look convinced at all. Oswald chuckled weakly. “Okay, so I’m trying to have a great evening.”
The cat nodded. “Do you want to leave? I’m sure everyone will understand.”

“Nah, I do that and things are going to get worse.” Oswald shook his head. Besides, she’d call him a coward for running away. Suddenly, that side of the table burst into laughter. Oswald flinched. Felix frowned. He was going to pull Felix down with him if this continued, and the moment Mickey or Donald got back they would see right through him. Oswald didn’t want to be the wet blanket here.

“Alright, fine. I give in. I’ll go see,” Fanny relentanted.

Nope! He couldn’t just stand aside! Hell no! He knew the look on that cup idiot’s face, and he couldn’t leave it be! That was the last straw! The song came to an end. A few couples left the dance floor. Oswald saw Mickey and Donald coming back with Minnie and Daisy. This would be his best chance. Just a warning. That was all. It didn’t need to go further. They could still have a good evening.

“One moment Felix. I need to burn some energy,” Oswald said and stood up, sticking his hands in his pockets.

“Ozzy?” Felix murmured. Oswald took the few steps to the chair she sat in.

Dovil’s smile fell. Red tensed. Oswald glanced at her. She refused to turn around to acknowledge him. “A dance?”

“With you?” Fanny muttered. “I’d rather eat my foot.” She didn’t even turn her head. Of course.

“Then we can talk here?” Oswald asked tauntingly.

She turned a glare on him. “I’m surprised you’re talking at all.”

“Fanny!” Dovil hissed.

They exchanged heated looks. “Francine,” Oswald said.

“You won’t stop, will you?” she growled.

“You know me well enough to answer that,” Oswald huffed.

Cuphead narrowed his eyes. “Hey, if she doesn’t wanna dance--”

“It’s fine,” Fanny said quickly. “Let’s go.” She stood up and offered her hand. Oswald took it and led her to the dance floor.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyFwko9O2UE

Mickey and Donald both paused and stared at them with wide eyes, so wide they looked like they might fall out of their heads. Oswald would have laughed if he could muster up the energy for it. They got to the dance floor. He put his hand on her waist. Her hand came up to his shoulder, and they began to dance. Step for slow step. They made a wide circle as they circled around.

“You seem to be having fun,” Fanny said.

“What do you think you’re doing, Fanny?” Oswald demanded.

Her thin brows shot up in surprise. “Why--I’m having fun, Oswald. Same as you.” Her voice was sugary sweet and entirely condescending.
“Don’t give me that stardust!” Oswald growled and leaned over her. “What the hell are you doing here Fanny?”

She laughed. “I was invited here. And what about you, long ears?” Her smile grew wider. “You act like I’m up to something nefarious, Ozzy.”

“Don’t call me that!” Oswald hissed.


“Would you cut the stardust,” Oswald growled. “I’m trying to be serious here.”

“You could have fooled me. You never used to be serious,” Fanny said and spun out and back in. “Not until that little kitten came along.”

Oswald tensed. He almost stopped dancing. “Don’t,” he warned her. This woman and her silver blade of a tongue!

“What? You don’t like the facts, Lucky?” Fanny asked, her eyes shining in the dance lights. “Leading me on like you did and then leaving me on the street like a can of trash.”

“Me leading you on? Oh that’s rich.” Oswald scoffed. “I was bending all sorts of backwards for you. Fights, adventures, dares, and the stupidest of stuff just to keep your cussing attention!”

She huffed and narrowed her eyes. “This isn’t why you dragged me out here, rabbit. What do you really want to say? Hmm? You want to judge me on my dress? My friends? My conversations? Are you mad, Oswald? Mad that I’m out at night? And what about you, huh?” A fire entered her eyes. “Locked up in your little depression, shirking all your responsibilities because things didn’t go your way again?” She sneered. “And then, the minute you decide to enter the public again, you make a show of it. Do those people at that table know what you really can be like?”

“Why are--”

“No!” Fanny snapped. “It’s my turn. My life is none of your starfallen business now. Got it? You are going to leave me the cuss alone!”

“Then, I can assume that Cuphead knows about your husband? How the cuss you can be?” Oswald asked in a low voice. “What about Brute? Why isn’t he here?”

Fanny went quiet. There. She’d stop this game. “You don’t even have the ring on. I didn’t hear anything about you leaving him. So, what are you doing here Fanny? Because it looks like your usual brand of trouble.” She sneered. “Playing with guys and stringing them along like some sick game. Getting presents and trophies and jewels from fools too blind to see her games!

Her face remained passive. She looked over to the table. “I would have saved myself so much grief if I just knew that you had a thing for cats.”

Oswald blinked. What?

“This game of accusation can go two ways, Ozzy.” She looked up at him again. “I mean a cat is one thing, but a man? Have you no shame, Oswald? Do you have any idea how that is going to reflect on the circus? On Mickey? On those little tykes of yours?”

A chill stabbed through Oswald. A shiver from ear to toe. He did stop moving this time. “What the
“Oh please.” Fanny rolled her eyes. “I’m not blind, Lucky. Or stupid. He’s almost a male doppelganger of her. They could have been cussing twins! And the way he looks at you!” She smirked. “What a scandal for the papers.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Oswald denied. Fanny snorted a harsh laugh. Damnit! Damnit! Damnit! This viper! Didn’t she realize this would ruin Felix! That he had nothing to do with this! Fanny and her twisted games! And what the hell was she planning with Cuphead? Huh? Did he even know she was married? He sure doubted it! Was it to get back at Brute for something? Did she just want to see them fight?

“Here’s my offer Oswald, and I’m only going to say it once.” Fanny leaned forward, wrapping her arms around his shoulders and getting them moving again so as not to bump into others. Oswald wanted to yank away from her body’s heat. She whispered. “Leave me alone, and I’ll leave you alone. The way I see it, if my supposed ‘evil plan’ makes a few ripples in our circles of acquaintances, well that’s one thing.” She sighed. “But I can’t imagine the splash your scandal will cause, since you and your new pet are both oh so popular,” she cooed.

“Felix hasn’t done anything to you.” Oswald leaned forward. Their noses almost brushed. “And that’s not what’s going on!”

“And Cuphead hasn’t done anything to you. You don’t know the circumstances either, Oswald. You just brought me out here and started accusing me!” Fanny hissed quietly, her dark eyes blazing. Oswald grit his teeth, returning the glare. “Can you blame me! I see you here without that schmuck of yours and flirting with another guy! Are you thinking at all what could happen? It looks pretty cussing bad! And with your history—”

“You don’t get to talk about my history! Especially with your cussing roll in it! You dumped me. What the hell do you care what I do now?” Fanny cut him off. “I could cussing drop dead right here, and you wouldn’t give my damn casket a glance.”

Oswald flinched back. His mouth dropped open a bit and eyes widened. There was a tense beat, horror snaked up Oswald’s spine. “Don’t,” he almost choked. “Don’t say that. Fanny.”

The song ended. Fanny pulled away. “Just leave me alone, Oswald. We both know that it won’t be pretty if you try anything.” She turned around, her chin held high as she headed back to the table. There was a tightness to her shoulders though. Had he scared her? Oswald took a moment to collect himself before going back.

She didn’t mean that right? She didn’t really think that if she died he would just be okay with that, did she? They hadn’t worked out. That had been a long time ago, but that didn’t mean he hated her. Well, not that much. Did she really expect the worst from him?

And would she really out Felix like that just to get at him? Then again, it wasn’t much different than what he threatened to do to her with Brute. But it was too. Felix would be ruined. His very life in danger. Fanny and Brute would just be in a fight. That would be completely different. Damnit! Why did she always have to cussing be like this? And now Oswald would be left wondering if she was stringing that poor mook Cuphead along.

Maybe he should talk to the guy? But now her guard was up. If he tried, she would spill secrets. Damnit! She had him cornered! He hated these games she played. The rest of the evening Mickey and the others were giving him worried looks. He even caught Red and Dovil giving him a worried
glance once in a while. The inky crew seemed curious, especially cupface, but Oswald could ignore
them. Almost. All but Felix.

The question and concern in his eyes. The twitch of his whiskers that could smell something. Oswald
was worried. He hadn’t meant to drag Felix into his drama with the viper woman. He would have to
warn him about her...but that would mean Oswald would have to talk about the feelings he suspected
Felix might have for him. He had promised himself that he wouldn’t bring it up. That he would only
acknowledge it if Felix ever talked to him about it first. Now, thanks to his stupidity, Oswald would
have to break that promise.

He didn’t even know where to start with that. An apology? An explanation? A bit about his history
with Fanny first? He didn’t want to be careless. This was beyond delicate. And that wasn’t even
bringing in what he thought of this whole mess. Well, he knew that Fanny was a starfallen pile of
stardust drama, but he meant Felix. It was all in a conflict in his head. Felix was his friend. He liked
the cat. The children adored him and asked multiple times if the adventurer would become their new
‘mommy.’ Oswald was quick to shut them down and ship them away from the cat before they could
start asking him if he’d be willing. Stars.

But.

He was working with this ink crew on that dangerous machine. Oswald wanted nothing to do with it
or those that were sick. His heart couldn’t take it. He looked so much like Ortensia that it hurt, but
Felix wasn’t her. It wasn’t fair to keep comparing them, but Oswald couldn’t help it. They shared so
many similarities, it was scary. The looks, the kindness, their humor. It was sweet torture how similar
they were.

So Oswald had no idea how to feel about Felix. Friendship? Yeah. Affection? Probably misplaced
from his wife. Reluctance? Definitely. He didn’t know if he wanted to invite Felix over for lunch or
push him away with a thirty-foot pole.

Add in that the cat may have feelings for him?

Stars. How did Oswald get into this mess? Where the hell was the emergency exit?

The night continued. Felix was able to relax again and so was Oswald. He focused on the moment
and what was going on with his brother instead. That helped astronomically.

It was funny. It seemed that Mickey and Minnie were really interested in Bendy and Alice. They
asked all sorts of questions about their interests and dating history. Bendy and Alice seemed to do the
same to them. There was so much blushing at Oswald’s end of the table he considering opening a
rose shop right there. Some of the people from the inky crew would glance over and laugh
occasionally. Especially the rune girl.

Despite Fanny, the evening ended well. They all got up together and parted ways outside the
building. Felix was going back to the house with Xedo and Red. Mickey was going to escort Minnie
home. Donald and Daisy were going to walk with Oswald. Daisy lived on the way to the circus after
all.

It seemed the rest of them were breaking off into pairs to take the women home this late at night.
Finley got a cab for him and Holly. They offered for any of the others to join them. Mugman and his
lady turned them down. Dovil and Puphead accepted. Alice and Bendy did too. Not to his surprise,
Cuphead offered to walk Fanny home or call her another cab. She opted to walk. Of course she did.
The rabbit woman gave him one last smirk before turning around and heading in the opposite
direction. Cuphead narrowed his eyes at him before following her.
Stars.

Why was he always in a mess? Oh well. It was time for bed. He’d sweat about it later.

Cuphead pushed his hands deeper into his pockets. He had no idea what that was about. The evening was great, but then that long ear schmuck had asked Fanny to dance, and she had come back weird. Like she couldn’t completely relax. What had he said to her? Her friends had asked if she was okay repeatedly until she started getting snarky with them. It was funny, but also familiar.

It was what he did when he wasn’t willing to talk.

From what he could put together from the table, they had a history. A nasty one. Maybe they had a huge fight? Maybe they were ex’s or something? Whatever it was left bad blood in the water.

“So, the silent treatment?” Fanny glanced up at him.

Cuphead snorted. “Nah, just thinking.”

“Oooh. A dangerous past time for you.” Fanny smirked.

“Ouch,” Cup muttered sarcastically. “My poor feelings.”

She chuckled. “Well, even if you are an idiot, I had fun.”

“That’s good. I did too. I hope we can do things like this again,” Cuphead said. “Everyone deserves it after the hell we go through.”

“All those wounds?” Fanny asked. “What are you people really doing? That train in Heela City? Was it just to get Mickey back?”

Cup shrugged. “Pretty much.”

“No way. You are a liar. There’s more to you people.” She narrowed her eyes at him.

“Maybe.” Cup smirked.

She glared. “Fine! Keep your secrets.”

“Will do,” Cup said lightly and pulled out a cigarette. She threw her arms into the air in exasperation. Cuphead laughed.

“You’re impossible!” she exclaimed.

“You!” Cup grinned.

“The worst!” she accused.

“Definitely,” he agreed easily.

“I could easily end up hating you.”

“It’s possible.” Cup lit the smoke.

“You know that’s bad for you, right?” she asked, wrinkling her nose.

Cup shrugged. Messing with her was fun.
“You should think about quitting. It stinks, and if you do, you can save what’s left of your voice.” Fanny smirked.

“Cu-” He stopped his automatic response. “What’s left of my voice? I’m not losing it!”

She huffed and laughed at him. “Oh yeah, right! It’s all rough.”

“It’s husky,” Cup muttered and pinched the cigarette between his fingers.

“The voice of an old man,” Fanny countered and turned to him.

“You like it,” he said and lowered his hand letting a breath of smoke into the night air.

“Ha! You wish!” Fanny laughed. “It’s not attractive at all.”

“No? You seem very worried about it for some reason.” Cup took a step, a little in her space and looked down on her smugly.

“I’m just worried you’ll be a worse burden on that brother of yours.” She tilted her head back to smirk at him. She didn’t seem bothered with the small distance. “Then again, you being mute might be an improvement.”

“You wouldn’t miss it at all?” Cup asked softly.

“Nope,” she denied, matching her tone to his.

Cup leaned down a little. “You sure?” he asked, just over a whisper.

“Pretty sure.” Her dark eyes glittered up at him.

“I think you’re a liar.” Cup straightened up and took a step back. He lifted the smoke back to his mouth. She sucked in a deep breath. She blinked, seemingly thinking better of it, and then turned to start walking again. Cup raised a brow at the victory.

Before Cup could figure out what her giving up meant, they got to her street. That had been too fast. “Well, this is me,” she said, gesturing to the two-story house.

“I know. You forced me in there last time.” Cup smirked.

“How are your cracks?” she asked again.

“Healing fine. No scars.” Cup shrugged. She narrowed her eyes. “Honest! They’re almost gone like the one on my face is gone!” What? Was she gonna force him inside again and check? “I don’t think making me take off my shirt out here is good for my health. It’s cold.” He snickered.

Her expression didn’t change for a long moment. She sighed. “What’s wrong?” Cup asked.

“Nothing. I’m just being ridiculous.” Fanny crossed her arms.

“Ridiculous? Sounds dangerous for you.” Cup smirked, feeling clever. She chuckled. He smiled at the sound. “A laugh. Well, I’ll be.”

“Hush you. It’s just your stupidity that’s amusing,” Fanny scoffed.

“You have a bad case of the lies tonight.” Cup raised a brow. “Whatever is bothering you…” He trailed off. What the hell kind of advice could he give her? He didn’t know squat about what was
bothering her.

She looked at him for a long moment. The tightness in her eyes seemed to relax if just a little. Then she huffed dismissively. “Thanks for walking me. Have a good night.” She turned to go.

“I still owe you that drink,” Cup suddenly said.

She glanced back at him and raised a brow.

“For the free treatment, and because I can.” Cup shrugged and smiled. “I still have to convince you that we’re friends.”

“Oh please,” she scoffed.

“No, no. I’m taking this seriously. I’m going to convince you we’re friends. Hell, I might even get us to be great friends.” Cup grinned.

“I don’t hang out with smokers,” she said dismissively.

“Then maybe I’ll quit,” Cup countered.

“Do you have to have a comeback for everything?” Fanny demanded.

“Pretty much,” Cup said proudly.

“You’re impossible,” Fanny grumbled and turned away again. She just reached the door when Cup called out one last thing.

“Have a good rest of your evening, Fanny.” Cup waved.

“Don’t die,” was her response before opening the door and stepping in. Cup snorted and turned to head back home. Not a ‘good night’ but better than last time. Hell, it was advice he should even listen to.

Fanny was a riot. She and her friends were fun to mess with. And damn! She could really dance! She and that damn rabbit had pretty much glided across the dance floor. He would cussing hate it, but maybe he should let Bendy teach him a couple of things. That way next time they could…

Next time?

Cup stopped walking. He looked back down the snowy street. “What the hell am I doing?” he muttered.

Cuphead: 0

Brain Damage: 99 being a moron. Moron.

She was cussing married. And he was being such a schmuck! No! No more! He would be friendly, and that was it. No more games! He wasn’t that guy. He refused to be that guy! He had to take his stand here! He was a schmuck and a murderer. He wasn’t going to cussing do this. With all the minuscule amount of dignity he had left. Which also meant that he would have to kill Mugs for doing this to him. Them. Damnit.

Cup released a sigh of smoke into the air as his heart clenched in his chest. He walked home, vowing to keep distance between him and Fanny Cottontail from now on.
Alice shifted in the car. The night had been amazing. Bendy was more than an amazing dancer. The way he led her, it was like he was showing her how to fly. It was the most fun she’d had since getting on the Surface. Bendy had been his usual ridiculous self, punning and laughing with her, every once in awhile, daring a terrible one liner. Everyone had been in such warm spirits...well, everyone but Fanny and Oswald. There had been...complicated emotions and then the worry of others but besides that! It was a great evening. She loved it.

But now the lights were gone. The music had faded. They had dropped off Dovil and Puphead already. It was just her, Bendy, Finley, and Holly. They were all talking excitedly about the evening and how well Mickey had done on his new leg and him and Minnie.

It was in the semi-dark of the taxi cab that reality seemed to dawn on Alice.

What was she doing?

Her hand in Bendy’s for most of the evening as they danced. Laughing with him and the others. Working at Betty’s store. Living with Holly and Cala. A Surface dweller and a gorgon.

What was she doing?

None of this had anything to do with her goals. It was good. So good. She was happy and helping people, but not in the way she wanted. The way she needed. She needed to get her wings. She had been here so long and had no luck so far. If she was thinking about it with any kind of rational, she would have moved to a new city a long time ago. Instead, she was sitting here. Next to a demon.

Heavens above.

The car pulled to a stop. Finley helped Holly out.

“C’mon Alice,” Bendy offered her his hand as he scooted out and onto the snowy street. Alice eyed it for a moment before mentally shaking herself. She took it and let Bendy help her out. His cool arua mingled with the cold air outside. Alice hugged her coat closer to her. They were at the apartment. Finley had led Holly away a little to talk or say goodnight.

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“Thanks for being my dance partner this evening, Alice.” Bendy smiled at her.

“Sure Bendy, I had a great time.” Alice made herself smile and push away her anxieties.

He grinned his small fangs as white as the snow around them. It was the most at ease Alice had seen him since that night she first met him and he had tried that sad attempt at flirting. It was like the weight of the world was usually sitting on his shoulders. He looked so serious most of the time. It was easy to forget they were the same age.

“That’s swell to hear,” Bendy said. Holly looked at her and winked. Finley was taking her to the door? And leaving her and Bendy here alone beside the taxi? “Uh, listen, Alice. I’ve been meaning to ask you something for a time now, and I haven’t been able to get around to it,” Bendy said, suddenly nervously. Alice blinked and focused on him again. Bendy continued. “You see, I’ve been wanting to ask you out on an actual date. Just the two of us.” He looked up at her with large hopeful light eyes.

Alice felt the sky shatter above her. Her? Date Bendy? Her and a demon? When she had already pushed her responsibilities back so much? When he had to do so much already? He had just barely gotten his papers! Did he realize that doing something like this would just get him in trouble? Both of them in trouble?
And yet, that happy look on his face. That smile. She couldn’t help thinking he looked so cute like this. She wanted to see this side of him more. She… liked him like this. All light, carefree, laughing, and joking. He was such an interesting conundrum to her. She never thought she’d met a demon like him. She never thought she could be so aware of someone before. It was different from anyone else she had ever been around in her life. Exciting, mysterious, and every time she learned something new about him, she just wanted to learn more. And that was so very dangerous. For both of them. She was an angel. She would only bring him misery. They’d never work. They never would. Despite knowing that, there was a small part of her that wanted to say yes. To just see what it would be like. What he would be like, if she dared. It terrified her.

“I—I’m, uh, sorry Bendy,” she choked out. “I can’t.”

His eyes widened in surprise for a moment before they relaxed. “Oh, uh su--I mean. Yeah, um.” He seemed to struggle for words.

“It’s really nice of you to ask me, Bendy, but I think it’s best we stay friends,” Alice said quickly, trying to spare him the awkwardness. Her chest felt oddly hollow saying it. She watched the hope die in Bendy’s eyes. The grin falling away. She couldn’t read his emotions like everyone else. She could only get things from Cala sometimes, but Bendy was always a blank slate. Only the agitation of his arua could clue her into anything, and that was magic, not emotion. She didn’t know what he was thinking or feeling. Had she crushed him? She really hoped not. “We both have things we need to focus on right now.”

His eyes narrowed a little. “It’s not because of me? Or, uh, no, I mean, because of what we, I mean, like it’s not from some cussing race thing is it?” His voice cracked at the end, his hands clenched into fists.

It was like he shot her through. “Bendy it’s…it’s complicated.” Alice felt her shoulders hunch defensively. “There’s a lot to it you don’t understand.”

“Then spell it out for me!” Bendy demanded, his eyes bright, not with magical red, but emotion. A slew of emotion that Alice couldn’t comprehend. “From where I stand, you’re an amazing girl that I would love to date. I want to get to know you better, Alice, and I feel--” He cut his shout off. Alice’s eyes widened. Feel…what? “What the hell does it matter what other people think?” he asked in a low tone. His eyes were burning with the question.

To her horror, Alice felt tears prick at her eyes. Why? Why did she want to cry? What did it matter? “I—I’m sorry!” She ran past him and to the apartment. Alice saw a flash of shock cross Bendy’s face before he was behind her.

“Alice!” Bendy called after her. She didn’t look back. She raced up the stairs, past Finley, not sparing him a glance.

“Alice!” Bendy called after her. She didn’t look back. She raced up the stairs, past Finley, not sparing him a glance.

“Alice?” he asked, surprise coming to his features before she left him behind her too. She got to the door and slammed it behind her. She leaned against it, breathing heavily. The strange emotion welling up in her again. What did it matter? The tears ran over and trailed down her cheeks. Holly was in the living room. She was dropping her jacket and shoes by the couch, too tired to put them away properly.

Her head jerked up in surprise as Alice ran in the door. Horror ran through her as she took in the angel. “Alice?” She blinked and rushed towards her.

“H-Ho-Holly!” Alice sobbed and threw her arms around her. What was going on? Why was she so torn up about this? Had she hoped? Was there really a part of her that hoped she could have
something with Bendy? And now she had to reject him because there was no other way. Is that why this was happening? Why her chest hurt so much? Was she crazy? She was so stupid! It couldn’t be that.

Holly stroked Alice’s hair, hugging her tightly. “It’s okay. You’re okay,” she murmured to her. Gently, she led Alice to the couch and sat her down, still holding her and stroking her hair. Worry radiated off her friend, but Alice was too distracted with her own feelings to think of Holly. Why? Why was she like this? She had done the right thing, so why was she like this?

“I don’t understand,” Alice wept. “Why?”

“Why what Alice?” Holly whispered, rubbing her shoulders.

Alice rubbed at her eyes roughly, demanding them to stop. “Why am I crying? W-w-why am I feeling like this?” Why was she so very stupid. “H-h-Bendy, uh, just asked me out. Th-that’s all! S-So why?” She sniffed, her nose feeling clogged.

Holly was quiet for a long time. “Uh...Why do you think you’re crying?” she asked tentatively.

“W-why?” Alice was taken back. “I don’t know!”

Holly stared at her. “Oh,” she whispered. “Oh dear. That’s not good.” She hugged Alice closer, patting her head. “I’m so sorry.”

Alice was grateful for the comforting touch and warmth. They sat there in silence for a moment, Holly stroking her hair and patting her back. “Is it because you didn’t want to reject him?” Holly asked gently.

Didn’t want--Alice opened her mouth to reject the notion. It was ridiculous! Preposterous! And nothing passed over her lips. Her throat was too tight. She couldn’t speak. She didn’t want...she didn’t want to! The tears and sobs grew worse. Was that it? She hadn’t wanted to say no? She had wanted to say yes? Of course she didn’t want to hurt his feelings, but they couldn’t! And she didn’t--but maybe she did! And that thought scared her.

“Oh dear,” Holly muttered again. She started to run her fingers through Alice’s hair. “You don’t have to say anything Alice.”

She didn’t think she could if she tried.

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